

FREEDOM

£2 www.freedompress.org.uk

Vol 75, Issue 1 • JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2014

DUGGAN VERDICT

Jury decides police were 'justified' in shooting an unarmed man

A dramatic inquest into the death of an unarmed young black man has ruled that the cops acted lawfully when they killed him. The inquest, which began in September last year, saw a jury vote 8-2 in favour of the boys in blue.

Police officers shot down 29-year-old Mark Duggan in August 2011, after they had stopped the taxi he was travelling in. The officer who shot him claimed that Duggan had a gun in his hand: a fact that was later disproved. Duggan's death sparked riots across the country, in an explosive display of frustration at poverty, police violence and racial tensions.

Duggan was under investigation by Operation Trident at the time of his death, due to suspicions that he was part of violent gang the Tottenham Man Dem, suspected of using guns in nightclubs. Police intelligence revealed that he had been given a BBM Bruni Model 92 handgun by Kevin Hutchinson-Foster 15 minutes before he died. However, Duggan was apparently not in possession of the firearm at the time, having thrown it out of the taxi.

page 3 ►►

LENS CAP CLASH WITH FASH IN SLOUGH



On 1st February anti-fascist activists gathered for a counter-demo against the English Defence League in Slough, Berkshire.

Photo © Charlotte Dingle

AR ACTIVISTS FACE TRIAL

Three animal rights activists are facing the prospect of 14 years in prison after being accused of 'blackmailing' Huntingdon Life Sciences, the largest animal testing laboratory in Europe.

Debbie, Natasha and Sven were arrested in July 2012 after police stormed their homes and offices and seized computers and campaigning materials. The three are accused of 'blackmailing' HLS between 2008 and 2011 – a charge which can carry a sentence of up to 14 years. 'Blackmail' is defined in law as anything which involves 'demanding' something from another – in other words, the sole purpose of a campaigning group! Debbie's trial is set for February. Natasha and Sven have no set dates but have been told they will be tried soon.

HLS is responsible for the deaths of over 500 animals a day and has around 700,000

animals on-site at any given time. The laboratory has been the subject of a number of exposés. Evidence of workers engaging in such delightful activities as punching beagle puppies in the face, performing autopsies on living monkeys, seizing animals illegally from the wild and performing experiments while drunk have been captured.

Despite its very dodgy credentials, HLS still has a history of pressing for – and obtaining – the harshest penalties for those who protest against it.

Your help is needed! You can follow the Blackmail 3 campaign at www.blackmail3.org. To get involved in the wider campaign against Huntingdon Life Sciences, visit the Stop Huntingdon Life Sciences website at www.shac.net.

Charlotte Dingle

INSIDE ►►

Dole scum page 3

Rote Flora eviction page 9

Svartfrosk page 16

Getting active page 18

Reviews pages 20 and 21

Arts pages 22 and 23

ISSN 0016-0504



9 770016 050009

NEWS

FREEDOM STOCKISTS

You can now pick up your monthly copy of *Freedom* at the following venues.

LONDON

- **Freedom Bookshop**, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX, tel 020 7247 9249 email shop@freedompress.org.uk <http://www.freedompress.org.uk/>
- **56A Infoshop**, 56 Crampton Street, London SE17 3AE, email info@56a.org.uk <http://www.56a.org.uk/>
- **Housmans Bookshop**, 5 Caledonian Road, London N1 9DX, tel 020 7837 4473 email shop@housmans.com <http://www.housmans.com/>
- **London Action Resource Centre (LARC)**, 62 Fieldgate Street, London E1 1ES tel 020 7377 9088, <http://www.londonarc.org/>
- **Newham Bookshop**, 745-747 Barking Road, London E13 9ER, tel 020 8552 9993 email info@newhambooks.co.uk <http://www.newhambooks.co.uk/>

BRIGHTON

- **Cowley Club Social Centre**, 12 London Road, Brighton BN1 4JA, tel 01273 696104 email cowleyclub@riseup.net <http://cowleyclub.org.uk/>

BIRMINGHAM

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

BRISTOL

- **Hydra Books**, 34 Old Market, Bristol BS2 0EZ tel: 0117 3297401, email info@hydrabooks.org <http://www.hydrabooks.org/>
- **Kebele Social Centre**, 14 Robertson Road, Bristol BS5 6JY, tel 0117 9513086 email kebelesocialcentre@riseup.net <http://www.kebelecoop.org>

NOTTINGHAM

- **Sumac Centre**, 245 Gladstone Street, Nottingham NG7 6HX, tel 0115 960 8254 email sumac@veggies.org.uk <http://www.veggies.org.uk/sumac>

LIVERPOOL

- **News from Nowhere Bookshop**, 96 Bold Street, Liverpool L1 4HY, tel 0151 708 7270 email nfn@newsfromnowhere.org.uk <http://www.newsfromnowhere.org.uk/>

EDINBURGH

- **AK Press online**, AK Distribution, PO Box 12766, Edinburgh, Scotland EH8 9YE email ak@akedin.demon.co.uk <http://www.akuk.com/>
- **Autonomous Centre of Edinburgh (ACE)** 17 West Montgomery Place, Edinburgh EH7 5HA tel 0131 557 6242 email ace@autonomous.org.uk <http://www.autonomous.org.uk/>
- **Word Power Books**, 43-45 West Nicolson Street, Edinburgh EH8 9DB, tel 0131 662 9112 email books@word-power.co.uk <http://www.word-power.co.uk/>

SOUTHAMPTON

- **October Books**, 243 Portswood Road, Southampton SO17 2NG, tel 023 8058 1030 email info@octoberbooks.org

LENS CAP UKRAINE



Fascists in Ukraine have taken to the streets and sparked violent riots. The riots were apparently started in protest at the current government's reluctance to take steps towards joining Europe.

Pussy Riot prisoners freed

Musicians Nadezhda Tolokonnikova and Maria Alyokhina, who were arrested for standing at the altar of Russia's main cathedral and performing a protest song criticising the power of church over state, have been released from prison in December after being incarcerated since March 2012.

They performed the profanity-laden song entitled Punk Prayer as part of their band Pussy Riot, while dressed in a striking outfit of now-iconic coloured balaclavas. The songs lyrics call for Putin to be 'thrown out', urge the Virgin Mary to "become a feminist, we pray thee!" and make reference to a 2011 Russian Orthodox church corruption scandal. A third band member, Yekaterina Samutsevich, was also arrested, but she was released in October 2012. The arrests were made on charges of "hooliganism motivated by religious hatred". Sentencing the women, the judge accused them of "undermining the social order" and "showing a complete lack of respect" for believers.

Russian president Putin is known for his strong links with the super-traditional Russian Orthodox church – which has recently, among other things, been calling for the recriminalisation of homosexuality. 'Promoting' homosexuality to young people is already illegal, and mass protests are planned for the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi in February. When the church called for the arrest of the Pussy Riot members, Putin quickly complied, saying the women had "got what they asked for" after "undermining the moral foundations" of the country.

Tolokonnikova and Alyokhina officially had their sentences reduced under a new amnesty law as both women have children – but many harbour suspicions that the level

of international outcry over their draconian punishment played a pivotal role in their release. The pair have angrily dismissed their release as a 'PR stunt' and have vowed to form a group to campaign for prisoners' rights following their degrading and uncomfortable time inside.

Both women went on hunger strikes during their time in jail, as part of unsuccessful appeal bids. At one point, Tolokonnikova disappeared, provoking an international campaign to uncover her whereabouts. It transpired that she was in hospital being treated for tuberculosis – but none of her family or friends had been informed of this fact. And it is unsurprising that she became ill, with insufficient clothing and freezing surroundings apparently providing a daily struggle during the winter months. Alyokhina reported being subjected to humiliating and repeated intimate examinations almost every day for a period of three weeks.

Suffice to say we probably haven't seen the last of these awe-inspiring women, who have emerged from detention even angrier than ever...

Charlotte Dingle





Dole scum

New Channel 4 documentary series slammed for its unsympathetic portrayal of those on benefits

Thievin', scroungin', fraudin', drinkin', druggin', shaggin', litterin', loiterin' – this is the sensationalist world of *Benefits Street*. The Channel 4 documentary series, made by independent film company Love Productions, follows the lives of the residents of James Turner Street in Birmingham. It paints a vivid picture of poverty, crime and squalor. Shoplifters dodge police helicopters on rubbish-strewn pavements; work-shy drug addicts shaft the benefits system; illiterate drunks grumble on about not getting enough for nothing; and feckless single parents allow their millions of foul-mouthed, underfed, grubby children to run riot in the streets. A clip of a woman claiming – incorrectly – that “only about

5%” of the street's residents are in work is repeatedly shown (a survey showed the actual figure to be 39%). With life-wrecking benefit reforms gathering pace under the coalition, there couldn't be a worse time to misrepresent the poor quite so brutally. Hardly unexpected, however, in today's reality-TV-obsessed world, where we are trained to take more and more delight in others' misery, be it watching them quarrel on *Big Brother* or confess painful family secrets on *The Jeremy Kyle Show*.

The first episode of *Benefits Street* was shown on 6th of January and the series will run for five episodes. *Benefits Street* is already pulling in the highest ratings Channel 4 has seen in a year, with five million viewers watching by the second episode. Ofcom has received hundreds of complaints and a petition to axe the programme is attracting thousands of signatures.

Benefits Street was originally meant to be entitled simply James Turner Street but Channel 4 decided to rename it. Residents have come forward to complain that those with jobs or calmer existences were axed

from the programme. One couple was filmed extensively for the programme only to be cut out before it was screened because one of them was a benefits officer. Personal phone calls were allegedly recorded and broadcast without permission. In an opening clip, a resident is shown pointing at houses and shouting ‘Unemployed!’ However, programme-makers chose not to include footage of her pointing at houses where she knew residents were in work.

A representative and balanced portrait of life in a disadvantaged area was clearly not the main thing on the programme-makers' minds. From the start, however, they deviously told residents the programme would be about community spirit – not an offensive misrepresentation of people struggling to make ends meet, created for the purpose of providing cheap, gratuitous shaudenfreude. The sad reality is that many viewers will take it at face value.

Want to see for yourself? *Benefits Street* airs on Mondays at 9pm until 3rd February.

Charlotte Dingle

Duggan verdict

◀ page 1

The media played a crucial part in vilifying Duggan in the lead-up to the trial, using tactics which included printing a cut-off photo of Duggan looking angry without pointing out that in the original he was holding a plaque that was about to be placed on his young daughter's grave.

Changing police reports on the circumstances surrounding his death have attracted suspicion from Duggan's supporters, who have used the case to help draw attention to other killings committed by the police – with an emphasis on scrutinising the high numbers of non-white deaths. Of the 1,000 people who have died in police custody in the past

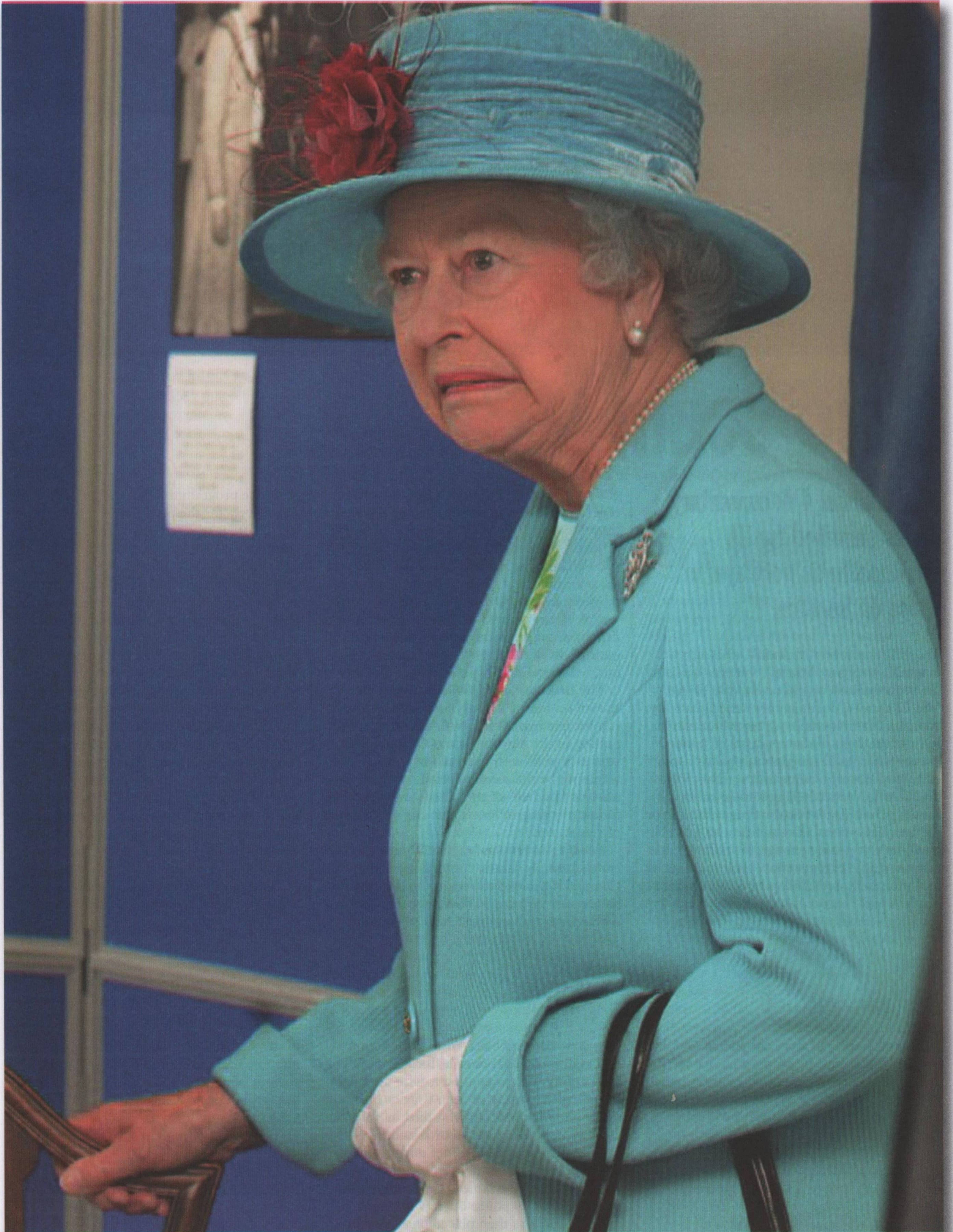
20 years, 10 were black or minority ethnic.

A vigil took place outside Tottenham police station following the inquest, with attendees including the family of Sean Rigg, a black schizophrenic musician who died in police custody in 2008. Accused of assaulting a police officer, public disorder and stealing a passport (which actually turned out to be his own) Rigg was restrained, handcuffed and then leant on by police officers for eight minutes. He was then placed on his knees in a ‘rear stack’ (hands cuffed behind back) position in the back of a police van. Police were caught on CCTV claiming that Rigg was ‘faking it’, before leaving him unattended

in the van for 10 minutes and then placing him unconscious on the floor of the station's custody suite for almost half an hour. Rigg was pronounced dead on arrival at King's College Hospital. An 18-month inquest absolved the police of any wrong-doing, deeming their actions ‘reasonable’ and ‘proportionate’.

Addressing the vigil, Duggan's mother said simply: “We want justice for my son. Mark was a young boy. He wasn't a gangster. Gangsters have everything. Mark didn't have nothing.” She then joined the rest of the crowd in releasing doves into the Tottenham skies.

Charlotte Dingle

THE BIG PICTURE

The poor old queen is now reportedly down to her last million of lucre due to her courtiers' overspending. This is down from a whopping 35 mill in 2001.

Party's over?

The folks at Trotwatch bring you the latest in the SWP saga...

The December 2013 national conference of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) was the scene for a decisive showdown in the factional battle that has consumed the organisation for many months. The meeting brought to an end what even the SWP's own propagandists were prepared to admit had been a "difficult and divisive year for the party". In the event, party bosses and their most loyal cadre easily crushed the shrinking opposition forces in the SWP's ranks. But their victory appears to be extremely hollow – and was only secured at considerable political and reputational cost.

Serious divisions within the SWP – the largest remaining Trotskyist organisation in Britain – emerged in 2012 (see *Freedom* March and July 2013) as dissidents began to question the performance of the party's leadership. The appalling treatment of an allegation of sexual assault made against senior party stalwart Martin Smith (pictured below) crystallised the frustration of many, and became the metaphor for a wider malaise seen to be afflicting the party: with a leadership condemned for its arrogance, its disdain for 'internal democracy', its nepotism and its refusal to acknowledge damaging mistakes. Since last spring, members have quit the SWP in droves, repulsed both by the crisis and by the leadership's denial of any shortcomings.

As the organisation was convulsed by conflict, both the opposition and the loyalists struggled over strategy. Dissidents in the party disagreed over whether the best plan was to stay put (to try to defeat the incumbent leadership) or to break away and form a new party. As the fragile unity of the opposition unravelled, some rebels quit while others vowed to stay and fight, shredding their combined numerical strength. The party's central committee initially attempted to deny the existence of a crisis, and then failed (despite convening a special conference) to silence the discontent, which intensified following fresh sexual assault allegations



against Smith. Smith resigned from all party positions shortly afterwards.

All parties to the conflict realised that that the two-day December gathering would be make-or-break time in the struggle for control of the organisation. Party bosses could not countenance the idea of the factional feud rolling on into another year, or give ground to the opposition. The party's remaining rebels were aware that any failure to win headway at conference would trigger a further round of resignations and expulsions, and put an end to any hopes of retaining an effective insurgency.

In the run-up to conference the party centre pulled out all the manipulative procedural tricks to ensure dissidents were not selected as party delegates. Angered by the upstart opposition, one group of party loyalists even organised their own anti-faction faction, aiming to marginalise the critics and encourage the voices of the obedient. With everything stacked against them, and their numbers depleting (as many dissidents gave up the fight), the pre-conference arithmetic was clear. There was little doubt that party bosses would crush, silence or otherwise be rid of their critics.

The leadership did table a carefully-worded "statement of regret", which tried to appear penitent without actually apologising for any wrong-doing. It noted the 'real distress'



experienced by the two women complainants and suggested that the party should be "sorry for the suffering caused to them by the structural flaws in our disputes procedures". The no-blame statement refuted any suggestion that "the party and its leadership are sexist... or covered up injustice". Asinine and vacuous, the 'apology' was sufficient to placate most waverers in the hall (although, in the polarised and poisonous atmosphere, there were few floating voters).

The outcome of conference was unambiguous: the oppositionists lost all the key votes and their slate of alternative candidates for the central committee were trounced in the ballot. Within hours of the rout a fresh round of resignations began, with notable figures including left-historian Dave Renton and party grandee (and biographer of SWP founder Tony Cliff) Ian Birchall both tearing up their party cards. These and other high



profile departures, though not unexpected, tempered any public displays of jubilation from the central committee. Under the watchful eyes of party enforcers, opposition faction 'Rebuilding the Party' dissolved itself, its membership dividing between those now accepting party discipline and those quitting. Although a minority of isolated rebels still inside the SWP pledged to battle on, they are few in number and now face a leadership with zero interest in conciliation. This latest rebellion is effectively over.

Few of the breakaway groupings to emerge during the party crisis have found the going easy. They share the aim of concocting a 'purer, better' SWP, none of them seriously questioning their Trotskyist heritage. The International Socialist Network (ISN), the largest of the splinter groups, share in the rejection of their old party's culture – but agree about little else. As the new grouping began to discuss its future, disaffection and disagreement grew and the first resignations and departures quickly followed. For its part, the SWP leadership has pledged to its battered, depleted membership that 2014 will be a year of recovery and renewed opportunity. Its remaining shell-shocked, beleaguered members are eager to believe their bosses.

The SWP has survived the most threatening crisis in its history but has emerged damaged, deflated and disorientated. It will try to quickly replace its lost cadre by drawing in a new intake of impressionable young activists, who will be told little if anything about the party's recent near-death experience.

OBITUARIES

Fallen comrades...

Unfortunately we've lost a number of activists over the past couple of months... We bring you tributes to Tom Dunnill, Celia Otter and Colin Wilson.

Tom Dunnill

Tom Dunnill died tragically after a short and very nasty struggle with cancer. It was the last of many struggles Tom engaged with as a conscious and active anarchist and community activist. The majority of Tom's struggles were located in and around west London after he moved there in the mid-70s. But he cut his political teeth several years before that.

Tom came from an unorthodox bohemian family. In his mid-teens his parents upped sticks and left the UK, leaving Tom lodging with a supportive family in north London. Thereafter he made his own way, and his first cultural identity was as a teenage peacenik hippy in the late 60s. He ended up, pretty much accidentally, at Southampton Uni, where he discovered drugs, alcohol, open relationships, protests, and anarchist politics. Academia didn't agree with him - he changed courses twice and then dropped out. But in that short time he opened squats, helped open the Student Union to local youth, supported the Angry Brigade, and eventually joined the ORA, which soon became the AWA. With no trust fund to fall back on, Tom was one of those rare birds who got a job, working on the tube as a guard. His proletarian credentials did not stop him from being expelled, with many others, from the AWA, a story he would later proudly relate.

Homeless, he followed the squatters trail to North Kensington, sharing squats and partners in Latimer Road and Powis Square (including with the founder of Rough Trade), just down the road from 'Frestonia'. He immersed himself in the multiracial and chaotic alternative cultures, alongside the organised anarchist movement. In 1976 he was a founder of the W11 Housing Co-op and lived in a house notorious for being painted red and black.

Tom was never a sectarian (although he maintained a distrust of Trots) and was happy to talk, argue with, socialise and struggle alongside all those who treated him as he treated others. North Kensington was then a million miles from the yuppie Notting Hill we know today, with a large poor black and white working class living in often appalling sub-standard housing. It was full of creative, talented, politically motivated,

intelligent, and often angry individuals of which Tom was one of many.

His key activities included: the formation of housing co-ops in squatted properties; the removal of fences and opening up of private gardens in local squares; activity with the local Grunwick strike support group; becoming a playworker in Powis Square; solidarity with the 'Persons Unknown' defendants; marrying as an act of solidarity a West German woman on the run, and later one of the world's quickest divorces and a remarriage when his pregnant partner faced deportation.

The birth of the first of his three children in the early 1980s was followed by a difficult time personally and his political activities became devoted to issues related to being a parent: childcare, schools, education. This was the beginning of his 30 year involvement with the Woodcraft Folk. His children attended Holland Park comprehensive known for its libertarian approach. Tom became a governor and struggled, unsuccessfully, against the authoritarian transformation of the school.

In the mid-90s Tom re-engaged with the organised anarchist movement becoming a founder member of West London Anarchist & Radicals (WAR), who engaged with others on a London-wide, national and international level. There were meetings and conferences, campaigns and propaganda, street parties and gatherings, and of course protests of all kinds. He also acted as a legal observer for LDMG. He went with an affinity group to Prague to join the anarchist black bloc on the 'Blue Route' as protesters tried to storm a World Bank meeting.

When WAR disbanded in 2003 Tom's formal involvement with anarchist groups ended, but he maintained contact with many individuals and social networks and continued to attend protests. His work with the Woodcraft Folk continued up until his death. He was writing a semi-fictional account of his life, a work that didn't quite get finished.

Tom's funeral took place at West London Crematorium attended by a couple of hundred mourners and anarchist flags led his coffin into the hall. Fine words were spoken about Tom's principles & commitment to anarchist ideas and action. The after-party that followed more than did him proud!

Tom was a gentle smiling giant, a dedicated family man, a friend and support to many. He was a housing advocate and a fighter for justice and true equality, against poverty, exploitation and state brutality. He was one of the genuine good guys. It's been a privilege and pleasure to be your mate. We'll see you at the bar...

Some former West London anarchists and radicals

Tom Dunnill: born 20th November 1952, died 4th December 2013

Celia Otter

Celia Otter (*pictured below*), libertarian, peace activist and long-term supporter of the Northern Anarchist Network (NAN), died on New Year's Day after a long period fighting off the consequences of a brain tumour that developed some years ago. She



had been linked to the anarchist and peace movement since the 1960s, when she was active in the campaign against nuclear weapons at Holy Lock and later in the Committee of 100. She lived for many years in Wellington, Shropshire, where her father died several years ago. Her home, a former farm house, to me resembled something which the National Trust might welcome as a treasure, and with its small orchard of fruit trees husbanded by Celia it was always a pleasure for me to spend some time stopping overnight with the Otter family.

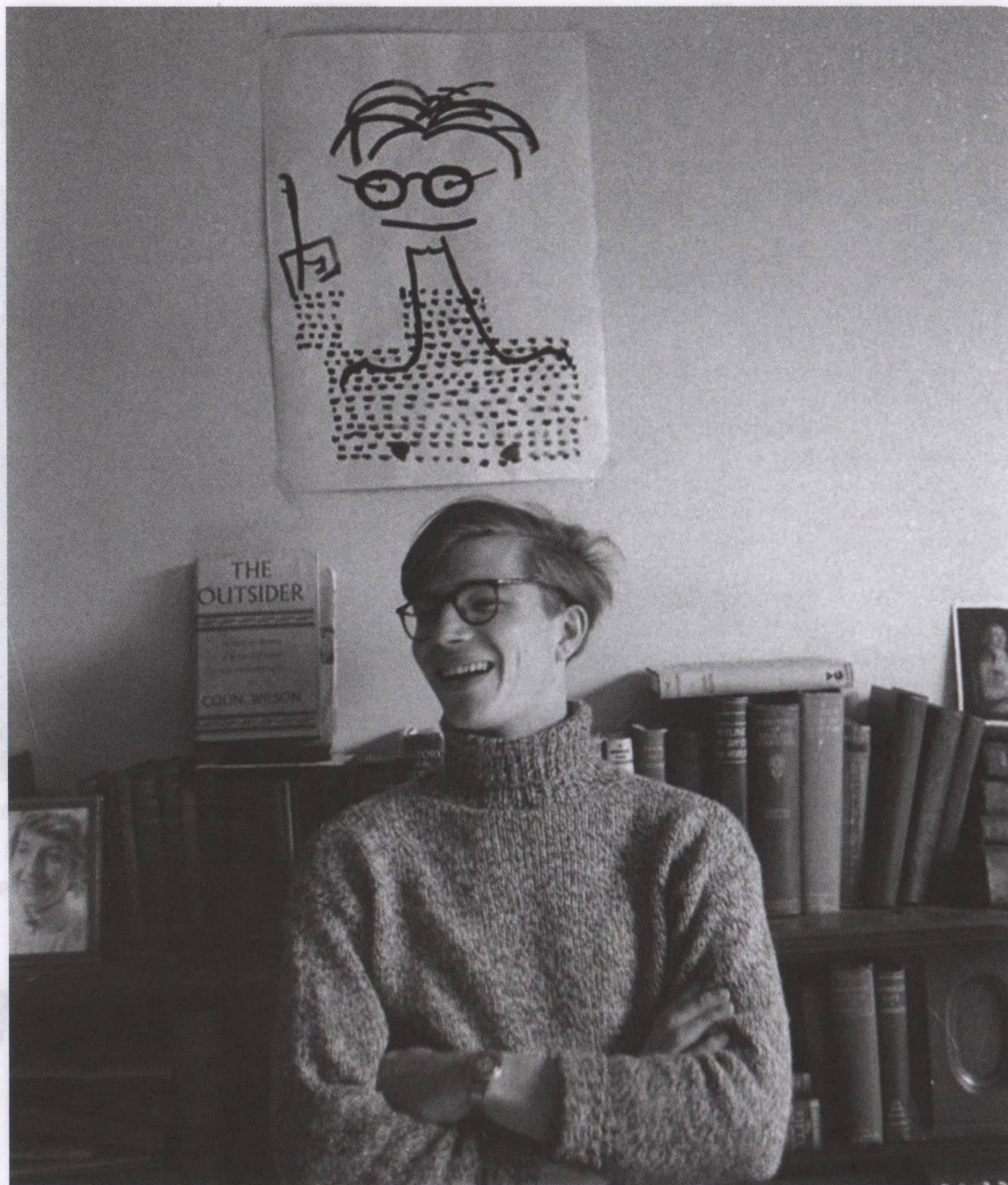
Celia came out of that confident tradition of left-wing activists of the 1960s, who were not afraid to identify themselves as activists in the libertarian political sphere. It was in *Freedom* (the then weekly anarchist newspaper) that Colin Ward wrote: "For anarchists the problem of the 1960s is simply that of how to put anarchism back into the intellectual bloodstream, into the field of ideas which are taken seriously."

In the 1960s David Goodway reports (see his *Anarchist Seeds Beneath the Snow*) sales of *Freedom* varied between 2,000 and 3,000. Today's UK subscription total for *Freedom* has recently been given as 300 (with a total print run of 1,100), which shows how political anarchism has declined in its influence in this country.

Thus Celia Otter's political origins dated from a time in the 1960s when anarchism, according to intellectuals like Colin Ward, appeared to be entering the life-blood of the social/political consciousness both on a political and intellectual level, and this was because anarchism and anarchists felt themselves to be part of a social movement: the peace movement. Celia had been arrested at Holy Lock during actions there and was also arrested during the protests and sit-downs of the Committee of 100. By the 1970s though this peace movement had lost almost all of its impetus, and the English anarchists and libertarians adapted badly to the rise of industrial conflict of the decade leading up to the defeat of the miners in their strike of 1984/5. At the same time the open honest civil disobedience of the peace activists and the peace movement, was being subverted by some anarchists, and a culture of anarchism that owed more to Machiavelli than Marx with groups, and individuals steeped in the school of political intrigue: thus we got the politics of the Angry Brigade, and culturally the punks replaced the hippies.

At the time that this was happening, Celia herself was working as head teacher at a school for maladjusted children. But she did not just confine herself to house-keeping and her career. In later years she attended the Northern Anarchist Network meetings in Wellington, besides providing food and accommodation for those in attendance. It is also reported that Celia took part in the founding of the animal liberation movement in this country.

Celia Otter was one of those English libertarians who were proud of their politics, straightforward in their demeanour, and valiant in their conduct. She is survived



by her husband Laurens, one of the best known and most loved figures of English anarchism, and her daughter Fiona.

Brian Bamford

Celia Otter: born 14th October 1935, died 1st January 2014

Colin Wilson

Colin Wilson (pictured above in 1956), the prolific author of 181 books including best sellers *The Outsider*, 1956, and *The Occult*, 1971, died in December 2013, aged 82. His association with the anarchist movement in London was short, but worth remembering.

Having been conscripted into the RAF and being granted an early discharge by pretending to be homosexual, in 1954 he was sleeping on Hampstead Heath and spending his days reading and writing in the British Museum Library (now the British Library).

John Rety, at that time the editor and publisher of *Soho News*, was among those who published short pieces by Colin. Rety was an anarchist, and it was probably under his influence that Wilson joined the London Anarchist Group, to whom he made a forgettable lecture, 'How to make a bomb'. Rety remained an anarchist until his death

in 2010 and was a member of the *Freedom* collective. Wilson hung around for a few months.

Meeting other anarchists at Hyde Park Speakers Corner in early 1956, he announced "I'm on the way to meet my publisher". "Course you are, Colin" – he had acquired a reputation as a bit of a fantasist. His book *The Outsider*, published by Gollancz, sold out on the day of publication, and went to seven editions before the end of the year. Then the famous literary pundit, F.R. Leavis, wrote about it in the *Times Literary Supplement*. Leavis checked the works cited against Wilson's quotations, and reported an average of six misquotations, including one which altered the meaning of the original, on every page. Wilson replied that accuracy was not all that important, he had written the book "in a white heat of passion". He had certainly written it very quickly.

Sourpusses at LAG meetings said that his success was all down to 'publicists' employed by Gollancz, but publicists cannot make fame out of nothing. If Colin Wilson was not a great scholar, he was at least a magnificent con artist.

Donald Room

Colin Wilson: born 26th June 1931, died 5th December 2013

INTERNATIONAL

NEWS IN BRIEF

CHINA: A three week strike involving 5,000 workers at an electronics company in Shenzhen, China, has ended after the bosses agreed to a 20% hike in pay. The strike started on the 31st October after the factory owners, ASM materials, announced – without consultation with the unions – that it would be relocating elements of its production outside of Shenzhen. Thousands of workers walked off the job, demanding a wage rise of 3,000 Yuan a month, and a compensation package for re-location.

Although falling short of their initial demands, the workers are said to be pleased that they have won a 20% pay increase and an accommodation allowance for those who are prepared to relocate.

PAPUA NEW GUINEA: Private security guards employed by 'Barrick Gold', aided by local police, have killed at least five miners at the Porgera mine in Papua New Guinea. The shootings came after mine security confronted a group of 300 locals who they deemed to be 'illegal miners' and 'trespassers'.

Barrick Gold – the world's largest producer of gold – has a long history of using violence, gang rape and murder against their workers, and local people in Papua New Guinea. Barrick founder and owner, Peter Munk, claimed that 'gang rape' is just a 'cultural habit'.

RUSSIA: The last two incarcerated members of Pussy Riot, Maria Alekhina and Nadezhda Tolonnikova, have been released from prison as part of an amnesty granted to around 22,000 prisoners. Whilst their release is obviously good news for everyone concerned, it is more of a public relations stunt by Vladimir 'Bonaparte' Putin, ahead of the Winter Olympics, than it is clemency, or a relaxing of Putin's regime.

SWEDEN: Around 30 neo-nazis from the Swedish Resistance Movement attempted to disrupt an anti-fascist rally of an estimated 500 people in Stockholm. Local reports claim that several dozen fascists arrived carrying home-made shields, knives and bottles. Violent clashes between the two sides quickly escalated into pitched battles in a nearby forest, before local police were able to regain control of the situation.

VIETNAM: Several thousand construction workers constructing a Samsung's factory in Vietnam have clashed with security guards, resulting in at least 13 people injured, with four said to be in critical condition in hospital.

Workers went on the rampage, burning the security offices, cars, and motorbikes, following the brutal assault of a worker by security staff, which included the use of a cattle prod type device. The worker had attempted to gain entry to his work area, but had forgotten his ID pass.

LENS CAP GREECE



Violence erupted across Athens and Thessaloniki after thousands of people marched in remembrance of 15 year old Alexis Grigoropoulos who was killed by police five years ago, leading to the 2008 riots. Many were arrested by undercover and plain-clothed police.

Korean railway workers strike

Unionised Korean railway workers went on strike from 9th December until New Year's Day, amid fears that the privatisation of a new bullet train extension between Seoul and Pusan is the first step in the eventual privatisation of the entire Korean railway system.

The railway workers are concerned that privatisation will lead to mass lay-offs and resorted to striking because the government failed to engage in any dialogue with the unions that represent them. The strike ended when the government promised better consultation with these unions.

Perhaps even more alarming than the threat of privatisation was the way in which the Korean government dealt with the strike. During the strike almost five thousand riot police and a thousand SWAT enforcers violently invaded the headquarters of the

Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU) – actions indicative of the government's obsessive hunt for union leaders.

Mass protests continue due to the government refusing to withdraw arrest warrants and charges against union officials, or cease a \$7.5 billion lawsuit against the unions for striking.

At the time of writing, 13 union leaders had recently handed themselves into the police following a five-hour standoff outside union offices between union members and some 300 police officers. More than a thousand union members also face touch disciplinary action for striking.

In spite of the oppressive actions taken by the Korean government the workers and unions have vowed to continue opposing any privatisation in Korea.

Mohamed Badawi-Macintosh

Notes from the US

Racism

In a study released in mid-November by the ACLU (the US equivalent of the Freedom organisation in the UK) it was found that of the more than 3,200 people nationwide serving life sentences without parole for nonviolent offences, 80% are there for drug-related convictions. While only 18% are white and 16% Latino, 85% are black. The crimes which attracted life sentences include

stealing petrol from a lorry, shoplifting, possessing a crack pipe, facilitating a US\$10 (£6.20) sale of marijuana, and attempting to cash a stolen cheque.

Resistance

In early November in Los Angeles, over 50 people were arrested outside a new WalMart store during ongoing acts of civil disobedience.

Hamburg: Rote Flora eviction

Over 8,000 protesters have clashed with riot police as they protested against the planned eviction of squatters from a popular social centre, and against the eviction of hundreds of people from their homes. The largely peaceful protest erupted following a baton charge, and use of teargas, and water cannons by the police. The protesters responded by building barricades, throwing stones, fireworks, and bottles. It is reported that over 500 people has been injured, and around 150 arrests made.

The Rote Flora (pictured below) is an old theatre building which has been used as a social centre since 1989. The initial sale of the building to developers took place in 2001, and has sparked widespread outrage and protest. There are also wider issues relating to an old apartment building nearby, the 'Esso houses' that had been the home to around 300 people, until they had been evicted last week. The Esso houses are described by a resident: "ESSO Houses is the name of an apartment complex, inhabiting flats, a gas station, two music clubs and some other small businesses. It was evicted a



week ago, after the walls shook and frightened inhabitants called the police. The Esso Houses were bought by a big investor a couple of years ago and inhabitants and supporters claim the investor lets the houses rot to eventually build new and more expensive houses at the same place."

Another of the squatters reported: "There was a mood of aggression from the outset," adding that "we came under serious attack. It has become more violent than anything we have experienced in a long time. Through the overwhelming use of batons, pepper spray and water cannon, there were numerous injuries."

Running battles were fought throughout the night across Hamburg. Several shop fronts were smashed and many cars set on fire. The police claim that 82 officers

required treatment for injuries.

A police spokesperson claimed: "The protesters suddenly started marching, and this was not what we agreed on with them, so we had to stop the march. Then bottles, stones and fireworks were thrown at us, injuring several officers. We had no option but to deploy water cannons."

Prior to the start of the demonstration the police had declared the city as a 'Danger Zone' which enables them utilise extended rights to stop and search, and to use preventative detention orders.

Hamburg has been the scene of other large scale disturbances in the recent past. Police clashed with marchers on May Day, earlier this year, and 700 anti-fascists fought with police and boneheads, late last year.

Luther Blissett

Notes from the US

◀ page 8

The workers are protesting 'poverty wages', and asking for minimum pay of US\$25,000 (£15,710) a year.

Then over one of the busiest shopping weekends of the year – after Thanksgiving – well over 100 people were arrested in a series of protests and acts of civil disobedience targeting WalMart and other big retailers. Actions took place at 1,500 WalMart locations across the United States, almost four times as many as for the same enterprise last year.

This was quickly followed by several days of mass protest across the country when in the first week of December workers at fast 'food' delivery sites walked off the job in about a hundred cities. The strikes and protests continued a campaign that began in 2012 to call for a living wage of US\$15

(£9.20) an hour with the right to form a union without retaliation.

At the same time, a study published by the Institute for Policy Studies explains how the CEOs of those same companies take hundreds of millions of dollars in taxpayer subsidised benefits thanks to a tax loophole that allows them and their companies to deduct unlimited amounts from their income taxes for the cost of stock options and grants as 'performance bonuses'.

Surveillance

Revelations on the extent of spying by the US elite continue. According to the *New York Times*, the CIA pays AT&T more than US \$10 million (£628,4170) each year for access to the telecoms giant's phone records

database. Apparently, the company co-operates voluntarily with the CIA – it makes available massive numbers of records of its own customers' and others' data which it handles.

In December fresh leaks from Edward Snowden reveal that the National Security Agency tracks the locations of cellphones worldwide on a scale much larger than previously imagined. The Agency is apparently gathering around five billion call records a day to log the whereabouts of cellphone users across the globe. This scheme allows the NSA to track individuals' movements and personal relationships. A database is believed to exist which monitors hundreds of millions of devices.

Louis Further

ECONOMICS

Sheriffs of the people?



Gyorgy Furiosa on why those who evict the poor from their homes are class traitors

As the government continues to slash benefits to those most in need and rent continues to rise more than earnings, 2014 will bring a wave of evictions across the UK and the whole of Europe, leading to thousands of vulnerable adults and children being forced into overcrowded hostels, temporary accommodation, friends' sofas, and on to the streets. Eighteen thousand people are evicted from social housing alone each year – the equivalent of the entire population of Stamford.

Gleefully leaping upon the excuse created by the government's policy of providing housing benefit at less than the actual rent of a property, Britain's biggest property gangster Fergus Wilson has declared that he will be evicting 200 families in one sweep – a fifth of his total number of tenants, all of whom are on housing benefit. He said: "Rents have gone north, and benefit levels south. The gap is such that I have taken the decision to withdraw from taking tenants on housing benefit. From what I can gather just about all other landlords have done the same. Our situation is that not one of our working tenants is in arrears – all those in arrears are on housing benefit."

The government's solution? They are organising to criminalise squatting in commercial properties, completing Mike Weatherby's war on squatters and capitalising on his success at criminalising residential squatting in 2011. The 2011 law can be seen as preparation for an economic future where tenants refusing the bailiffs and occupying their homes in defiance on the law becomes commonplace. They also plan to criminalise rough sleepers and reduce people to exchanging stamps for groceries from food-banks. Meanwhile, the lauded solution to the crisis – namely the help-to-buy scheme,

by which first-time buyers are given money to support their mortgage application – is forcing property prices in London up by £100 per day.

Housing is a human right. Tenants and homeowners need to defend themselves against unscrupulous landlords and a banking system that is hopelessly corrupt and biased. Where is the bailout for the poor? Banks that went bust were bought out by the government to keep them afloat. Those who default on mortgages or fall into rent arrears are left to sink.

Historically, this is a continuation of a feudal system of dominance and control, whereby the biggest, hardest bastards around would group together and make up some reason why they had an inherent right to rule over others, and thusly would use violence, repression, and the laws they write for themselves to murder, exploit and oppress anyone who was weaker or less organised than they were. In the past, we called them kings, lords, knights. Now, we call them politicians, police and bailiffs.

The bailiff in particular must be viewed as the lowest form of class traitor and collaborator. Bailiffs are available online for as cheap as £70 per eviction. They may title themselves 'sheriffs of the people', but the only sheriff they resemble is the Sheriff of Nottingham. Next year the BBC is launching its new docu-soap *The Sheriffs Are Coming*, another propaganda ploy in the meme of cops, that will work tirelessly to portray them as some kind of working class heroes, when in reality, bailiffs are the people who evict the vulnerable, elderly and impoverished out of their homes and into the streets on a daily basis. We have met bailiffs whose callous attitude to their work, always justified meekly as 'just doing their job', would squeeze a

tear from a stone. It makes you wonder how they manage to compartmentalise the damage and pain they cause on a daily basis as part of their work. At least the police and politicians are able to hide behind the illusion of the public good, but even the most deluded bailiff must realise that he is the lowest form of lackey, a hired goon of the capitalist system. Yet the number of applications for a bailiff's licence continues to rise. It's arguably the appeal of joining the bigger firm, in the manner that those who are oppressed will learn to oppress others, in order to claw back some semblance of power and control. If you can't beat them, join them. Bailiffs are notorious for aggressiveness and overstatement of their powers. They are unscrupulous and untrustworthy as required by their profession, and it is important for people to resist their actions and make them pay for every penny they extort from people. Remember – you don't have to open your door to a bailiff. There is a grim sense of justice to be taken in last year's shooting of a bailiff and a housing officer during an attempted eviction in Brixton, London.

The use of violence is of course an extreme response, but one that will undoubtedly become more common as people being evicted from their homes realise that no alternative is being offered them beyond destitution and despair. People need to realise that they are not alone. Through community-lead direct action we can resist evictions and keep people in their homes. This will force landlords, banks, bailiffs and politicians to seriously address the housing crisis and begin to consider alternative solutions. One thing is certain – putting people on the street will only deepen this crisis and lead to a spiral of social degeneration, criminalisation and poverty.



Locked up or left out

From workhouses to 'care in the community'

In 1838 increasing numbers of those too poor to feed themselves led to workhouses being built. Designed to deter those who were considered 'habitually slothful',¹ guiding principals of those institutions are still used. Work House regimes "were so close to that of prison" any kind of 'legitimate employment' was preferable.² The underclass and those in want are still blamed for their condition. However low the wages or bad the working conditions such job offers must be accepted or more painful alternatives will follow. Power-usage hides the fact that welfare payments are a subsidy the State pays indirectly to shop keepers and landlords.

Working class struggles and some generosity of other classes led in time to workhouses being abolished. Many of them were turned into hospitals under the NHS. As a local authority social worker in the 1970s I met various old people who were terrified of leaving their homes for the alternative of safe, reasonable residential care or hospital. They were afraid of being taken to the workhouse: even though such places had vastly changed, the original stigma remained.

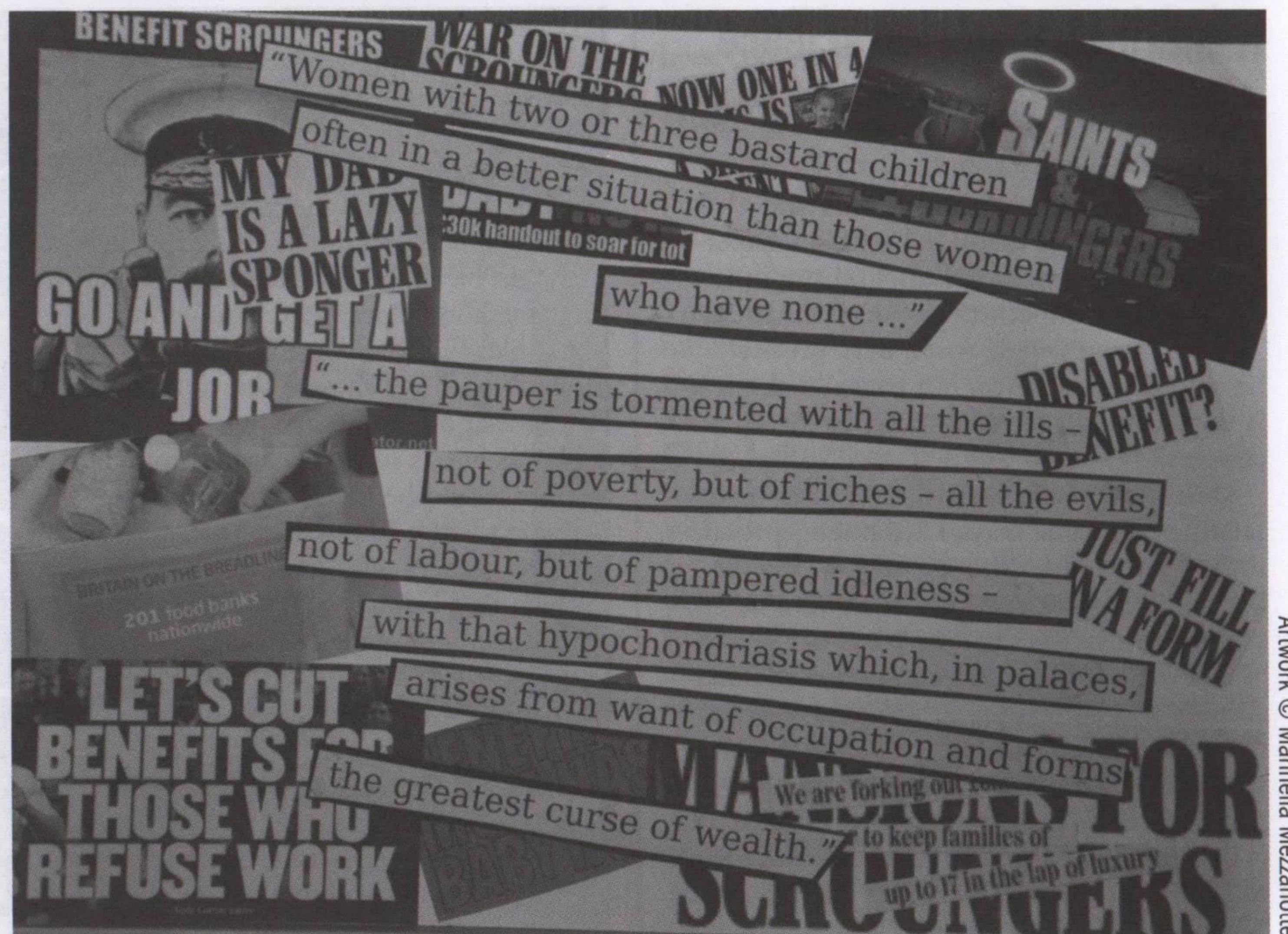
In the early 1980s the idea of "care in the community" flourished. Close down the long-stay asylums/hospitals some of which had been the old Victorian workhouses. It was argued that they were very expensive to maintain and staff. Their residents, people with long-term mental health problems or learning disabilities, were to be housed in the communities that they had been taken from. In some places care in the community worked well. Sufficiently funded long term plans

For families across the UK [...] whose lives are blighted by worklessness, educational failure, family breakdown, problem debt and poor health, as well as other problems, giving them an extra pound - say through increased benefits - will not address the reason they find themselves in difficulty in the first place.

Ian Duncan Smith

GIVE LONDON'S YOUNG A CHANCE TO WORK

"... to give such relief [...] is the duty of private charity, and should not be provided for by a compulsory rate."



Artwork © Marinella Mezzanotte

were successful, resulting in some former inmates having more independence than they had ever enjoyed before. In other places it was a total disaster. Many communities had greatly changed while such former inmates were 'away' or they were unable to settle in the available accommodation or funding and support broke down. In turn, this contributed significantly to rises in the prison and homeless populations. A 'one-size-fits-all' policy as authoritarian as anything Victorian in its outcome had inflicted misery. It is as if rough-sleeping or prison cells were the only arrangements for this section of the underclass and the unwanted.

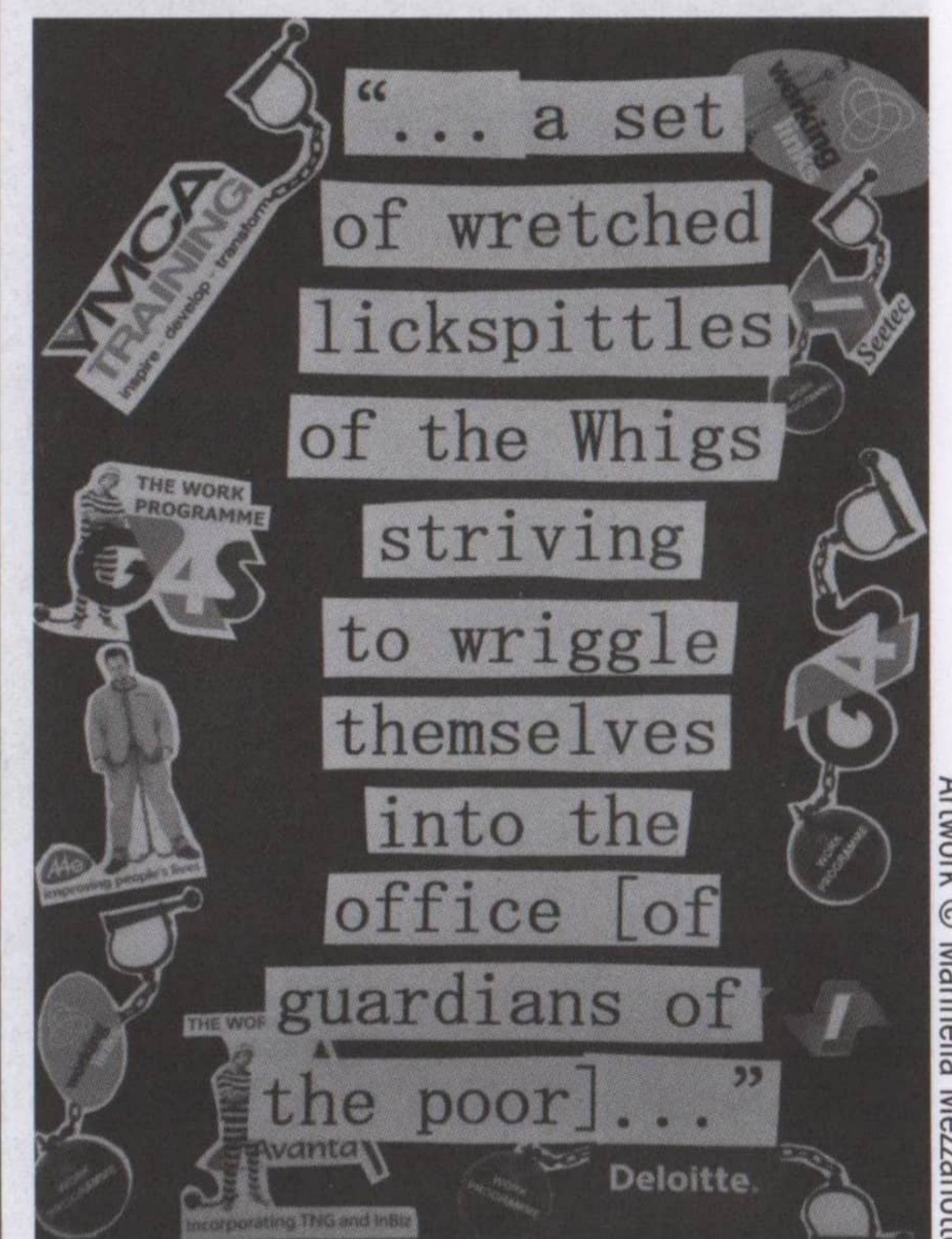
But some of the thinking behind care in the community was idealistic, trying to bring normality to lives that had been institutionalised.³ This was countered by capitalistic thinking needed by the State. Top level managers were offered bonuses to get these old institutions closed down on time. Property developers made fortunes out of the extensive grounds attached to the former long-stay hospitals. I know of a psychiatrist who selectively 'creamed off' a number of his more easy to handle patients, putting them in his own sea-side B'n'B and charging the NHS a great deal for their care.

Today the underclass is bigger than for some time. Unemployment, cuts to safety-net benefits and wages have ended hopes for a decent life for them or mobility out of that strata. Difficulties surrounding the collection of data on suicides are unlikely to hide that such deaths are increasing. But the State is still having to pay for the existence of the underclass and those close to them. If housed in large buildings they could be more carefully controlled. Those who have nothing

to lose are a threat to our masters, who fear civil unrest with the riots of 2011 still fresh memories. It is cheaper for the State now to keep 'them' in their own homes, like the worst victims of 'community care', rather than build a new generation of workhouses. But the thinking remains unchanged: the poor must be blamed for their condition.

martin s. gilbert

1. Simon Schama, *A History of Britain - Vol. 3: The Fate of Empire 1776-2000*, BBC Books, 2003.
2. *ibid.*
3. Wolf Wolfensberger, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wolf_Wolfensberger.



Artwork © Marinella Mezzanotte

FEATURE

TESTING TIMES

Richard Challinor on science, democracy and postmodernism

The march of science is relentless and wonderful. It has displaced religion, superstition, ancient wisdom, orientalism, indeed every other competitor on questions of fact. There is some wiggle room over precisely how to define science, but overall I think it is impossible to seriously dispute the above conclusion.

Unless of course we give up our critical faculties. In some ways I am not surprised, indeed not totally (though largely) disheartened, at the postmodernist view of science that exists in some parts of the left. While the left has many disagreements and strands and emphases, I think it is reasonable to say a common strand is distrust, indeed strong distrust, of any authority and any power. Science possesses both of these. So it is natural, and should be natural, to challenge this authority and test whether it is legitimate, whether there is any way to remove it, to spread it more evenly.

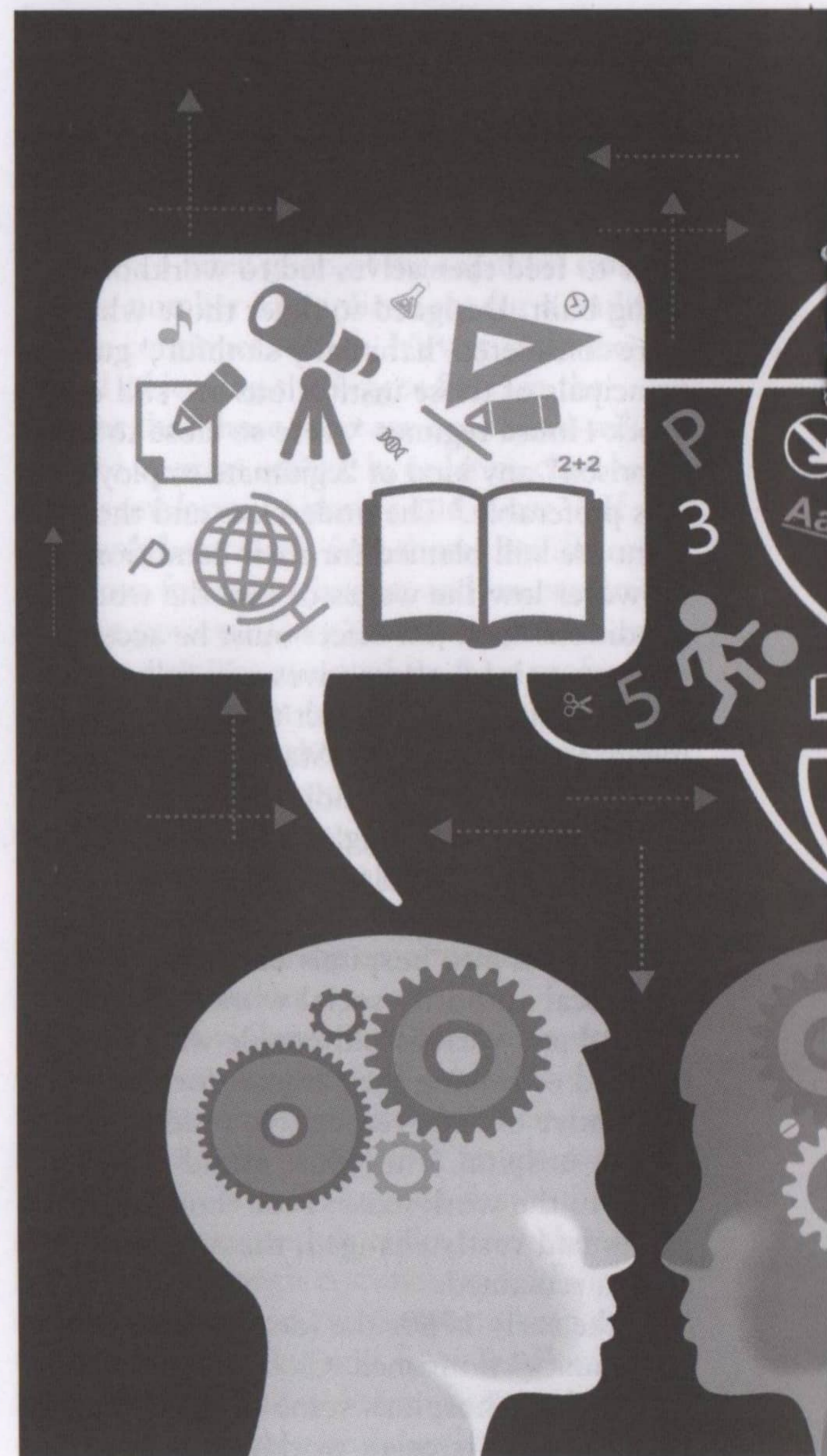
But of course an institution may pass the test, may be justified in holding power, and I think this is true of science. The reason for this is simple, often cited, and I think a cause of annoyance for academic postmodernists: science makes predictions, which turn out to be correct. As I mentioned in the beginning paragraph, we can see science as a method, or a body of knowledge arrived at by that method, or a historical entity, or a cultural entity, etc. The justification for the statement that science is deserving of authority is simple and powerful, because it can ignore all of these different facets except for method. If the scientific method is sound,

science is sound for all definitions of the word science.

Science makes predictions, and these predictions are proven true by observation. These predictions are novel, unusual, and often absurd, unlike the predictions of, say, astrology or clairvoyance or tasseomancy. They can be false, as Karl Popper emphasised. They methodologically exclude known human biases like confirmation bias, known statistical pitfalls like small sample size and lack of randomisation; if you ask 'what would I do if I were being as objective as possible', the answer would be the scientific method.

I won't labour these points too much, firstly because readers will no doubt be well versed in them and I don't wish to be patronising or tedious, and secondly because there are many excellent books that can explain the philosophy and methods of science more completely and expertly than I can. The field is massive and rich, but for those who find these points interesting and new, I particularly recommend *Understanding Philosophy of Science* by James Ladyman, *Bad Science* by Ben Goldacre, and *How to read a paper* by Trisha Greenhalgh. There are of course dissenting voices that are valuable for those who wish to research further, most notably *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* by Thomas Kuhn, and *Against Method* by Paul Feyerabend. The history of science in the latter two books is useful as a juxtaposition to modern science, and as a measure of how science really progresses, which is to say by messy slow progress with occasional jumps of genius.

My hope is that whenever we meet a person who holds leftist principles of distrust for authority, but who also favours organic food or detox or acupuncture or herbal remedies or holistic medicine or electrosensitivity, that we



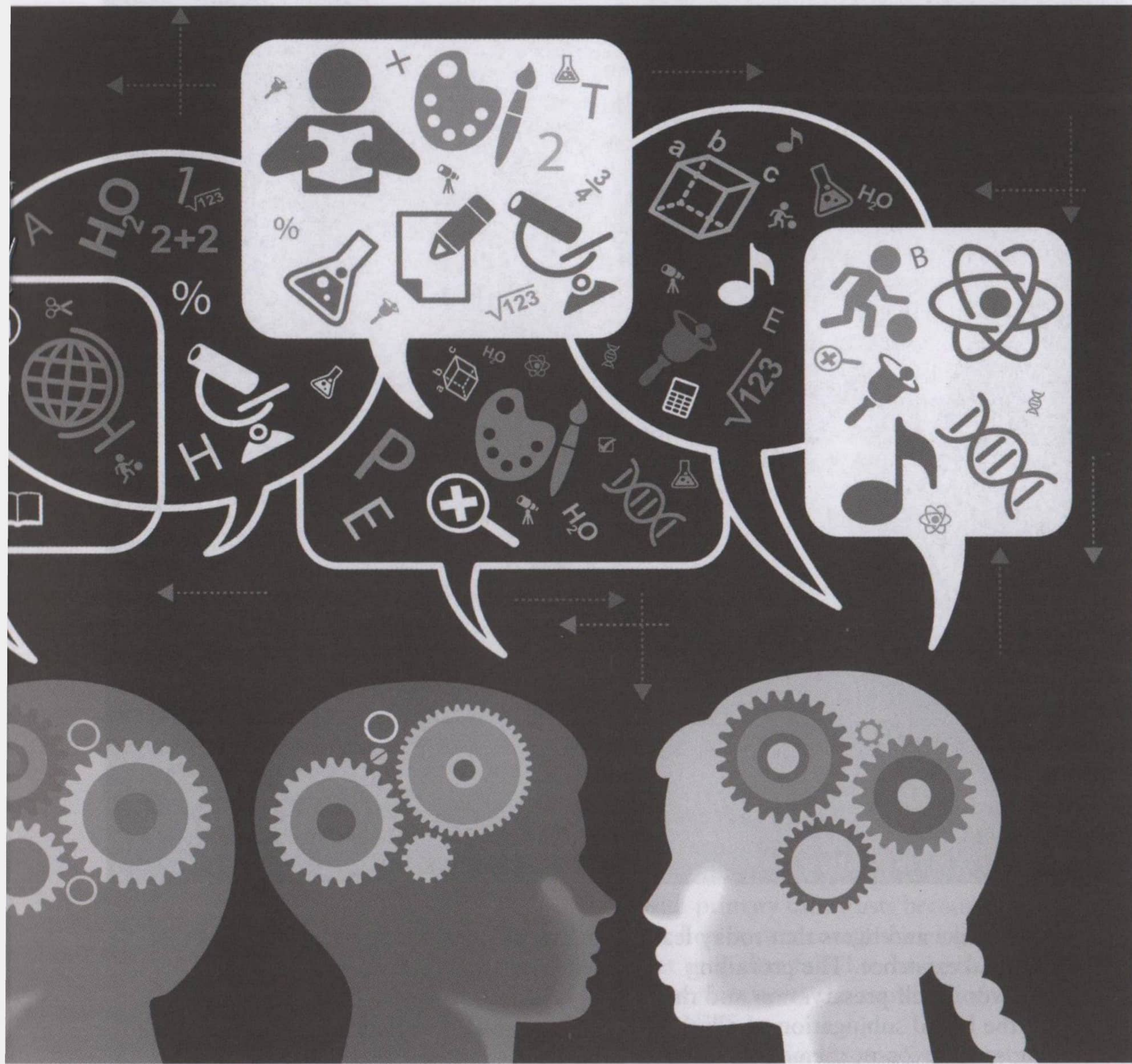
put those beliefs under pressure. The vast majority of those beliefs won't be able to stand up under that pressure. And it is important that they not stand, because those beliefs cause suffering in this world, for those who hold them, for their dependents, and for society at large when intellectually substandard policies are enacted.

If, say, you are involved in the struggle against Monsanto, question each and every factual claim separately and with scientific rigour. Even better, see what scientific organisations who give correct judgments on other things like aircraft wings and quantum physics and organ transplants say about it. Do what you would hope (but perhaps not expect) a right wing activist would do about climate change, or arctic oil drilling, or tobacco smoking.

Above I recommended looking at what eminent scientific bodies say about a topic, rather than primarily researching yourself. This might seem an unusual and even deplorable recommendation. Isn't research to be encouraged? Isn't engagement in science to be encouraged? Yes, I think so. But this leads on to my second area of concern, namely the burden that anarchism, and to a lesser extent so called 'social democracies', place on people. To have the ability to vote



On prison for intellectual disability



for something, be that by ballot or by committee or by spending, is meaningless if you don't also have the information on which to vote. Consider a more democratic world where a vote comes up on the following questions.

1. Should we prevent our children from taking recreational drugs, and if so which ones?
2. In 12 years we will cease to produce enough. What balance of power sources should we use to satisfy this demand, while also preventing runaway global warming?

You should vote, after all you owe it to yourself and your fellow citizens to make the world a better place. Could you vote? If you did, could you go to bed knowing your decision was well researched, well reasoned?

Another way to think of it is like this. A professional scientist will have gone through around ten full time years of education after their compulsory state education in order to be considered worthy of entry into the profession. From there they will work full time to read every paper available, understand every sentence and calculation, about a topic so narrow that another scientist probably wouldn't understand the title of their colleague's paper. Any topic more general than this would be too large for one person to know fully. Could you go to bed and sleep

soundly? The answer must be no. If one professional couldn't sufficiently research one of those questions, a non-professional certainly couldn't research both.

So this leaves us in a bit of a pickle. We want a more democratic society where power is as evenly distributed as possible, yet we can't each possess enough information to meaningfully exercise this democratic duty. The answer, I think, is to trust experts. This may not sound like much. But it's already too much for many on the left, and for the anarchist it is even more burdensome. It means ceding some of your power, albeit provisionally, optionally, tentatively, begrudgingly, to another person.

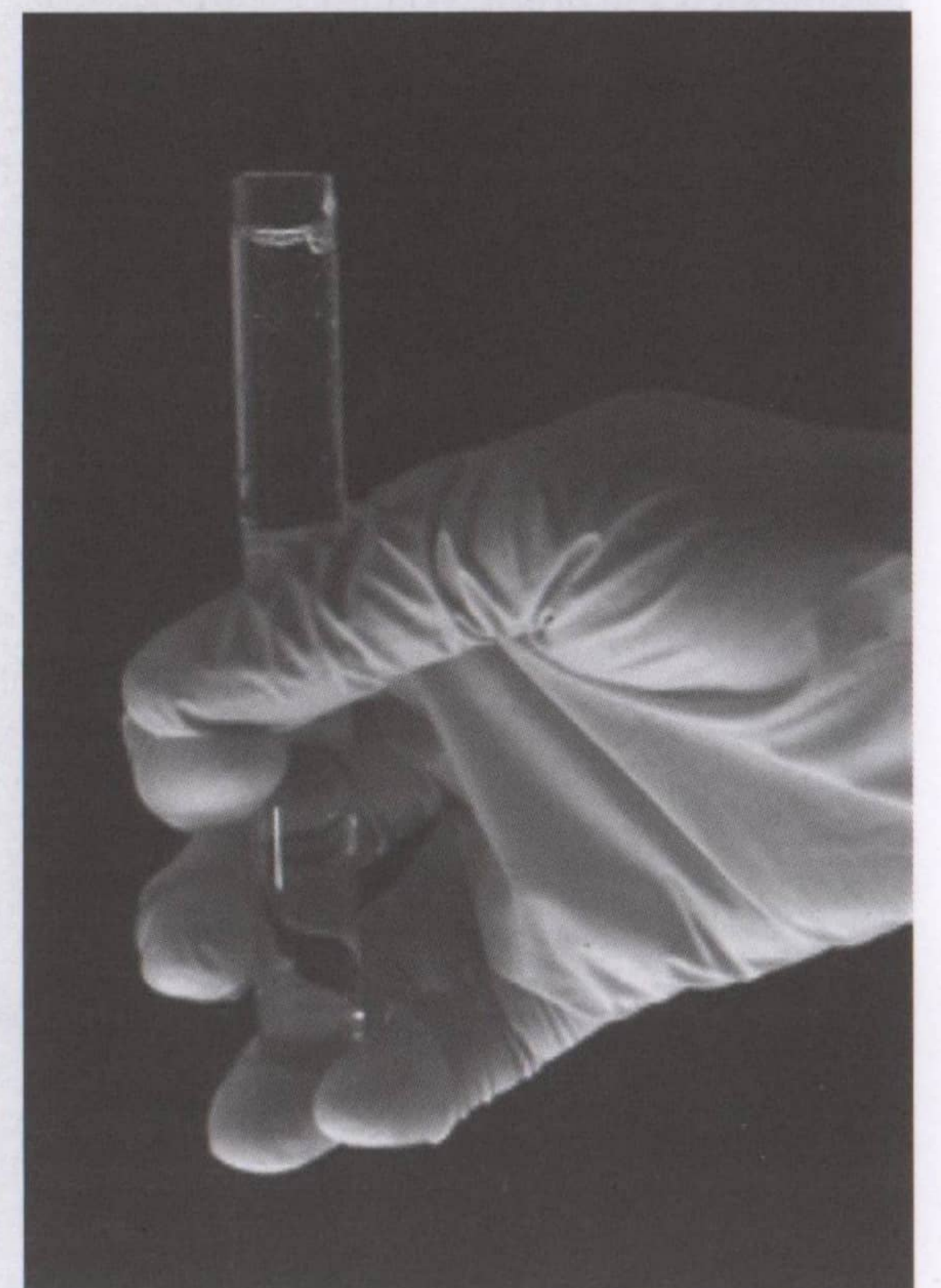
How are we to prevent the accumulation of power by the few, to prevent misinformation and bias from the few? How are we, at the same time, to maintain an interest both academically and politically in topics of importance? The answer, I think, is to make sure every person has a small set of scientific and logical tools so firmly and readily at the disposal that they can tell when a method is unscientific. The specialist uses the method to produce knowledge for everyone to use, and the majority occasionally test the methods of the specialist, but not the conclusions of the specialist, to check everything is working

correctly. When the specialist knowledge has been collected and condensed by the specialist it is then available to everyone for use in the democratic process.

This would avoid many of the unfortunate features of our modern political culture: people, often well meaning, weigh in on topics about which they know far too little. They may have tried to research the topic individually, or ceded collection to another body but not appropriately picked the body. They may make a statement, such as 'No Class A drugs' or 'No nuclear', about which they almost certainly could not have done sufficient research.

I should add that the discussion so far has been concerned with facts. Questions of value, which is to say ethics and aesthetics, are not amenable to the scientific method in most aspects, and I think should be democratically decided. Science will tell us the facts, e.g. 'we can avoid two degrees of global warming by either cutting consumption by 50%, or boosting nuclear +10% and wind +30%, or nuclear +0% and wind +100%, with costs of £5billion, £20billion and £40billion respectively', but it then remains for the people to weigh lower usage against higher cost. The figures I have used are arbitrary place examples.

I expect this article will be mildly annoying to two camps, and I must stress this is not my purpose. To those who favour alternative medicine, no nuclear, organic food and so on, I ask only that you really follow the evidence. This will probably support some of your beliefs, but it may undermine others, and those you should drop. To those who align with science but disagree in ceding judgment to specialist bodies, I urge you to think about the task you are setting yourselves, to be honest about whether it is surmountable, and if not to ask what is the next best option.



ANALYSIS

Animal instinct

Vegan Kevin Watkinson continues the debate on whether or not true anarchism involves following a plant-based diet

I would like to thank Brian Morris (*Freedom*, October 2013) for his recent thoughts in regard to meat consumption, written in response to my own article on the subject (*Freedom*, July 2013).

1. Whilst I agree that there is no fundamental centrist perspective in regard to nature, I would suggest that through observation it is apparent that the plant and the animal exhibit substantially different behaviours when confronted with a threatening situation. I do not necessarily know the feeling of either, but on the former grounds I would regard it preferable to consume the plant over the animal, though I would indeed emphasise the important place that plants hold within nature aside from being a potential source of food. Further to this, there is the argument involving an animal that consumes the plant and is then killed for human consumption, suggesting the act of killing twice.

2. The system that produces meat under capitalism is the same as the system that produces plant based foods. Capitalism has undoubtedly appropriated veganism as a source for profit, and we can identify how large traditionally dairy companies have purchased some of the standard vegan alternatives for their own financial gain, and not because they are wholly dedicated to pursuing dairy production. As the system has quested for profit, conditions for animals have declined rapidly in order to satisfy the apparent need for people to purchase ever 'cheaper' foods. There is also reason to reject the industrial production of plants, as the industry clearly neglects to take into consideration its broader environmental impact and the exploitation of people, just as the maximisation of flesh production has neglected the well being of animals and its considerable impact on the environment. When rejecting the industrial production of food, we also suggest a substantial reduction in the human population to one that can more easily be sustained by the environment. In terms of sheep farming, it is unnecessary to utilise all areas of space for food production, and the impact of sheep farming in some highland areas has been fairly well documented (Sheepwrecked by George Monbiot is quite interesting).

3. It is difficult to show respect for animals you are about to kill. Unless of course you believe in showing respect for the



great white sharks and tigers that today lead a very marginal existence. The prevailing culture believes in self preservation and that has meant the broad subjugation of all threatening species. Zoos, theme parks and aquaria are extreme examples of the contempt we continue to show for non human animals. There is no doubt that people who have domesticated animals have cared for them in their own way, but likely through the necessity for the animal to exist to be utilised. The 'delicacies' of the working class were not exclusive to the working class, so it is unlikely they considered themselves superior for the consumption of these animal products, and if they did, perhaps only to feel that way toward people even further marginalised. For people in the higher echelons of society, part of their privilege was attached to being able to purchase the superior cuts of flesh. The prohibitive cost of purchasing 'humane' organic meat also emphasises the difference between those who can afford to be 'kind' and those who cannot, a similar situation can be found with organic fruit and vegetable farming whereby people try and avoid some of the more harmful effects of intensive farming. Growing your own fruit and vegetables with what limited space you have is therefore a positive action where you have much greater control over your situation.

4. Almost anyone can eat plant based foods and eschew animal products where there is a choice to do so. However, as a

matter of consistency the only group that tend toward veganism are the animal liberation advocates. There are anarchists, communists, christians, muslims, nazis who have all adopted a plant based diet, not because of some dogmatic agenda, but most likely because of a direct experience with the issue of how food animals are treated. Vegetarianism (and possibly veganism) has also been regarded by certain groups as a form of 'purity', even though it has not often been exclusive to them, it has been used as an attempt to (incorrectly) proclaim their superiority over others. Anarchists are free to consider the impact of their actions, and when we can learn how to create different tasty and affordable vegan dishes, we are able to withdraw our support for a flesh industry that seems to do more harm to people, animals and the environment than is apparent in the plant based industry.

Advocating anarchism in my view means respecting the freedoms of all animals, and in contemporary society we can get closer to this through the practise of veganism.

For anyone wishing to explore this issue further, I would recommend *Making a Killing: The Political Economy of Animal Rights* by Bob Torres which is published by AK Press (sporadically available in the Freedom Press bookshop), and *Speciesism: The Movie*, just released on DVD, which is a film inquisitively looking at some of the conventional beliefs we have about other animal species and our use for them. This film is also available to rent on vimeo for \$3.99 or about £2.50.

NEWS IN BRIEF

● A relatively recent addition to the work of the Anarchist Black Cross network has been the North American ABC Medical Justice Committee, which has taken up the task of “providing urgent medical support to North American political prisoners and prisoners of war, who are systematically tortured by medical neglect”. The long sentences served across the board in US prisons and the brutal conditions of segregation and solitary confinement, plus lack of exercise and appalling diets, mean Type II diabetes and bowel problems and hepatitis C and HIV stemming from unsterilised tattooing equipment and shared needles, are all rife. Seriously ill prisoners are denied medical care. Not least because they or their families can ill afford to pay for it and many end up dying in prison or, as with Herman Wallace recently, die within days of their release on ‘compassionate grounds’. One of the recent cases highlighted by the campaign is Robert Seth Hayes, ex-Black Panther and Black Liberation Army member who has been serving 25 years to life since 1973. Diagnosed with Hepatitis C and adult onset Diabetes in 2000, despite his repeated requests Seth has not been receiving adequate health care from Clinton Correction Facility, where he is currently being held, and his condition has steadily deteriorated.

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

● We’ve mentioned in previous columns the effects the massive cutbacks are having on the lives of prisoners, with the pressures of being banged-up in their cells for longer due to cuts in prison staff and access to education and training, not to mention cuts to food and health and welfare budgets. Well, one of the clearest indications of those pressures has been the massive leap in the number of times that the prison system’s tactical riot squads or Tornado teams have been called out – 151 times in the first nine months of 2013, compared to 129 times for the whole of 2012. And remember, these are teams drawn from a number of prisons across a region and not just the screws on a wing that get suited and tooled up to deal with everyday things cell extractions and carting people of the segregation. Unfortunately, the prison service does not routinely release figures for the daily use of force, but no doubt these are rocketing too.

● In Zimbabwe, the health situation in prisons is much worse. With the country still suffering from massive inflation and unemployment rates, over 30% of the population are acutely malnourished and, every day, hunger causes two out of every 10,000 people to die. The Zimbabwe justice ministry and prison officials have recently revealed that at least 100 inmates in the country’s 55 prisons have died this year from malnutrition.

On prison medical care

The is more than a modicum of irony in the announcement that the government are currently seeking to introduce penalties, including possible imprisonment, for medical staff that are found guilty of ‘wilful neglect’. I say irony because for decades the worst medical care (sic) has been that available in British prisons. So much so that the panacea for all ills in prison, everything from the lowly toothache (and you try and get to see a prison dentist!) to a heart attack, is the humble paracetamol tablet. In fact, the only sector of medical provision that does appear to work is the daily handout of methadone scripts. Can’t have withdrawal-crazed addicts running rampage can we?

Prior to 2003, when the NHS began taking over the running of in-prison health provision, individual prison governors were responsible for the level and standard of health provision in their individual nicks. Their medical staff consisted largely of those doctors and nurses who essentially were unemployable elsewhere, including many past retirement age or who had been dismissed from jobs within the NHS. And the levels and standards of care through out HM Prison Service were a widely acknowledged scandal. Hence the Home Office’s decision in October 2002 that the Department of Health would take over funding of prison health services, with primary care trusts becoming responsible for health care commissioning and provision. Yet even that failed to bring in-house health provision up to the standard of the rest of the NHS.

Enter the Coalition government and their desire to cut government and, in particular, Ministry of Justice spending back to the bone. So, along with the wholesale privatisation of

prisons themselves, the government decided to outsource public sector prison health care provision across the board under the auspices of a new supervising body, NHS England. They will now be responsible for commissioning and provision and, despite the government tasking them with improving prison health provision, we can only surmise that the same appalling levels of neglect will now be provided out-of-house, and for even cheaper.

Prisoners are already amongst those with the lowest life expectancy within society – a 2010 report from the Prisons and Probation ombudsman found that the average age of male prisoners who had died from natural causes was 56 (versus 78 years for the wider population) and 47 for female prisoners (versus 81) – because of their sedentary lifestyle, poor food and health provision. Added to these are the Russian roulette of missed hospital appointments (because of a lack of staff to escort them or inadequate liaison with prison health staff); the perpetual inability to actually see a prison doctor; or when one actually sees one, getting fobbed off with the proverbial paracetamol or the equally common misdiagnosis.

Now, with these cutbacks in health provision (and pressure to reduce the costs, and therefore size and nutritional value, of prison meals) added to this lethal mix, it inevitably mean that even greater numbers of prisoners will end up dying prematurely, many pointlessly remaining chained to a hospital bed or prison screws in their last moments, or suffering unnecessarily debilitating consequences of the structural ‘wilful neglect’ of a system designed to save money rather than lives.

Bra



COMMENT

ABOUT FREEDOM

ANGEL ALLEY

A merry new year to all our readers and comrades. A year has now passed since the firebomb attack and we're pleased to announce that everything (well, almost everything) is back up and running again. Unfortunately this issue has come too late to invite people to the anniversary party on Saturday 1st February in the shop from 4pm, but this gives us the chance to remind everyone that you can keep up to date with all Freedom Press events on our website and, for trendier folk, our social internet web media Facebook (2,438 friends) and Twitter (a little under 2,900 followers)

We are pleased to welcome some new residents to the building. Haven Distribution, as many comrades will know, do a great job providing free educational books to prisoners, including several Freedom Press titles, and are taking up a room for office and storage space.

Also on the improvements front we now have PayPal (yes we can hear the boos and hisses) on the online shop after endless trouble with Google checkout. This means we can check and dispatch orders daily from the shop so if you still haven't got every copy of *The Raven*, hurry while stocks last

SUBSCRIPTIONS

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 through our website at www.freedompress.org.uk. Don't forget that donations are always extremely welcome, or you may like to take out one of our special supporter subscriptions. If you don't want to worry about forgetting to renew your subscription to *Freedom*, ask us to send you a standing order form by emailing subs@freedompress.org.uk.

CONTACT DETAILS

Freedom Press, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX
Tel/fax: 020 7247 9249
www.freedompress.org.uk
Enquiries: info@freedompress.org.uk
Copy/Letters: copy@freedompress.org.uk
Subscriptions: subs@freedompress.org.uk
Bookshop: shop@freedompress.org.uk
Freedom Press Distribution (for trade book orders): distro@freedompress.org.uk

NEXT ISSUE DEADLINE

The next issue will be dated February 2014 and the last day to get copy to us for that issue will be **Sunday 12th January**. 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

In November, I was lucky enough to see a lecture by David Attenborough on Alfred Russel Wallace and his work on birds of paradise. Technical glitches aside, it was a fascinating and lively survey of Wallace's background and studies in Indonesia, particularly in the light of how he failed to see the role of sexual selection in the evolution of the myriad forms of birds of paradise. Attenborough illuminated it with films of the birds' behaviour, some of them from his own programmes.

For those who don't know, Wallace arrived at the conclusion that natural selection was what drove evolution through his studies in the field, totally independently of Charles Darwin. He had corresponded with Darwin and sent his findings to him in an essay. By then, Darwin had been working on his ideas for more than a decade, building ever more meticulous evidence, but seemingly unable to publish anything. His friends Joseph Hooker and Charles Lyell persuaded him that to present a joint paper in both Wallace's and Darwin's name would be the way forward. This was done, to little fanfare. Wallace returned to England and was accepted into scientific society, but his name has received less recognition in the years since.

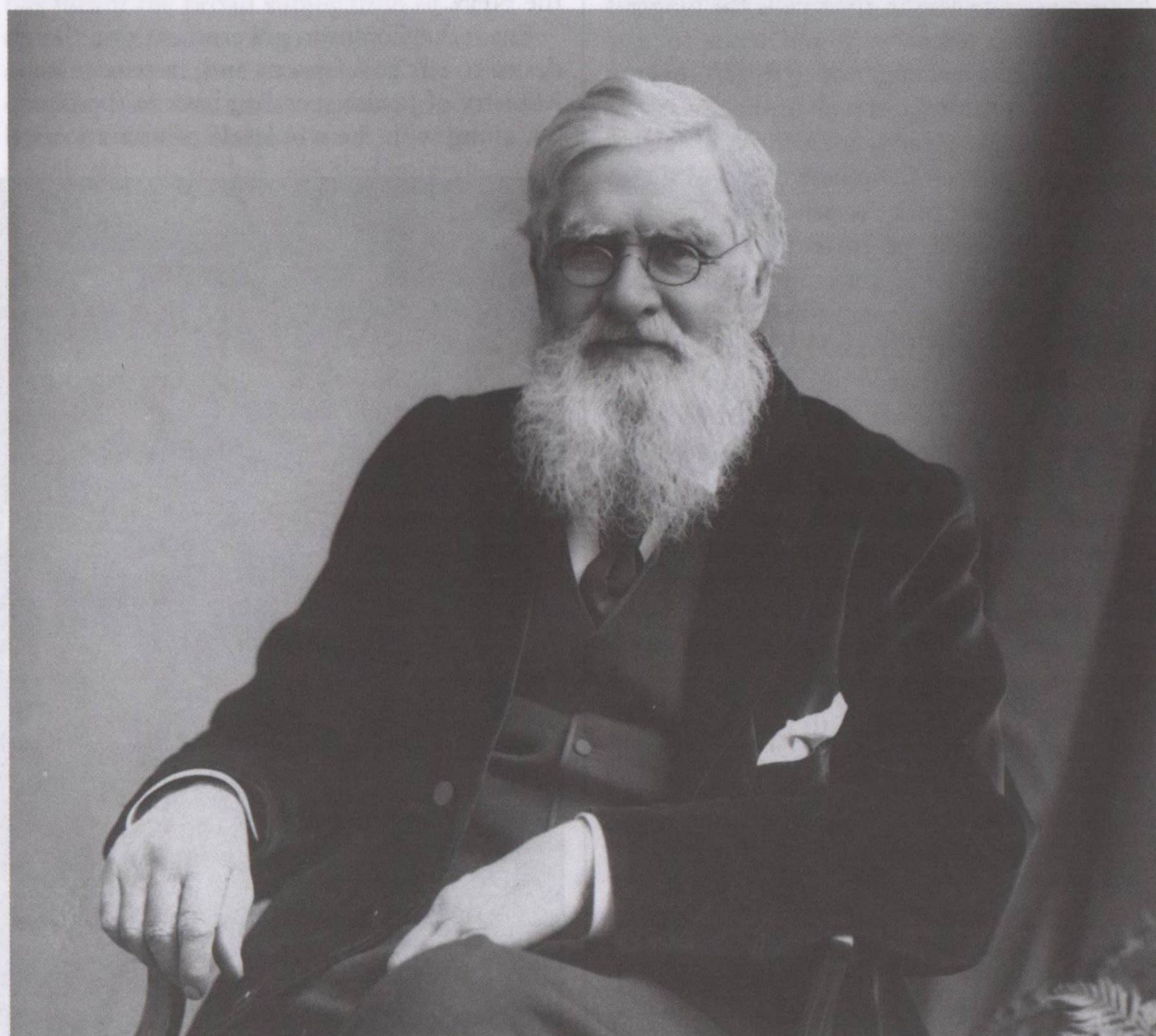
The one thing that jarred in the lecture was a suggestion that Wallace might have been disappointed by Darwin publishing his idea. Wallace was very focused on material needs; he had to be – unlike Darwin, he was not from a wealthy family and had to earn money in order to continue in the field. He

did this by sending back specimens from his field trips to collectors in England, firstly in South America then in South East Asia. He survived many disasters, including bouts of severe illness while there, but was driven by his thirst for understanding as much as his need to bag specimens for cash.

But to be disappointed because someone else's name was on a paper seems to me out of character. Wallace showed no sign of bitterness during his life. He was interested in advancing the sum of knowledge, through scientific observation and speculation. It seems a very 21st century way of looking at things to imagine great wealth or prestige coming from such a break-through – they clearly didn't at the time. It's worth remembering that the paper presented to the Royal Society passed without much attention. And it's not to say that Wallace wasn't grateful for the respect of his peers and the doors that being associated with Darwin opened for him.

But both were scientists – at its heart science is about the pursuit of knowledge. Wallace's inability to see the role of sexual selection in the evolution of birds of paradise shows that we progress that knowledge in fits and starts.

In his life's work, Darwin drew on inherited wealth; Wallace sold specimens and wrote, and struggled until Darwin arranged for him to receive a pension. Their contributions to the sum of human knowledge belong to us all, and should therefore be free – a view they would probably have supported as well.



Alfred Russel Wallace, circa 1895.

Unfairly branded

I think your denunciation of Russell Brand (*Freedom*, November 2013) as a misogynist fraud and hypocrite despite his critique of consumer capitalism is a little unfair. He is a working class lad made good who is now using his fame/notoriety to expound, in very poetic and compelling prose, and in combative interviews, a searing critique both of the cult of celebrity (himself included) and the social order that manufactures it. He has expounded ideas that are at least anarchic if not fully anarchist, and that should be applauded. In fact he could be invited to guest edit *Freedom* for an issue? And I'm sure an invite to the London Anarchist Bookfair would also increase anarchism's profile!

Richard Parry

Split meaning

Reading Gyorgy Furiosa's article 'Sex is not the enemy' in the November issue of *Freedom*, it occurred to me that the use of the word 'schizophrenia', even in the context of 'social schizophrenia', should be unacceptable. It is a loaded word. People commonly think of it as meaning, in that sort of context, a split or dichotomy. Which would be fine if it did not have connotations associated with mental health.

JF

The great i-con

Icons are needed by the State – admired figureheads that convey images bolstering shared values and national unity.

In spite of horrendous mistakes, Churchill became a national icon – state funeral for his fans but his class-victims partied, as happened following Thatcher's death. Gandhi was once called "a half-naked fakir" by Churchill but became revered internationally.

In 1968 as a student I was in Atlanta, Georgia, when Dr Martin Luther King's funeral was being planned. Initially, activists and the like planned to attend. But for hours beforehand media reports showed that VIPs were coming. Many of them had benefited from hierarchy, authoritarianism and exploitative relationships – all opposed by anarchists. Also, those top-people were reliant on an underpaid, black working class.

Eulogies on radio and television showed that whatever Martin Luther King's resistance to methods used by the state, it was going to co-opt him as a fluffy icon. The idea that he would be stripped of radicalism to have main roads and public buildings named after him was sickening.

Years later, I learned of others who had refused to attend that funeral.

Official American history will not record that Martin Luther King helped to bring

together the peace and civil rights movements that ended the Viet Nam war.

Now 45 years later, preparations for Nelson Mandela's funeral show the same process of co-opting an icon. Dignitaries who had benefited from apartheid in different ways flocked to that funeral.

Some commentators mentioned that hypocrisy without suggesting Mandela had been co-opted as a state icon, eulogising him as a champion of democracy. But the version we get of it is highly restricted.

Although democracy is meant to be inclusive, the state ensures that its hierarchies exclude most people from decision making.

Possibly, Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela had no choice but to co-operate with state agencies to further their aims. Their efforts contributed to middle-class African Americans and their South African counterparts making significant progress. But as elsewhere, the gaps between rich and poor in those countries are widening.

martin s. gilbert

Correction

In the November issue of *Freedom* we wrongly attributed the article on our history page to Joe Herbert instead of John MacDonald. Please accept our profuse apologies.

DONATE YOUR OLD BOOKS

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

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

FREEDOM BOOKSHOP

84b Whitechapel High Street
London E1 7QX
020 7247 9249

Open Monday to Saturday
from 12 noon until 6pm

If you can't get to the shop, why not use our mail order service or order books via our website at

www.freedompress.org.uk

GETTING ACTIVE

WHAT'S ON

FEBRUARY

■ **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.

■ **10th** Luddites200 talk on 'Digital Technology, Surveillance and Big Data' from 7pm at Fairly Square café, 51 Red Lion Street, London, WC1R 4PF, email luddites200@yahoo.co.uk for details.

■ **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.

■ **18th** Radical Anthropology talks, *Egalitarian hunter-gatherers in the East African Rift Valley* with Thea Skaanes at the May Day Rooms, 88 Fleet Street, London EC4 1DH from 6.15 to 9pm, see www.radicalanthropologygroup.org or Twitter: @radicalanthro.

■ **20th** Occupy London Tours, the Canary Wharf tour will be from 7pm until 9pm, see <http://occupytours.org/> for details.

■ **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 magic of law in Upper Amazonia* with Harry Walker at the May Day Rooms, 88 Fleet Street, London EC4 1DH from 6.15 to 9pm, see www.radicalanthropologygroup.org or Twitter: @radicalanthro.

MARCH

■ **2nd** Occupy London Tours, the Mayfair tour will be from 2pm until 4pm, see <http://occupytours.org/> for details.

■ **4th** Radical Anthropology talks, *Bunbafai: Buddhism and the carnivalesque* with Paul Twinn at the May Day Rooms, 88 Fleet Street, London EC4 1DH from 6.15 to 9pm, for more details see www.radicalanthropologygroup.org or Twitter: @radicalanthro.

■ **10th** Luddites200 talk on 'Toxics and Nanotechnology' from 7pm at Fairly Square café, 51 Red Lion Street, London, WC1R 4PF, email luddites200@yahoo.co.uk for details.

■ **11th** Radical Anthropology talks, *Dance, play, laugh: What capitalism can't do* with Morna Finnegan at the May Day Rooms, 88 Fleet Street, London EC4 1DH from 6.15 to 9pm, see www.radicalanthropologygroup.org or Twitter: @radicalanthro.

■ **15th** Occupy London Tours, City of London tour from 2pm until 4pm, see <http://occupytours.org/> for details.



We are organising for **AFem2014**: an anarcha-feminist conference in London on Sunday 19th October 2014.

Who are we?

We are a group of anarcha-feminists of varying genders, backgrounds and histories, who have come together to organise an anarcha-feminist event. We want to use it to build concretely towards the transformation of our own experience, and towards toppling the institutions and ideas which oppress us.

What is AFem2014?

AFem2014 will be the first of what we hope will be a series of international anarcha-feminist conferences. The need for this has been obvious for a long time within anarchist organising. Efforts to shut us down, belittle our ideas, and physically assault and abuse us have led to a level of anger against the masculinisation of our movement. We are not represented in equal numbers and often are not taken seriously.

Whilst on paper we are equal, we sometimes face oppression even in our own groups and organisations. Barriers to our full political participation remain intact. This means that our anarchist movement is not truly 'anarchist'. We will no longer tolerate this. We want to transform our movement.

We understand anarcha-feminism not just

as a response to anarchism and feminism. Anarcha-feminism is an anti-authoritarian, anti-oppressive critique of the capitalist kyriarchal form, and a weapon we can use in our daily lives. We want to explore the intersections between oppressions, developing theory, learning from others and arriving at practical outcomes.

Who is the conference open to?

Although this conference is not open to cisgender men (men who are comfortable with the gender they were assigned at birth), it is open to people of all other genders and none. It actively hopes to engage with trans*, genderqueer, gender fluid and non-binary people, as well as with cisgender women. We will not take a policing stance around gender presentation at the conference, but we will not hesitate to challenge trans*phobic, cissexist or binarist language, behaviour and attitudes.

Please spread the word and get in touch if you'd like to help out!

AFem2014 Organisers
afem@afed.org.uk

STOP PRESS: In light of feedback criticising our entry policy as cissexist, we are in the process of amending our mission statement for the conference. We apologise for any upset caused. Please see full statement here: <http://afem2014.tumblr.com/>

Sok it to them!

◀ page 24

Art, music, magazines, soup-kitchens, alternative shops and restaurants, stuff like that. And next to that many of were busy with activist activities, such as anti-militarist actions, demonstrations against the weapon industry, support-groups for Latin-American refugees, etc.

How did you become an 'anarchist'?

We (i.e. The Ex) preferred to call ourselves 'friends of anarchism'. We liked the ideas and ideals of anarchism, but not the nihilist versions of that. The anarchist struggle before and during the Spanish Civil War was a great inspiration, not the mindless smashing of shop windows during a demonstration. We saw too many people doing stupid senseless destructive things who called themselves anarchists... Easy targets for the rightwing media to give anarchy a bad name. We didn't want to be part of that negative idea of anarchy.

You decided to leave The Ex in 2009. What have you been involved in since? Have things happened as you expected?

To be honest, when I left, I had no idea what it would be like. The main thing was that I realised that after 30 years with The Ex it was time for a change. I thought I was done with music and I wanted to focus on merely writing and graphic design.

In the second half of 2009, however, I ended up on stage again, as part of a Dutch theatre-play. Then I met this French group from Toulouse, Cannibales & Vahinés, for a project. Which went quite well, and we decided to keep on working together (on a slightly irregular basis, though, as we live about 1,200 kilometers apart). Then I met with other people/bands, who asked me for collaborations, and it hasn't stopped since.

I hadn't realised or imagined that, once I had left The Ex, others would/could be interested in working with me. And I felt really free now to do so, when I would like the people or the project. It's a bit scary too, also, because it doesn't guarantee any steady income at

all. But, well, it's now five years since I left The Ex and I am still alive and doing the things I like best.

You have spent 30 years in activism. How have you sustained that and avoided cynicism and getting jaded?

I think the main thing that kept/keeps me/us going, is the fact that we are happy with the lives we live. We believe in working together with like-minded people, we don't believe in greed. We enjoy sharing things, we don't need much luxury. We try to keep an open mind, and we meet a lot of friendly, great, inspiring people everywhere, it makes us realise we are not alone in this. Maybe we can't change the whole world for the better, but we can change our part of the world, step by step by step, meeting and making new friends one by one, day by day. It's not that difficult, in a way. And we laugh a lot, even when we're tired, and once you can laugh you don't feel tired anymore.

Have you any plans and projects for 2014? Plans there are aplenty, but you never know

which ones you'll be able to realise. With Cannibales & Vahinés we're trying to organise shows in Russia. I want to publish a book of Dutch poems, maybe also one in English. I might like to release a compilation CD featuring myself and some of the artists I've been working with the last couple of years.

Projects that are certain include a spring album with UK's Action Beat (their first album with vocals) with a two-week tour in April. My duo The And (voice and guitar) will record some tracks this month for a 7-inch and then we will work on a 10-inch release later in the year. I'm working with Cannibales & Vahinés on new songs. Throughout the year I'll also be working with several other artists (mostly French, I don't know why that is) on various musical projects. And, of course, there's King Champion Sounds. The first album was very well received, so now we're busy with new songs to put out later in the year when we go touring again.

And since it is 2014 and The Ex will celebrate their 35th anniversary, so will I because, although I was born a few years earlier, GW Sok was also born in 1979.



SUBSCRIPTION RATES

	inland	Europe	outside Europe (surface)	outside Europe (airmail)
Freedom (annual subscription, 12 issues)				
Claimants	£18.00	-	-	-
Regular	£22.00	£30.00	£30.00	£50.00
Institutions	£26.00	£44.00	£44.00	£64.00
Supporter	£48.00	£60.00	£60.00	£72.00

Note that we have a special 'supporter' sub rate for those who wish to ensure the future of the paper. If you want to make a regular donation to Freedom get in touch and we can send you a Standing Order form - email subs@freedompress.org.uk for details, or to find out how to donate online.

For more information on subscriptions/bundles, email subs@freedompress.org.uk

FREEDOM monthly ISSN 0016 0504



Please return completed form to: Freedom Subscriptions, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX

- Please start a NEW subscription / RENEW my subscription to Freedom (to avoid errors, please circle required subscription rate, see right)
- I enclose a donation
- I'd like to pay by Standing Order, please send me details

I enclose £ payment (cheques payable to Freedom Press please)

Name

Address

.....

..... Postcode

REVIEWS ACTIVE

FICTION

The estate

Sandra sighed as the van pulled off the A20. She looked at Carlo, squeezed in his baby-seat between her and Paul, who was helping her move back to her Dad's.

"Take the second right at this roundabout and straight over the next," she said. Ten minutes later and they were on the outskirts of the Springfield Road estate. The estate was mainly houses with a few small blocks of flats, most from the 1930s, with passages in the middle of the terraces and a cottage look to them. The street names were drawn from history and her Dad's house, her home for the second time, was number 19 Hengist Road. Who was Hengist anyway, she wondered.

Paul parked up as Les, her Dad, came out smiling in a red and blue checked shirt. Sandra greeted him and introduced him to Paul, and he hugged Carlo who called out "Grampa!" They unloaded the van then Les made a pot of tea.

"Blimey, there's not much, is there," said Les.

"Just enough for Carlo and me. It was a rented place we were in and I don't have much. Well, much I want to keep anyway," replied Sandra.

"Yeah, well we can talk about that later," said Les.

"I gave all that stuff away. To a women's refuge in Hackney," said Sandra. Paul finished his tea.

"Time for me to go, I reckon," he said.

"Okay, thanks Paul. I'll see you in a few weeks I hope," said Sandra and she gave him a peck on the cheek.

"He seems alright," Les said as they waved him off. Sandra looked at him.

"Look, I know you were right about Kit. Can we not have this constant reminder every time?"

"I just said he seems alright," said Les. "I've not said anything about that waste of oxygen you were hooked up with, have I? And I don't want a row in front of my grandson."

"Sorry, Dad," said Sandra. "I'll make some tea."

That afternoon, they set up Carlo's stuff in her old room. Les had made a wooden mobile of animals and they hung it above his cot. With her old bed and the cot, there was barely any space. Les took Carlo downstairs to play with an old box of Lego he had. Sandra sat on the bed and stared out of the window, resting her hand against its metal frame. There was the washing line and the old concrete path in the garden, with her Dad's shed and greenhouse at the back, which had fed them that summer when her Mum got ill and couldn't manage the walk to the shops. She saw the top of a bus pass between a gap in the houses. That was something, at least there were now buses after five o'clock. When she'd last lived here, the outside world was full of opportunities and she had railed against being stuck here. And now, here she was again.

Martin H.

BOOK

Reading Room Only: Memoir of a Radical Bibliophile

by Phil Cohen, Five Leaves Publications, £14.99

How does the leader of one of the most famous squats in England become an Emeritus Professor of Cultural Studies? The unkind answer is that it probably helps to go to an expensive private school, even if you hate it. It may also help to attend the University of Cambridge, even if you drop out and go to sea instead. The kinder answer to the enigma that is Phil Cohen (Dr John of the 144 Piccadilly squat) is to read this fascinating book.

Cohen's book is not a history of squatting, of libertarian social action, of 1960s-style 'happenings', or indeed of anything else. It is a personal reflection on an interesting life, and of encounters with people and books, especially in the old circular Reading Room of the British Museum in Bloomsbury (pictured below), where Karl Marx studied and wrote. Cohen grew up in Bloomsbury and the museum was always part of his personal landscape.

The first and longer part of the book is the one most clearly linked with social action, with bit parts played by actors as diverse as Malcolm X (Black Power), psychiatrist R.D. Laing and

John Latham, the Situationist artist.

The second, shorter part of the book is more problematic, dealing as it does with book collecting. Some of this seems self-indulgent, for example the notion of books on a bookshelf "talking to one another", like characters out of *Toy Story*. But Cohen's Top Ten collection is an irresistible listing. He starts with Camus's novel *The Outsider*, a useful reminder of how much the French existentialists Camus and Sartre shook up a whole generation growing up in the aftermath of the Second World War. He also includes W.G. Sebald's *Rings of Saturn*, a sad and angry novel that seems to sum up the disasters of the twentieth century.

Cohen makes some use of Walter Benjamin's essay *Unpacking my Library* in organising his thoughts about books. I would have liked more of this, perhaps pursuing it into territory Benjamin shares with Sebald – the way that books can disturb our peace of mind, shake us up, ambush our complacency and our reluctance to think seriously about the mess we have made of our beautiful world. This was the 'blood and horror' that eventually overwhelmed Benjamin and millions like him who paid with their lives for the horrors of the twentieth century. Phil Cohen survived.

Joe Herbert



QUIZ ANSWERS

1. They give private companies the right to sue governments over regulations they don't like. Veolia are using them to sue the Egyptian government for raising the minimum wage.
2. They demanded 14 days notice and charged them extra.
3. The British Public. Admittedly the survey, for the Royal Statistical Society and King's College London, was a relatively small sample, but found that Britons

- consistently overestimated the amount of benefit fraud, immigration, crime, teenage pregnancy and how much is spent on foreign aid. Bobby Duffy, the managing director of Ipsos Mori, said: "A lack of trust in government information is also very evident in other questions in the survey." Fancy that!
4. Google. They have bought robot maker Boston Dynamics, who supply military robots to the US Army.

Common interest

Nature for Sale: The Commons versus Commodities

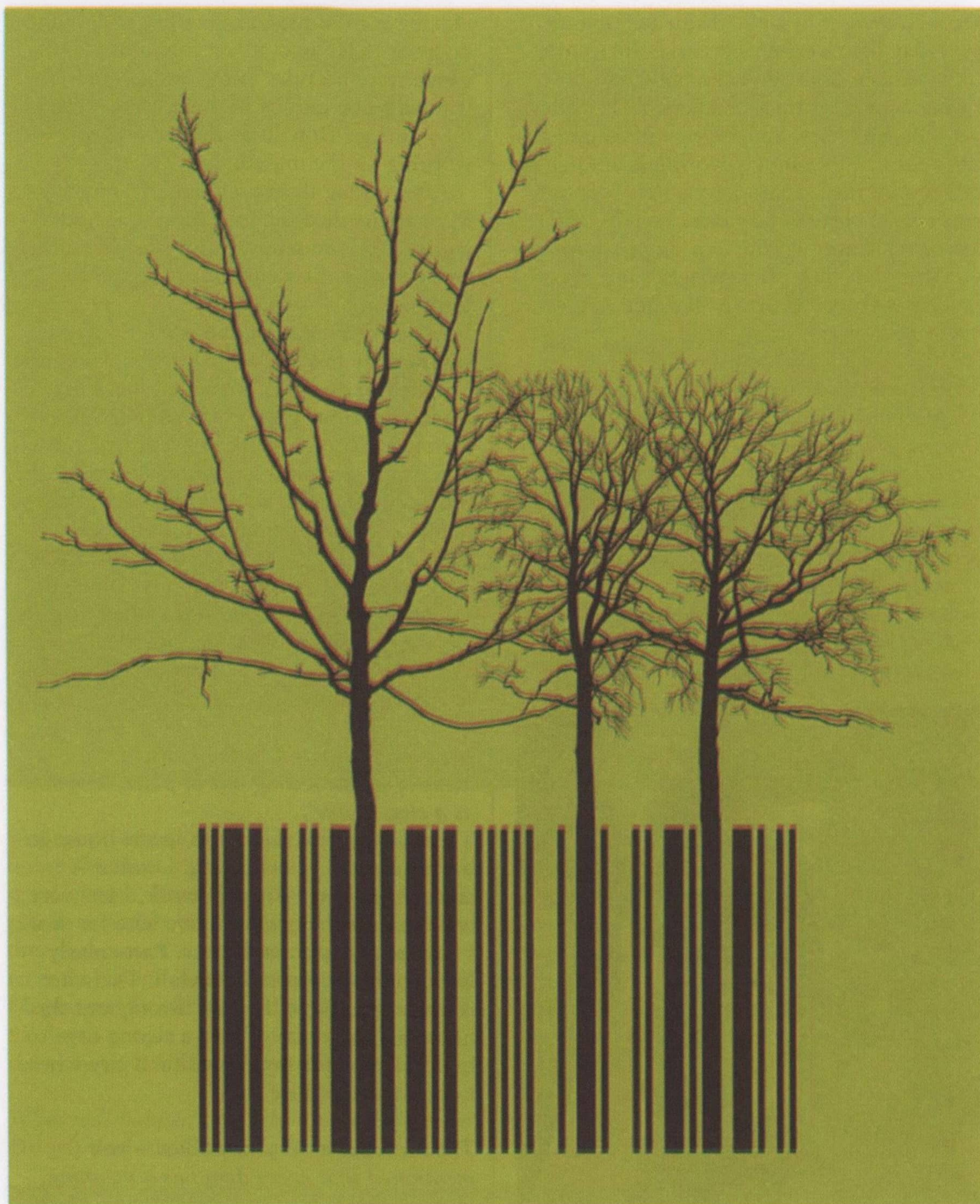
by Giovanna Ricoveri, Pluto Press, £13.00

This book has been described as a ‘powerful tool’ to help us to understand the capitalist system, and to mobilise resistance and find alternatives to the present destructive economic order. It aims at the recovery, the restoration, and the re-invention of the commons, which is seen as vital to both our freedoms and to our very survival. This means – the message of the book – that we need to go back to the “self-organized management of natural resources by local communities” (95). Written by the Italian economist Giovanna Ricoveri, the book is essentially a neo-Marxist text. It is part of a project aimed at the ‘greening of Marxism’ that was initiated some years ago in the writings of Ted Benton, James O’Connor and Mary Mellor.

It is a thoroughly worthwhile book, comparatively short, readable and engaging, and offers an excellent defence and advocacy of the ‘commons’ as an alternative way of organising social and economic life. The entire book hinges around the dichotomy of the ‘commons’ versus the ‘commodities’ – the underlying logic of industrial capitalism. Apart from a brief mention of Murray Bookchin, Ricoveri, in typical Marxist fashion, makes no mention at all of anarchism, while simply recapitulating and re-affirming what anarchist-communists have been advocating for the past hundred years or more.

The book consists of four short chapters. The first chapter outlines “What are the commons”. The commons, of course, are all the aspects of the natural world – land, water, air, forests, animals – and all the ecological services that nature provides gratis. In essence these belong to no one and everyone, and all people, therefore, should only have usufruct right to such natural resources. The commons provides us with all that is essential for subsistence – food, water, and shelter. Unlike the so-called post-anarchists, Ricoveri emphasises the fact that “we all depend on nature” (46).

The notion of the ‘commons’ is, of course, intrinsically related to that of community, which is any group of people who together manage an area of land, together with its natural resources. The community, she writes, is the name given to the “collective body that self-governs the commons” (52). Ricoveri emphasises the fact that the dynamic process of natural ecosystems in essence sustains the commons, and she makes some cogent criticisms of Garrett Hardin’s famous essay on “the tragedy of the commons”. In this she simply echoes what Maria Mies wrote more than a decade ago, for Mies, in her advocacy of a ‘subsistence perspective’ also stressed the



need for “reinventing the commons”. But, as with the anarchists, Mies hardly gets a mention in the text.

The second chapter is focussed on the “decline of the commons” and emphasises the historical processes and the various ideologies that have led to the undermining of subsistence economies and to a decline in the culture of the commons. These include: the industrial revolution, European colonialism, the mechanistic conception of nature depicted by Bacon and Descartes, and the ideology of possessive individualism associated with Hobbes and many economists – which portrays the human individual as “ruled by competition, aggressiveness and egoism” (63). This is a succinct and engaging discussion, and Ricoveri highlights the work of two scholars who are still, I think, well worth reading – Karl Polanyi and Carolyn Merchant.

The third chapter focuses on the present crisis of capitalism and what Ricoveri describes as the “new enclosures of the

commons” – the negative impact of the so-called “structural adjustment programmes”, the privatisation of land, water and public space, the biopiracy involved in the implementation of “intellectual property rights”, and the kind of neo-colonialism that is being promoted worldwide under the guise of ‘development’ by technocratic ‘experts’.

All this is a thoroughly worthwhile discussion, complemented in the introduction by a short account of the varied social and ecological movements which, throughout the world, have been defending the “culture of the commons” against the onslaught and intrusions of global capitalism, aided and abetted (of course) by modern states. It is a culture that emphasises social and environmental justice, the common ownership of land and natural resources, cooperative organisations based on mutual aid and self-management through direct or participatory democracy, the sustainable use of natural

THE ARTS

THE HOUSE OF DREAMS

Stephen Wright uses the discarded objects of everyday life to create mosaics: milk bottle tops, broken dolls, dolls eyeballs, the contents of Christmas crackers, false teeth, pen lids, crockery, and the rich pickings of a car boot sale. Seemingly worthless ubiquitous objects are turned into jewels that become an integral part of the stories he tells. His interest is driven by the impromptu aesthetic qualities that they offer. Wright's use of objects is Outsider Art. A Baroque Art for our times.

Could you please give a little bit of the background story behind the House of Dreams Museum? How did the project start?

The House of Dreams Museum project began in 1998, after seeing a series of programmes by Jarvis Cocker, who visited Outsider environments in France, other parts of Europe and the USA. I had been a designer in many guises for 20 years before then but never felt part of any 'artistic family'.



Having seen the programmes I was elated to discover that I had at last found my family. There were no rules in this family and I wanted to be part of it. Together with my then partner Donald Jones, we began working on the museum.

After a long illness, Donald died in 2004. My parents died the following year and work on the museum stopped for a while. I was not sure if I wanted to continue the project on my own.

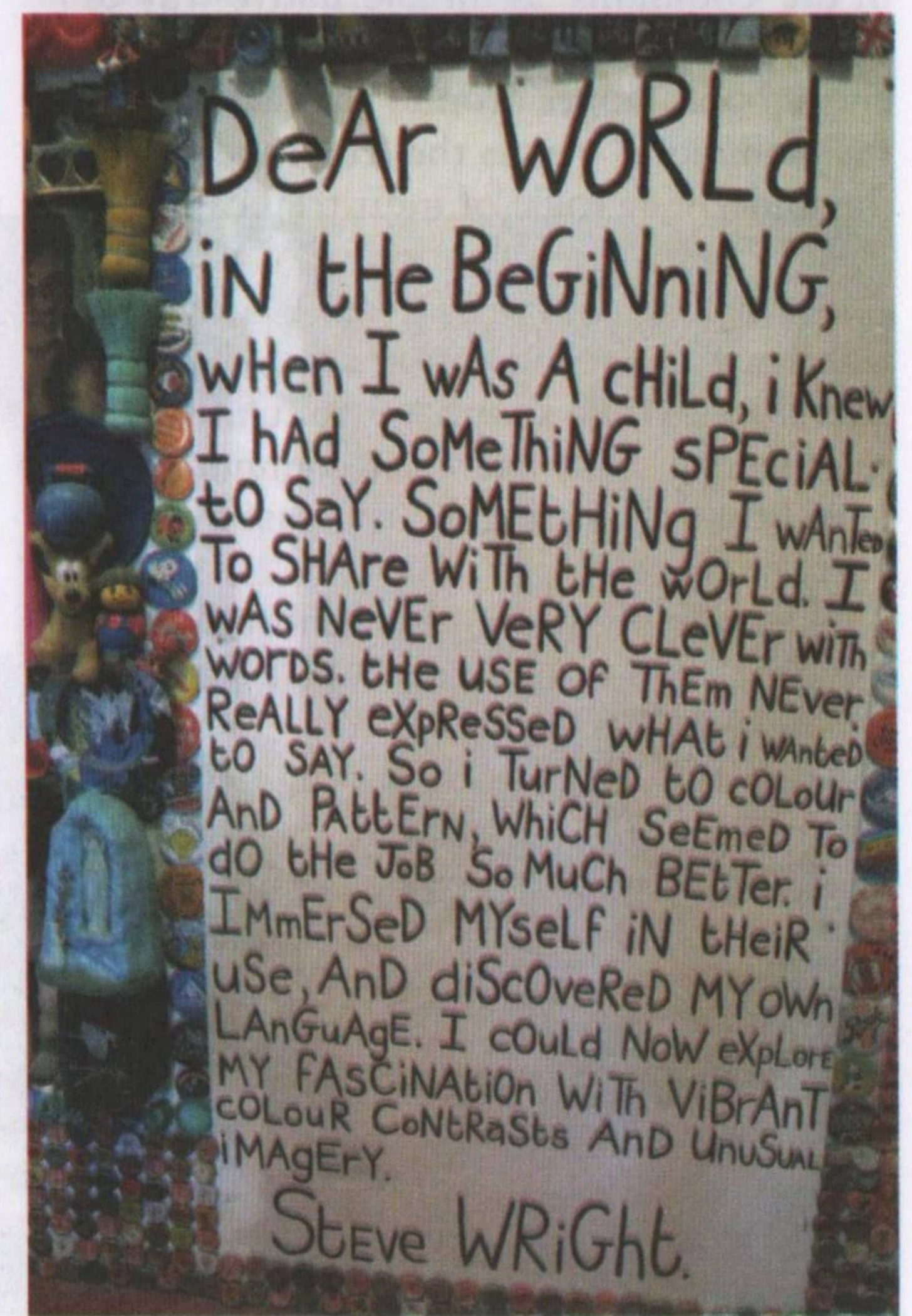
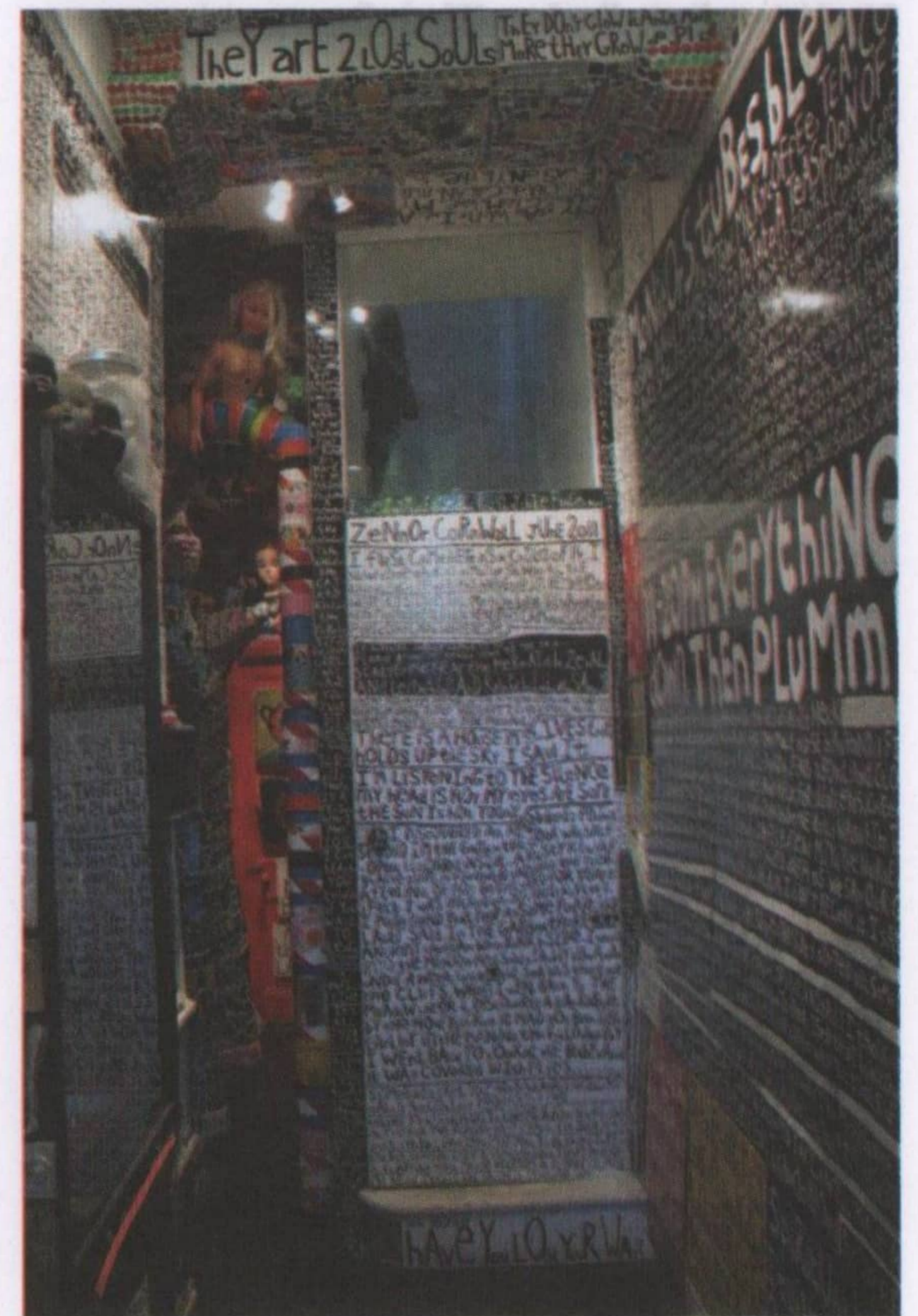
After consideration and some time to emotionally heal, I decided one morning that I needed to do the museum for me. I began working seriously again in 2006/7. Since then it has been a work in progress, and has changed direction. I worked in secret on the project until 2011, when I opened to the public in a very limited way. I have been opening the house up since then on various open days and appointment days. But I do say no sometimes to enquiries when I'm working on the project. I'm not always available! Last year I had about 950 visitors to the museum.

Some of your work in the house deals with ideas of place: feeling out of place, London as a city, 'home'.

There are several references in the house to having a sense of belonging. London is somewhere that I live and work. I feel very little sense of belonging. I live here for work. I have many spiritual homes. Particularly Mexico, Haiti, Paris, Cornwall. There are references to these 'homes' throughout the house and museum. I have a strong urge to build a home for myself within a city where I don't feel any love for.

The Museum is very emotional – you mentioned that every item has a meaning. Every item/object that is collected to live in the museum, or embellish the walls is selected for a reason. A memory, a moment, given to me by a person who is dear to my heart, collected from a spiritual place.

The front gate of the Museum and the fence are relatively plain, and the house is somewhat hidden. Was this intentional?



Review

◀ page 21

resources, and what Ricoveri describes, following Vandana Shiva, as 'earth democracy'. All this, of course, simply echoes what libertarian socialists have long been describing as 'anarchist communism'.

But when Ricoveri comes in the last chapter to promote "All power to the commons!" she completely backtracks. For she contends that by emphasising the culture of the 'commons' we can "return legitimacy to the state" (91). As a typical reformist

Marxist she wants to restore the "sovereignty of the state" (54), so that it can offer a "certain amount of protectionism" (66) against the corruption, inequalities and ecological degradation engendered by the market economy (capitalism) and thus be an 'honest broker' (no less!) "between business and citizens" (100). The nation-state, which Ricoveri so ardently supports, has never been, and never will be, an 'honest broker' for it has always undermined the power of

local communities and the "culture of the commons". As Kropotkin and the social anarchists always insisted the *raison d'être* of the modern state has always been to support and defend the interests of capital – the capitalist market economy and the logic of 'commodities'. There is no reformist middle way between the culture of the "commons" (eco-anarchism) and that of "commodities" (market capitalism).

Brian Morris

REAMS



The two-metre walls built at the front of the house are there to keep most of the world behind it. I open the gate which is usually locked when I want to. I need to create my world in relative peace and privacy. It acts as a practical barrier.

People bring you things to use in the house, sometimes that are very personal or beloved items of someone who has passed away. Do you feel that a community of sorts is being captured in the project?



Visitors do bring objects/photographs to the house for their own reasons. That is a recent development. I feel that they want to leave a presence within the building. I presume that they feel moved enough to want to. A man recently brought his wife's ashes to the house. Maybe we should have asked him why he wanted to! Some people just want to contribute to the project. Reasons are varied I think.

What will happen to the house in the future? Do you feel it will ever be 'finished'?

The museum will never be finished in this lifetime. This realisation gives me the incentive to continue. It's the hook. It was important to get the National Trust involved to protect the building for the future. The recent BBC film has helped also to give clarity to visitors and myself. Visitors are very welcome to visit on open days and by appointment only. Details can be found on my website.

See <http://www.stephenwrightartist.co.uk/>



MUSIC

Sok it to them!



GW Sok, formerly of The Ex, speaks to Tim Forster

The Ex emerged from the Dutch squat scene of the late '70s as an anarcho punk/art band.

Can you describe the Dutch anarchist squat scene of that time?

In the late '70s the Netherlands suffered from a huge economic crisis. Unemployment rates were high, and so for the youth there were no jobs. And no possibilities of affordable housing either. (Sounds familiar, right?) Squatting solved

some of these problems for us. We were on the dole, but didn't need much money as we didn't need any luxuries. Squatted housing was cheap, although not totally for free, as a lot of time was invested in repair and renovation. But the great thing was, that we had a lot of free time. Time which we could spend on the things that we felt were important.

page 19 ►►

THE QUIZ

1. What are Investor-State Dispute Settlement rules and how are French multinational Veolia using them?
2. How did Bupa's Victoria Manor care home in Edinburgh deal with the family of a patient who died on 1st January 2013?
3. According to a survey for the Royal Statistical Society and King's College London, who is wrong about nearly everything?
4. Which search engine has expanded into being an arms company?

Answers on page 20

The Anarchist Quiz Book by Martin Howard, illustrated by Paul Petard, is available for £5 post free.

