

FREEDOM NEWS

May 2015

Since 1886

Issue 1

Long Live Freedom!

It's been a year since the decision was taken to end Freedom Newspaper as a regular printed publication. After a successful transition online, the time to relaunch Freedom News as a freesheet, as well as being online, has come. Being back in print means Freedom News can have a much more extensive reach beyond the news website- everywhere from a local pub to prisons. Freedom is not only written for, but also by, our readers. Our content is submitted from a variety of individuals and groups, which means we can represent a full range of ideas and issues from the ever broadening Anarchist spectrum. As well as full versions of the articles in this freesheet, a regularly updated selection of news stories, photographs, comment pieces and interviews can be found on our website, and as time goes on we hope the Freesheet will expand and evolve with the help of our readers and contributors. Here's to the future!

Ella Harrison

**Freedom News Online is edited
by Ella Harrison and Adam
Barr**

Contact us at:

editor@freedompress.org.uk

Website:

freedomnews.org.uk

Facebook:

Freedom News

Twitter:

@Freedom_Paper

Freedom Bookshop

**84b Whitechapel High Street
London, E1 7QX**

Educate! Agitate! ORGANISE!

Anarchists have always been sceptical about big unions run as businesses with large bureaucracies and staffing levels. There is a tendency within these structures for the union to become a thing 'of itself' rather than simply being the collective fight for justice of the workers. For the past few decades neoliberalism has had a major impact on the way business unions work, and organised labour has been in retreat in terms of membership levels and large scale success.

Neoliberalism is an ideology whose adherents are obsessed with moving anything that can be marketised into the realm of private finance. At the same time they also desire that as much as possible is individualised under the guise of 'responsibility.' Under the latter objective unions are a complication as they have a tendency to collectivise issues. Strikes, demonstrations, petitions and the rest are all a hindrance to the neoliberals.

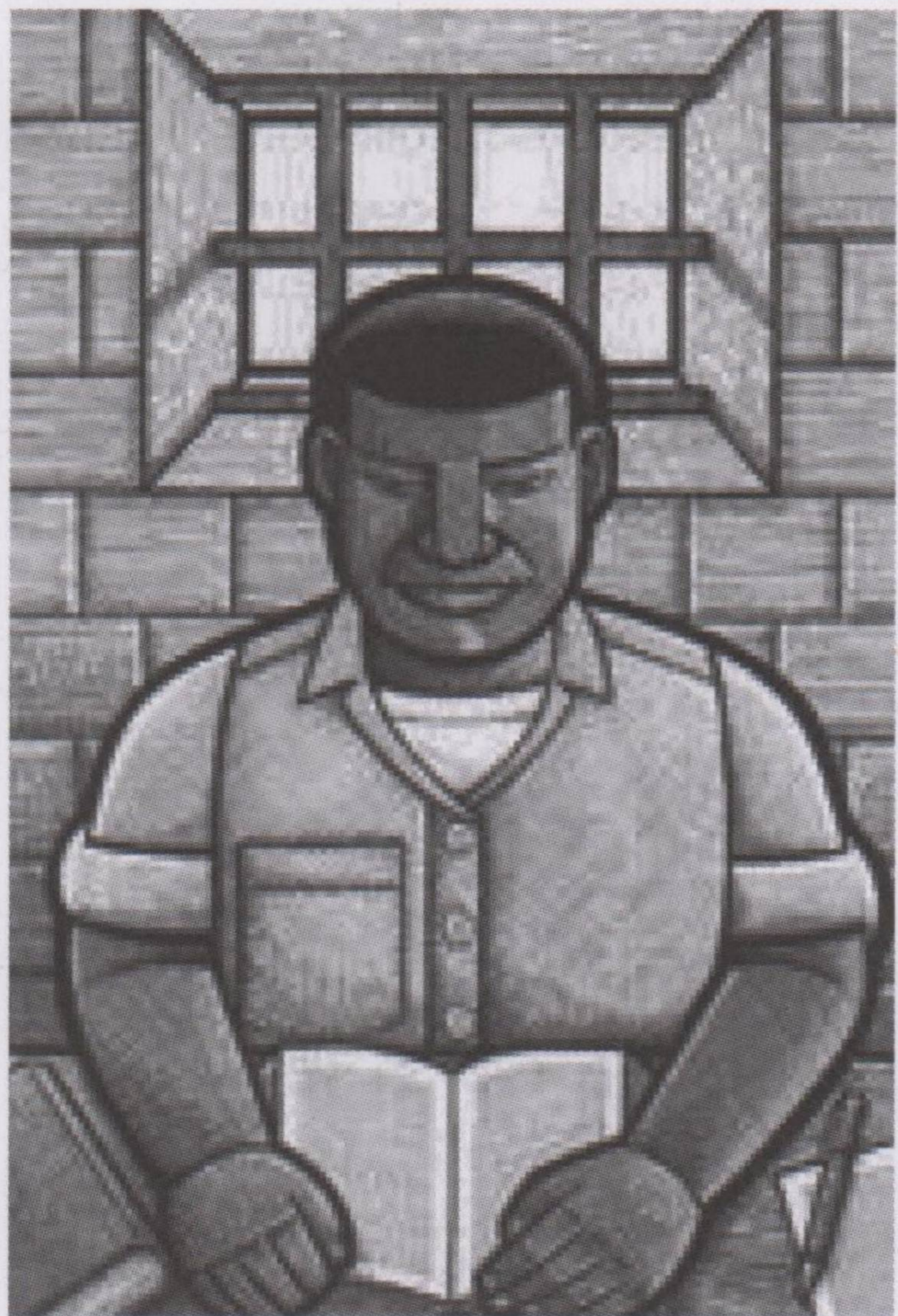
New Labour under Tony Blair took the neoliberal agenda further than the Tories and provided the free market dreamers with a partial answer to the problem of organised labour. By enhancing the rights of workers at employment tribunals, personal casework became ever more important in the life of union activists, which in turn damaged collective action.

The so called "union barons" we hear about in the press think strategically and often with the Labour Party's best interests at heart, so the last thing they need is activists trying to whip up disputes that could lead to strikes. Such things should come from the top as far as they are concerned. This is perhaps why the TUC didn't exactly jump up and down screaming when Thatcher enforced postal ballots for strike action: it took the power away from workplace activists who had previously been able to lead walkouts via a show of hands and gave all that power to the secretaries general.

Personal casework also makes activists reliant on the trade union bureaucracy. As a case gets more serious, legal help may be required. This forces the activist up the chain of command within their union to seek help. That help often ends up involving several paid full time officers of the union and solicitors. This gets to the centre of the unions' business model. If people join the union to have the best possible insurance for when things go wrong at work, and if unions provide top class legal support, then they will get more members and be able to operate better, attracting more subscribers.

That's where we come in as anarchists. By getting involved with organisations like the IWW, SolFed, IWGB and others we can help shape small scale struggles. When we look at the history of trade union renewal the surge in power and membership has always come during a period of intense industrial action. By keeping as organised as we can and by ensuring that we are ready to help workers no matter what industry they are in we will be at the forefront when workers rise again. The fact that we can do this without massive bureaucracies, and without worrying about the Labour Party is a positive not a negative. Let's collectivise the struggle and get on the offensive. Migrant workers, sex workers, people on zero hours contracts, call centre workers, teachers in TEFL schools: this could be where the surge starts. Being sceptical about business unions shouldn't lead us to be sceptical about organised labour.

By Jonathan Bigger, full article on the Freedom News website.



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27 Old Gloucester Street, London
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info2015@havendistribution.org.uk

The Winger

I'd not thought of him for years.
Not one of the clever kids, yet
no idiot, and too nice a lad
to be a bully – but good enough

at football they all wanted to know
him.

Never dressed too smart:
worn jumper and plimsolls.
On the football pitch he became
himself.

Holding the left wing, when the
ball
came to him he'd dribble, run, fly.
Body ... sleek, not gawky,
red jersey more standard than
bunting.

He knocked plenty of goals in,
but with him it seemed the joy
was outpacing everyone, ball at his
feet.

When he left school no-one ever
saw him again.

Tim Wells

MIGRANT LIVES: NOT A COMMODITY

By Rosario Fernández Ossandón, Fenyá Fischler, Nicolás Ortiz Ruiz,
Aleksandra Stankova

This article is written by a group of people living in the United Kingdom who are migrants, students and workers. In the last few weeks alone we have witnessed the deaths of hundreds of migrants in the Mediterranean Sea and we have mourned Pinakin Patel who died in detention in Yarl's Wood. This, as we all know, is only the tip of the iceberg. It is the direct result of the UK and the European Union's murderous migration policies.

The framework underlying these actions is a capitalist conception of the value of life. We see this replicated on a daily basis in the discourse of politicians such as Ed Miliband and David Cameron, but also in the media and even in migrant rights campaigns. This framework has legitimised discourses as extreme as the now notorious "cockroach" rant by Katie Hopkins. Although they undoubtedly have very different intentions and aims, they all share a very similar underlying framework: migrants' lives are only worth what they can be sold for.

One example that you might have noticed when taking the underground in London is the "#migrantscontribute" campaign. We absolutely realise that this campaign was initiated by well intentioned and well informed people who care deeply about migrants, many of them are indeed migrants themselves. Clearly a strategic decision was made about what the most effective positive messaging would be around migration, keeping in mind the upcoming national elections. This does not make it any less concerning that a campaign that on the surface seeks to stand up for the rights of migrants, in fact reproduces those very same frameworks underlying the far right discourses referred to above.

When a major migrant rights campaign centres its message around the fact that migrants "contribute", and defines this contribution primarily as an economic one, we have reached a low point. In this we can truly realise the extent to which the capitalist framework has infiltrated our thinking. So what is wrong with justifying the presence of migrants in terms of their economic contribution?

First, this does not take into account the historical roots of migration flows. In particular, how many EU States benefited from the mass murder, enslavement and plundering of resources in the former colonies. This makes it even more perverse to now criticise migration as an economic threat. Second, this framework instrumentalises migrants' lives by linking their inherent worth to their economic input. Migrants are no longer human, their only relevance is to serve as commodities for consumption by the capitalist state.

Third, this reproduces the idea of the "good" and "bad" migrant. The good migrant being the formally employed, non-criminal, law abiding, hardworking, tax-paying individual trying to make a "better life" in Britain. Migrants, unlike 'white' and middle and upper class nationals, must prove that they are deserving. The distinction is at the same time classist and ableist, gendered and racist. The most vulnerable: those who are unemployed, disabled, undocumented, detained, unpaid or criminalised and marginalised in many other ways, are not perceived as valuable. They expose just how narrow a framework #migrantscontribute is.

Fourth, it implies that national borders are natural, unchanging and even necessary and leaves intact and reinforces arbitrary state power to inflict violence against migrants' bodies. This rationalises the need for the detention of ethnic others and public indifference.

This lethal discourse that commodifies migrants' lives has directly influenced decision making, causing ongoing human tragedies. We must refuse to put a price tag on migrants' lives and stop valuing them only to the extent that they benefit European economies. We must challenge the framework that commodifies migrant lives and move forwards to a new one. One that values life in its own right.