

# FREEDOM

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## BRICKS & CLASS WARFARE

SELF-ORGANISED CENTRES AND SQUATS VS THE COLLAPSING SOCIAL COMPACT



### ALSO INSIDE THIS ISSUE

LABOUR'S GREY DAWN ☒ **RADICAL UNIONS RISE** & SMASH IPP!

**THE SPARROW'S NEST** ☹️ ECLIPSE PHASE: ANARCHIST RPG

CLIMATE MODEL SCAMMING ₤ **ECONOMY MYTHBUSTER**



PLUS THE FREEDOM ANNUAL REPORT

# A RETHINK ABOUT LABOUR

For most of the last 40 years it has been quite simple making anarchist arguments against the political system. There has barely been a cigarette paper's difference between the main parties as both rushed to embrace the neo-liberal consensus that sees the role of the State as guaranteeing good conditions for business. And always taking the side of capital over labour in any dispute. Even people far removed from any sort of anarchist or communist politics make the same observation.

Jeremy Corbyn's election as leader of the Labour Party and subsequent reinforcement as leader after the General Election has changed that. I am personally sceptical that he can deliver very much of what he has promised, but I am not alone in finding it refreshing that a now mainstream political figure has addressed issues that I hold dear, such as housing and workers' rights. To use a phrase from Chomsky, Corbyn has committed to "widening the floor of the cage." The experience of Syriza in Greece ought to make Corbyn's cheerleaders take pause, though to their credit, Corbyn and McDonnell do seem to have thought about this quite a lot. Nor is there any getting away from the fact that there is an awful lot wrong with our society.

But none of this is an anarchist response. What do we say now that the easy "they're all the same" line is not possible? It's quite tempting to either fall back on the usual refusal to engage with politicians or be swept up in the momentum of a mild, fairly principled socialist leader suddenly being very popular — at least among certain parts of the country. Neither actually help. We need to revisit what is distinct about anarchism: we are opposed to Capital and the State. We should be talking about our

problems with power in all its forms — and it will be interesting if Corbyn ever succeeds in his aim of devolving some powers away from Westminster, likely to be anathema to a centralising Labour Party.

Nationalisation is seen as a panacea by the left. While it is a logical step to try and bring some sense to our fragmented railways and cash-cow utilities, the idea that it is somehow a good thing independent of how it is operated is ridiculous. At no point have any of its cheerleaders suggested the idea of nationalisation under workers' control.

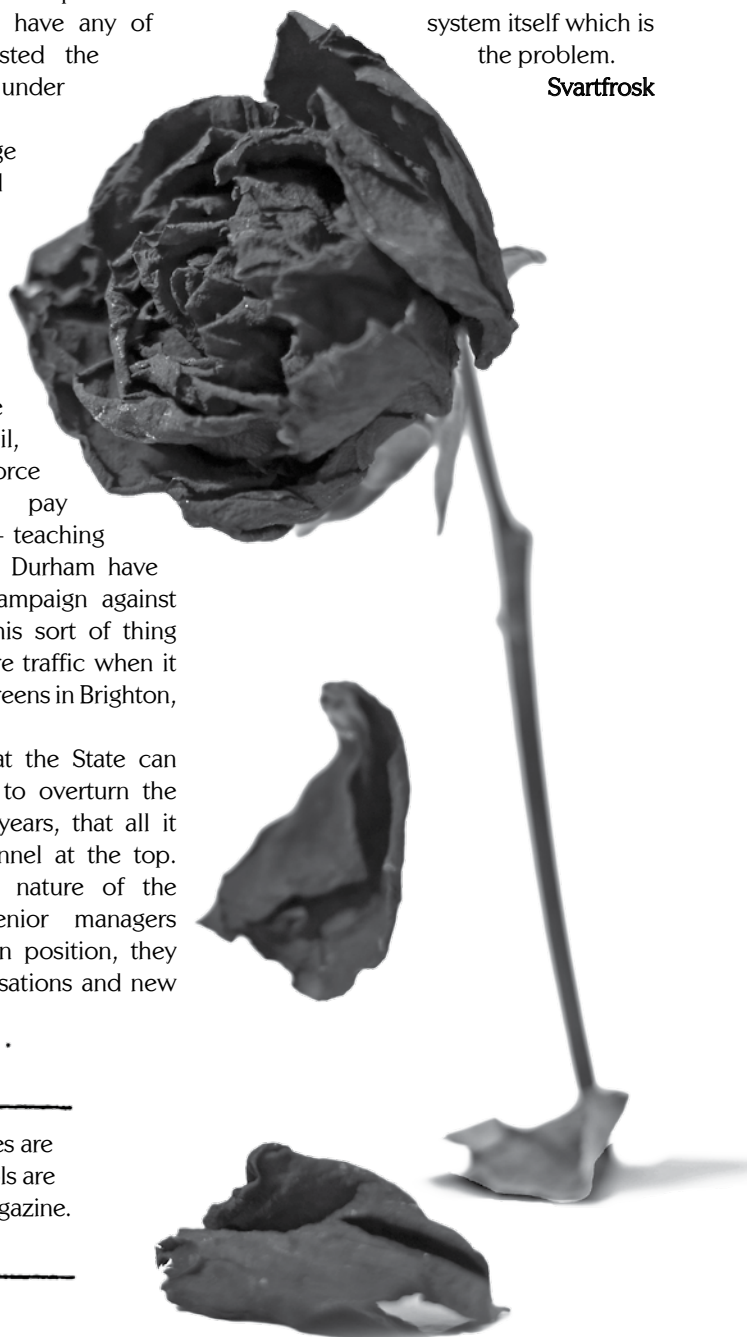
Who will be in charge of a nationalised utility or railway? The government. Who has kept public sector workers' pay frozen for eight years? The government. The Birmingham refuse strike was about a local council, Labour-run, trying to force through a significant pay cut. It was not alone — teaching assistants in Labour-run Durham have been fighting a long campaign against massive cuts in pay. This sort of thing seemed to get a lot more traffic when it was being done by the Greens in Brighton, I wonder why?

The Left imagines that the State can be captured and used to overturn the policies of the last 40 years, that all it takes is different personnel at the top. This ignores the class nature of the bureaucracy. Once senior managers in public services are in position, they always bring in reorganisations and new

ways of working and usually leave shortly after. This does not just fall from the sky — bureaucrats are motivated by career opportunities and nothing burnishes a CV like a successful reorganisation.

Anyone new coming to this, without the experiences that have formed other bureaucrats, will inevitably look to what their colleagues suggest so as to fit in. The "good" people get captured by the system, which would tend to support a classical anarchist view that it is the system itself which is the problem.

**Svartfrosk**



For people interested in this sort of thing, the main typefaces are Langdon, Alfa Slab One and Centabel Book. Dingbat symbols are taken from 1910 issues of Emma Goldman's Mother Earth magazine.

Kindly printed by Aldgate Press



## Enthusiasm becomes votes fodder, solving little

# THE MYTH OF MOMENTUM



There is no doubt that Momentum helped secure Jeremy Corbyn's Labour leadership in the 2017 general election. It utilised and combined online tools with traditional campaigning to ensure people knocking on doors in marginal constituencies. That, with the aid of a manifesto which actually contained policies, enabled Labour to avoid an electoral disaster.

Long gone are the newspaper reports about this group of infiltrators threatening to deselect any MP who disagrees with Corbyn. Since the group became a much more top down organisation over the course of the last year, so the critical newspaper articles have stopped. The reorganisation of Momentum was seen as solving the issue of the Trotskyists. What's left is a social democratic leadership and scores of trade unionists ready to act as voting fodder for internal Labour battles.

Anarchists have reacted in various ways to the rise of Corbyn and Momentum. Many had continued to refuse to engage with electoral politics. Some have decided to hold their nose and vote, in the hope of getting rid of the Tories, and some others have got involved with actively supporting Momentum and Labour. This is understandable but utterly wrong. It's understandable because much of the campaigning they are involved with is about changing the material circumstances of the majority for the better. As anarchists we stand for socialism and it's perfectly reasonable to want to help campaigns that appear to be socialist.

The myth of Momentum is that on a day to day basis it is a socialist campaigning group, rather than simply a group aiming to get Labour into power. The amount of people flocking to it in hope of those material differences is drawing others in.

The problem with that is the very nature of Momentum as a top-down organisation. What happens when you want to campaign for something against

a Labour-run council for example? Well just ask housing campaigners in London. Momentum is nowhere to be seen. They will do nothing to damage the party. This also exposes another myth of Momentum. This is the myth that they are doing something extraordinary in grassroots campaigns. They are not. If anything they are just a well organised group of professional activists. Think of the Socialist Workers Party actually doing stuff other than just selling papers. That's Momentum. They decide what to campaign on (it has to be in Labour's interests), then they turn up and campaign (regardless of what is already happening on the ground).

Professional activists can be a menace. Good activists resist taking leadership positions in local campaigns they are not affected by themselves. They keep their distance so that they can offer advice to those that are directly involved. This is not the way Momentum activists behave. A Plan C article written after the Momentum conference, *The World Transformed* (wonderfully shortened, and without irony, to TWT) sets out how some people see Momentum as a game changer. The article proclaims that "standing 'outside' of the movements influenced by Corbyn's ascension to the top of the LP really doesn't cut the mustard." Unfortunately it doesn't elaborate on what cutting the mustard actually means in this context but it does explain that it is "warm under the wings of a dragon." The author goes on to claim that "there is no other game that could build a mass movement at present."

That is absolutely the case. We need to consider what the point of such a mass movement would be though. People seem obsessed with the size of political activity, rather than the efficacy of whatever they're doing. The Focus E15 Mothers weren't a massive group but gained some success. The United Voices of the World are a small union but keep

winning. Class War led a small campaign against the idea of 'poor doors' a few years back and gained a great deal of publicity on the issue. Politics is not about size, it's about what you do and the ways in which you do it. Small groups matter and they need help. Structure matters. As anarchists we should reject Momentum simply on the basis of how it organises, let alone its dodgy politics.

On the election we need to bear in mind that in every election across the democratic world there are usually around 30% of the population that don't vote. These non-voters tend to be the poorest people in society. Their apathy is really anything but. They are just getting on with life but perhaps more importantly there isn't normally much on offer for them to make a rational choice between competing parties. In 2017 the Labour manifesto was nowhere near as radical as the press made out. It didn't send Alistair Campbell and Tony Blair crying into the polling booths to reluctantly vote Labour. They trotted along quite happily to support it. The talk wasn't of breakaway parties anymore. This was simply social democratic policies, albeit on the left of social democracy. There was more than enough in there for the liberals in the Labour Party to support it.

The myths of Momentum could end up with people being swallowed into a structure which is only interested ultimately at getting Labour into power. The risk is that activists will be diverted into battles that only ultimately help that party. They could, in the process, result in other grassroots campaigns being trampled on, ignored, subverted and controlled by professional activists. There is no mass movement worth having unless it is free from the shackles of parliamentary politics. Freedom and socialism has to be our aim and we simply can't have both by going down the parliamentary road.

Jon Bigger

# AMID TUC DECLINE, UK'S

The Trades Union Congress is facing a decline in membership that many within the organisation are recognising as a crisis. At the same time more radical unions are not only growing but actively winning time and again. What do they offer that the TUC doesn't?

The TUC's membership crisis is a generational one. Of those currently in work, the generation with the highest density of union members is edging towards retirement.

Those following on behind them, currently around the middle of their working lives, are only marginally less likely to be union members — but they're getting older. When we look at those just starting their working lives, however, the drop in density is stark.

In essence, when older trade unionists retire there's nobody coming in behind them. The next generation of workers simply isn't unionised and the membership crisis is set to come to a head in about 15 years.

Under the TUC umbrella this has provoked reactions ranging from denial to panic. However, even when they acknowledge the problem that doesn't mean the answer is necessarily useful. Seeing a TUC blog suggest that "instead of saying 'let's stand in solidarity together' we might say 'unions are your best way to get ahead at work'" tells you all you need to know about how wrong-headed the direction they're heading in is.

But while the TUC is looking at "three new models" to "engage" young workers, ready to run a "full pilot" of what they view as the best in 2018, something far more crucial and exciting is happening. Workers are getting organised in the most precarious sectors of the economy and making enormous gains.

The traditional unions aren't declining because young people don't think they're hip, or because the next generation is riddled with individualists looking for career advancement, willing to accept any affront from zero hours to unpaid overtime to do so. That kind of line only serves to accept the narrative of 21st century capitalism and justify a service-provider unionism which is clearly going



Pic: Steve Eason, Flickr

nowhere. The actual reason for the decline is in the retreat to the public sector and other traditional strongholds of union membership such as manufacturing, dismissing the gig economy, the service sector and so on as "impossible to organise" and so hardly worth the time.

One recent honourable exception to that rule is the "McStrike" by the Bakers Food and Allied Workers Union (BFAWU). But in TUC terms this is an aberration, with stale parliamentary lobbies over the public sector pay freeze and the

predictable one day strikes to follow more par for the course.

By contrast the efforts of unions such as the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), Independent Workers of Great Britain (IWGB) and United Voices of the World (UVW) are truly inspiring. These unions have proudly staked a claim to the impossible to organise, and over the past couple of years there has been a marked growth in their numbers.

Cleaners and security guards in places such as the University of London, cycle

# RADICAL UNIONS GROW

couriers, private hire drivers, restaurant staff and more have quickly established themselves as the militant edge of the organised working class in Britain, far ahead of the sabre-rattling “awkward squad” of the TUC.

What’s important is that this militancy isn’t just defined by taking strike action. The civil service union PCS took more strike days than many other unions from 2010 to 2014 as it lost, in succession, disputes over pensions, pay and attacks on terms and conditions. But these low paid, precarious workers are actively winning. The Living Wage, outsourced workers getting the same conditions as in-house staff such as occupational sick pay and holidays, the reinstatement of sacked reps, the list goes on.

A key factor in this is the tactics, of course. Strikes which are called to inflict economic damage rather than as mere protests are the linchpin of a wider arsenal which has included occupations, blockades, marches and demonstrations far more loud and vibrant than veterans of dreary TUC-organised trudges across big cities may be familiar with. But these tactics are effective because they’re backed by effective grassroots organising and vibrant rank-and-file democracy.

You don’t have to be an anarchist to realise that the approach of the TUC unions is completely antithetical to this. The extreme examples are the open hostility of full time officials to lay members taking any initiative and doing things without their say-so and unions actively purging activists for having unpalatable politics.

More mundane is how live issues are stripped away from members to disappear into “negotiations in confidence” and stale campaign tactics imposed upon workers from above. Trade union politics are as weary and soul destroying as the most toxic office politics and any seasoned rep with an ounce of sense has long since been disillusioned and embittered by the whole thing.

In the 21st century, how we organise has to evolve. We have more ways than ever to communicate with our fellow workers, and they can be a great asset if used effectively. But the core principles of

organising which works and yields results remains the same: talk face-to-face, agitate over issues that workers actually care about, pick winnable battles and use direct action to win them so that workers can realise their own collective power, escalate as more workers get involved.

In theory, that’s trade unionism 101. But even if a union has an organising model in theory, in practice it doesn’t sit well with the bureaucracy’s need to sustain itself and retain its handle on power at all costs. Democracy and autonomy for members and branches, too, are obstacles to this.

As workers, the prospect of a new generation not being organised should worry us. The attacks we’re currently facing are the result of a ruling class seeking to kick us when we’re down; they perceive the union movement as weak enough to allow them to roll back the gains of previous decades, and they’re not wrong. With a crunch in union membership, there can be no doubt that they’ll see the opportunity to stick the boot in further.

But as anarchists, we have an answer. It’s the same answer as it always has been — organising democratically from the ground up and using direct action — but the size of the movement putting it into practice is growing.

Unions like IWW, IWGB and UVW are doing so in the workplace, and though they’re worthy of an article all on their own it’s worth mentioning that tenants and claimants groups as well as organisations like Sisters Uncut are doing similarly excellent work in communities.

The importance of all this is that it’s not just a more effective way of making and defending real gains in the present. Combined with an anti-state and anti-capitalist perspective, it’s the movement we need to build if we’re going to shape our own future as well.



## WHO'S DOING WHAT

**Industrial Workers of the World**  
iww.org.uk

Founded in the US in 1905, the syndicalist union currently lists 14 active branches around Britain, making it the most geographically diverse of the base unions. Particularly active in places such as Bristol and Sheffield, it has a solid organising background and excellent international contacts.

**Independent Workers of Great Britain**

iwgb.org.uk

Originally organised as an offshoot of the IWW, IWGB has made its bones working with precarious and migrant workforces across London, particularly in universities, and recently made a big splash by facing off against controversial taxi app service Uber over its treatment of staff.

**Solidarity Federation**

solfed.org.uk

Doesn’t have official workplace branches as it is not a registered union, but maintains a strong presence in Brighton and active Locals in half a dozen cities nationwide.

**United Voices of the World**

uvwunion.org.uk

Strong presence with migrant workers in London, fighting casualisation and for the Living Wage. Recently backed the Ferrari Two in their wage fight against H R Owen.

# ENDLESS NIGHTMARE: THE

There are currently around 4,000 people held in UK prisons on Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP) sentences. The sentences were introduced by then-Home Secretary David Blunkett, as part of a raft of New Labour measures seeking to criminalise people. The parole conditions for IPP sentences are far harsher than for most other sentences, and often require prisoners to undertake numerous mental health courses.

With the introduction of austerity the slimming down of these courses (which had already begun under New Labour) accelerated drastically. The net effect is that, unable to complete the activities that would grant parole,

thousands of prisoners are being held in sentences that far exceed their original tariff. Unsurprisingly, this means that IPP prisoners are far more likely to become addicted to drugs and to self-harm—a vicious cycle that prevents parole being made—and to commit suicide.

What's worse is that IPP sentences have been abolished. Blunkett acknowledges the deep injustice of what has happened to IPP prisoners. Yet nothing has been done to secure their release. Indeed, the government has railroaded plans to expand prisons—supposedly to deal with the 'overcrowding' crisis. Rather than look at getting people out of prison, our government is instead trying to imprison

more people (and get them to make companies big profits in their in-prison workshops in the process...).

Underneath all these figures are peoples' lives. What follows is a letter from Ian Hartley, an IPP prisoner who's partner, Joanne, who has fought tirelessly for his release. We are incredibly grateful for their permission to print them.

Public visibility of IPP injustice is slowly growing, but needs so much more solidarity. If you'd like to get involved, in any way, you can find more information, and contact details, at [smashipp.noflag.org.uk](http://smashipp.noflag.org.uk)—we're constantly struggling to keep our capacity up and every bit of support is needed.

## LETTER FROM PRISONER IAN HARTLEY

I've spent a lot of time in prisons since 1989 due to my own selfish ways. The sentences I never really gave a thought to—they were like water off a duck's back to put it bluntly (sad really) I was in boarding schools from the age of five years old.

But I've always known when I was getting out. Then in 2006 I was sentenced to three years IPP, 17 days took off. I didn't have a clue what had happened and I wasn't the only one. The sentencing judge Mr Slinger didn't understand either because three days later I was called back to court so it could be explained what the sentence meant. Coming on 12 years later back broken I'm still here wandering the violent drug-fueled wings not knowing when and if I'm ever going to get out, It's an environment I wouldn't wish on my worst enemy.

In my opinion they don't have a clue what's going on in prison (on the wings) or how to handle IPP prisoners. I've had a big problem with substances since the age of eight or nine. I have had clean times but I've also had a problem on this sentence. I hate waking up in the morning and can't wait to go asleep at night, when sleep does come that is.

My probation officer commented that for someone who has been in prison as long as I have I'm headstrong. I took that



as I'm not broken like she wants me to be. Seven years ago the probation was supporting me for residential rehab. Then that support was withdrawn for attempting to smuggle drugs 18 months before—my fault I fully accept that. Me and probation argued and are still arguing to this day.

Last year with no help whatsoever I gained funding from Preston adult social services and a placement in residential rehab, but in fact the probation inside and outside were not supportive and dead against it and they let the parole board know, very much so. But 100% supportive of Category D (open prison). When I explained to the probation it would be a matter of when and not if I lapsed into drugs in Cat D, she wrote in her report

that I'd threatened to use drugs if I went in Cat D, that I would use drugs and that I was trying to manipulate my release to a rehab (what a crock of shit). She claims she wanted me in Cat D.

I lapsed, I went and spoke to officers and asked for help. I was moved to a "drug-free" wing (no such thing in prison) where I was giving negative urine samples. Five or six weeks later my probation officer came up to see me and explained that I looked really well and she didn't expect it really because she had been told about my lapse. On that visit she started to talk about my childhood and was saying stuff like "what answers do you want from your mum. You need to let it go, you're not gonna get answers

# SCANDAL OF IPP VICTIMS



Ian Hartley with family and, left, supporters protest for his freedom

to your questions.” Then she started to tell me about her childhood and how she was brought up by her father and not her mother, how strict he was and things like that. Then about her own children and how they were disciplined (beaten).

She said: “but I accept it’s nothing like you was Ian, but it was a different era, you need to let it go Ian.” She started to talk about Joanne’s ex-husband who sexually assaulted her and how I would have to sit in a room with him and Joanne and social services over the kids, then ended the visit. It left me with a big head fuck, I feel she pulled me in and duped me with her patter about herself.

That night I lapsed. The screws walked in my pad, saw I was under the influence and found a bit of drugs on the side. They handcuffed me and put me in the block then sent me back to closed conditions the next day. Was that her test? I’ve had her for over three years as my offender

manager and that was the first ever time I’ve seen her one-to-one, it’s always been with the offender supervisor.

If I wasn’t so headstrong I would have took my own life long ago. I don’t live, I exist in this life. And drugs have been my coping mechanism since a very early age. Thinking about how my family and Joanne’s would feel and deal with it has kept me alive because I wouldn’t want to put them through that sort of thing. This sentence is killing so many people within themselves.

There are so many times I’ve put myself in segregation for five or six months at a time. How can the powers that be expect you to change when every time that cell



door opens you’ve got to put that mask on so you yourself don’t become a victim of the violence that happens every day on the wings.

Last year us cleaners on the wing sorted some bullies out and they were moved off the wing the screws praised us.

I went into Cat D after that when I came back. I got put on a condemned little dingy wing. Lo and behold the bullies were on there. I didn’t see it coming I just woke up in a pool of blood, I hadn’t even put my property in my cell. Three days later a screw said “fucking hell, when did that happen.” I said three days ago, she said “there’s nothing in the observation book.” I knocked a visit back with my family because I didn’t want to frighten them — my mum and sister were sat in the visiting room but I wouldn’t come out my pad.

I asked to be moved off the wing but was left on because I wouldn’t name names. But what I did say was you lot (screws) know about the bullying incident that went on on E wing and you’ve put me on the same wing as the bullies. I was still left on the wing, I was only moved back to E wing after Joanne phoned in demanding I be moved.

Prison is a jungle, the worst ever and 80% of the screws are spectators of their own choice — they get a rush from it. I filled an own interest Relocation Risk Assessment form (Violence Reduction Form). I didn’t name anybody, the screw came up to me and said you need to give us names. This was outside another inmate’s cell — he saw and heard everything. I told the screw to get away from me. It was like he was trying to create a situation Incident or whatever you want to call it.

Nobody knows what this environment is like unless you live or work here, no wonder people are killing themselves, cutting themselves or drugging themselves up. I might be headstrong but I honestly don’t know how long I can keep going like this, I need emotion, love, compassion. I get that every week on a visit that’s it, the rest is dark and scary, sorry for rabbiting on but that’s what it’s like to walk in a prisoner’s shoes, that’s just a snippet of what goes on, slashings every other day, people beat with table legs, broom handles, stabbings — it’s no holds barred.

# LESSONS OF CORNERHOUSE

*The Cornerhouse is a former theatre in Manchester squatted from January to August 2017 by self-organised homeless people linked to the Manchester Activist Network. This is their story.*

As the final pieces of our belongings, donations and clothes were brought out of the infamous Cornerhouse it was time for Manchester Activist Network to reflect back on six months of occupation. From the Loose Space festival and surviving three eviction attempts, to the rough sleepers we housed and three other squats opened over that time, this had been a busy, and at times stressful but productive period that none of us will ever forget.

The biggest thing that came out of the Cornerhouse was a reaffirmation of the need for solidarity when we are faced with big issues. In order to fully tackle rough sleeping and stop the rise in homelessness we all need to be prepared to give a little of ourselves. Not money, but from inside of us. We need constructive dialogues, we need to drop the egos, forget about the “company line,” reflect on what we put our energies into and how we can change as individuals. Only then can we better the systemic problem that is homelessness.

Our experience of the Cornerhouse starts with Loose Space, a five-week festival we held. It was a double-edged sword. It did exactly what we hoped it would; bring artists and the community together with activists, and enable a sharing of ideologies and effort. However this came at a cost to many of us personally as it tested our bonds of friendship and ideology, and was physically and mentally draining. I think we would all agree though that it had more positives than negatives.

We are still here solid as a group, at time of writing have three squats and have brought in new faces who have given additional energy in areas we did not have access to before, like film, social media, arts/crafts, healing, contact through the MMU and fundraising for three worthy charities. All of

these were goals before the festival, so in my eyes it was a great success.

It has taught us a lot more about squatting, particularly when you have a group of around 40 people. There is a need for different types of squats: Residential, Activist, Arts and Healing are all very different places to live in, however they are essential for any group who wish to be active and create intentional communities to allow the various mix of people, personalities and energy to have the space in which to flourish and be productive to the whole.

Homelessness will never end. We are not the people to end it and no-one should look to us in that way, however, there is a need for us in this city right now. There are many who publicly don't endorse us, yet behind close doors recognise that we provide a service that is lacking at the moment across the UK, not just Manchester. We can as a city end rough sleeping though and this is what we put our energy into at the Cornerhouse.

It is not easy. Dealing with issues that are the causes of homelessness range from drug addition, alcoholism, abuse, youth homelessness, mental illness and the disabled; the list goes on, it is very draining on those individuals that take on mentoring roles, and for people around them as they try to rebuild their lives. We firmly believe now, more than ever, what we did at the Cornerhouse was the right thing to do, and we will continue to do this. Our community of squats grows, and will resolutely put pressure on the council and the associated bodies in Manchester by taking high-profile council buildings and iconic structures in Manchester. Just as rough sleeping doesn't stop overnight, neither will we.

Finally, one part of the experience has left a bitter taste in the mouth for many of us. Dealing with politicians. We had a running dialogue with Andrew Lightfoot (CEO, Combined Authority), Mike Wright (Strategic Lead for Homelessness, Combined Authority) Paul Dennett (Mayor

of Salford) Beth Knowles (Lead to ending rough sleeping, Labour Council), Ivan Lewis MP, and finally Andrew Burnham (Gtr Manchester Mayor). We had been told that meetings were being arranged with the Mayor and his team, that Beth, Ivan and Paul were coming to visit the squat to see what we did.

We attended the meetings, stayed calm, talked passionately but articulately and tried to engage the people with the power. Where did this leave us? With a broken promise that we would be told the week of eviction to enable us to get some of the more vulnerable members to a new squat, so they were not left to walk the street. That we would be granted a private meeting with Mayor Burnham, and an ignored request from us to postpone any eviction until we had the meetings to give us the best chance to prepare our arguments and points of view.

For me the trust will never be rebuilt and this is the same for many of us, personally it will change the way in which I organise around issues for the remainder of my life.

To wrap things up, the last six months have been a whirlwind of situations, people, buildings, friends, new ideologies and much to ponder. We must however not let our personal stories take the limelight. This is about ALL of us. You, me, the rough sleeper, the abused child, the struggling mum, the mentally ill, to the lonely migrant. This is not just about homelessness either, it is about helping people learn that the time has come for a new paradigm. The old one has run its course, capitalism only fully works for the haves, not the have nots. It only serves a small proportion of the global population and not the many. So now is the time for us to put aside our individual activism issues, come together as one and make change happen. This is the only campaign and it goes on, we only hope that you will start with us today.

**Nick Napier**  
facebook.com/MancActivists







Social housing is under attack from privatisation, gentrification, and straight up neglect. Thousands of people have found out they live in unsafe blocks which they had previously been told passed safety tests. Others are fighting privatisation and demolition. This article gives a short roundup of some struggles going on around social housing in London.

In Haringey the council plans to transfer £2 billion of council owned land to a private company, LendLease. This land includes the Broadwater Farm and Northumberland Park estates, home to thousands of people, plus a library and school. There have been many allegations against Lendlease including issues of safety. Where tenants will be rehoused, and on what kind of tenancies, has not been spelled out.

The campaign against the transfer has been very active and has held several lively demonstrations in Haringey, but a difficulty is that many tenants do not know about the plans or believe they will have better housing after the redevelopment. Long term neglect of estates can mean people don't feel enthusiastic about fighting privatisation and are in favour of "change" even though it may work out badly for them.

Many blocks failed the more stringent safety tests after the Grenfell fire in Kensington but have people still living in them who are now in a state of uncertainty and stress. The four tower blocks in Ledbury Estate, Peckham, which are built using the same design as Ronan Point, the Newham tower block that collapsed in 1968, have cracks in the outer walls that you can see daylight through.

After years of complaints from residents which had been brushed aside, Grenfell finally forced Southwark council to accept

the blocks are unsafe and it is attempting to decant residents to repair the blocks. However people are still in dire circumstances as there is not enough alternative housing available so Ledbury tenants have to "bid" for flats that come up, which will impact on the thousands of people already on the waiting list, and tenants have spoken out about having to "compete against my neighbours."

The gas has been cut off because of the risk of a gas explosion, but residents are not able to use electric heaters as the supply cannot take the increased load so people are suffering in the cold. The tenants have organised a campaign, Ledbury Action, and are organising weekly protests.



Tanner Point in Plaistow is one of many blocks where people discovered they were living in a tower covered in flammable material, and would be going on living in it until the cladding could be removed. A march in August in Newham, calling at various affected blocks, heard a woman describe how she kept the bath full of water with blankets beside it so she could wrap herself and her child in wet blankets if there was a fire. People are having to live in a constant state of stress and anxiety.

At the same time Grenfell tenants are still being housed in hotel rooms and temporary accommodation. Some have been forced to go to food banks and have also experienced abuse and hate mail directed at them after media misreporting of the "luxury flats" they were supposedly being given.

There are many difficulties in organising in defence of council housing. People

find it difficult to come together and act in defence of their homes. Tenants with no resources are up against multi-million pound developments. Some campaigns were starting from scratch in an emergency with very little pre-existing organisation on the estate. After decades of badmouthing of council tenants and working class people in general, some people feel that nothing can be changed, or don't want to see themselves as council tenants, or believe that anything that gets them off the estate must be an improvement. Long working hours and poverty leave people with little energy for going to meetings and flyposting in the rain.

However the different estate campaigns are managing to bring a lot of people together and give each other confidence. Throughout the summer people were talking to each other from estate to estate and sharing advice and information about safety concerns and issues. There are co-ordination groups such as Radical Housing Network and different campaign groups support each other in lots of ways. Council tenants are also working with private tenants groups such as Digs and the Renters Power Project.

The destruction of social housing means higher rents, more insecurity, worse housing conditions and working class people relegated to the corners and edges of the city. Although we are up against powerful developers and unaccountable councils, and the task at hand feels daunting and overwhelming, a lot of the problem is our feelings of isolation and powerlessness, and those are more fragile than they appear. Talking to neighbours and sharing support is something we can all do. What can feel like concrete walls keeping us apart are sometimes only glass, and can be smashed.

**Malone**

# ELITES' SQUAWKING OFFER

Recently the National Audit Office (NAO) published a study which was of surprise to no-one — notwithstanding the blustering pretend humbug of neoliberals and Tories — showing that welfare cuts cause homelessness to rise.

In reporting it for a 2017 audience the BBC duly potted up to a government spokesperson for “fair comment,” and were told by a presumably straight-faced PR weasel that they are “investing £550 million to address the issue.”

This context-free and highly conditional “we’re bunging money at it” line is, of course, one of the standard slate of PR responses all governments try when the horrible consequences of their inhumanity get an airing on national television. Other tried and tested smokescreens involve telling us they’re “disappointed” in the people making these reports, as though a naughty schoolchild has been caught writing rude words on the class whiteboard. Or talking about some noble-sounding piece of legislation which actually offers very little positive change — in this case, the “Homelessness Reduction Act,” which nominally requires councils to help all eligible applicants rather than just those with a priority need but of course will be neutered by workarounds as councils have no extra real or ongoing resources to do so.

The numbers aren’t really anything we don’t know already. In seven years there has been a 60% rise in households living in temporary accommodation, including 120,540 children. That number is extraordinarily generous to the government, as it excludes many staying with family because they have nowhere else to go, or who have fallen through the cracks of the system, or simply don’t qualify for “emergency” rooms.

Around 4,000-4,500 rough sleepers were counted last autumn and noted in the same study — almost certainly a gross underestimate, given the difficulty of doing comprehensive research on people who are by their very nature living beyond or actively avoiding the easy notice of bored researchers wandering around town centres. Nevertheless, that snapshot represented a 134% increase since 2010.



## Mixed Responses

When a representative of the big council and charity institutions responds to a question from a BBC journalist about the policies of a government department overseen by a Tory Minister, there is, most likely, no point at which an agenda isn’t being satisfied for a middle to upper-class figure making assumptions about people they don’t really understand.

The BBC reporter is looking for a snappy narrative — Council vs Commons. Charity vs Tory. Nice neat quotes from authoritative figures who know the requirements in the studio. At some point, if they find someone photogenic, a case study may be forthcoming about how miserable someone is — the great unwashed aren’t really suitable to pontificate on the Daily Politics live, of course.

The Local Government Association chappie meanwhile is pitching for his council chiefs against Westminster.

His chatter will be all about the impact of cuts to council allowances, a lack of power at local level, the impossibility of satisfying both Ministers’ demands and constituents’ needs. He won’t of course, talk about systemic corruption and graft. Or about dodgy development deals stitched up by councils of all political hues, where luxury housing and gentrification are not so quietly encouraged because they bring in far better rates for the coffers. Or about the measures taken to push rough sleepers out of sight and out of mind, park benches that can’t be slept on, fines for begging. Shunt those homeless out to less powerful regions and we can drive the problem elsewhere, they don’t say (but do).

The charity ... well let us just see where their money comes from. Who it goes to. Follow the green paper road until we see the shine of those clutched pearls in the soft hands of their filthy rich executives.

# RS NOTHING TO HOMELESS



Pic: Nick Rowland

“The government must give more,” these scions of wealth cry, as they pick up another bung to deal with the problem at rock-bottom prices, another contract to deal damage to the poor they “champion” via workfare or migration stitch-ups. There are none so scathing of the Worthy Institutions as those who have to live with them, none so cynical of their intent than those who work on the shop floors for penny-pinched wages and are told “but this is a charity” when they complain. Sixty percent of donations on admin. Millions sat unspent. But please, “don’t give money to beggars.”

The “solutions” these people peddle are self-serving. They stumble around the nests of institutional power, endlessly screaming at each other about the foulness below because they can’t admit that it’s part and parcel of the edifice they have built. Homelessness isn’t just a result of poor policy in the management of State and capital, it’s business as usual.

Late capitalism is homelessness. For there to be a rich there must be a poor.

### The rights and wrongs

When Westminster complains that it can’t raise cash for housing or homelessness, it’s half right. The logics of managing capitalism are limiting. Even a left Labour government can’t solve the basic problem of higher taxation resulting in capital flight, the pressure of globalised production or the problems brought by massive borrowing — eventually it must bow to the needs of “responsible management.”

When local government complains it’s being stymied by Westminster it’s thus also half right — pressure journeys downwards from the peak. But such councils are also expected to “manage responsibly” using their own bespoke taxation and their interests are therefore skewed towards the groups they get most of their resources from — businesses, homeowners. Certainly not from the homeless, regarded on council balance sheets as little more than a drain.

When charities complain ... well they always complain. That’s what they’re there for, as long as they don’t question core capitalist principles (they’re legally bound not to). It’s certainly not their role however to make themselves redundant, or to pass all the money to the poor. An irony is that the Tories say State handouts reduce people’s self-reliance, but a Rees-Mogg is always there to boast about the British impulse to charity, a form of aid requiring people to publicly define themselves as incapable of self-reliance.

The State-charity network as a whole acts simply as another cycle in the reproduction of capitalism. A 2011 study found that more than 15,000 charity bosses earn over £60,000 a year in this country, and 55 pick up more than £250,000 a year to “direct” the management of people whose lives they couldn’t possibly understand. These are the thoroughly insulated decision-makers.

### On collective self-reliance

Meanwhile the homeless themselves try as best they can to find their own solutions. They squat, they apply for limited hostel

places or if unsure of Britain’s complex laws and technicalities they sleep outside until the winter rolls around. They band together in little groups of mutual solidarity against the night, and hustle for the chance of a roof and a locked door.

We The People have never “owned” most of the land in this system, and progressively fewer own any of it, for it has been seized by those most aggressive hoarders of profit — wealth multiplied through ownership. And those space parasites leveraging their advantages to make yet more advantages cannot be done away with by capitalism, their greed is protected in its core and heart.

We do collectively have the potential to take it back however — those 200,000 homes that have sat empty for more than six months, the luxury pads held over simply because the wealthy have nothing else to do with their cash than buy another concrete asset, the homes and flats that are gouged monthly for fat rent cheques.

The numbers, skills and productive power are there to not just tinker around the edges of a fundamentally unfair system but to remake it, throwing off the nets that are cobwebs for the rich and steel chains for the poor. It has been done before with rent strikes and mass squatting campaigns. It is done today in occupations, eviction resistances and solidarity with tent sleepers. In fights against the mismanagement of residential blocks and assertions of tenants’ rights to control their own homes.

The war against capitalists’ lust to dominate everything and everywhere cannot be won by letting the rich arbitrate our destiny based on endless studies they’ve commissioned which remind us all about symptoms we already see and refuse point blank to address root causes. It must, and eventually will, come from below.



# SAVING ANARCHISM'S PAST



Based in Nottingham, the Sparrow's Nest is a key archiving project for the literature of the British anarchist movement. Freedom talks to the collective.

## Could you say a bit about how you got started and what sort of things you collect?

We started in 2007 after visits to libraries and archives in Europe which have emerged out of the "social anarchist" tradition. We wanted to establish something of a high standard in Britain for historians of anarchism, activists and anyone just interested in finding out more. We started with our own private archives and the works of key anarchist thinkers, and built from there helped by generous donations and cost-price purchases from Freedom, AK, Active Distro, Kate Sharpley and other anarchist publishers. We now curate the archives of the Anarchist Federation and Solidarity Federation and their previous incarnations. Large parts of our collections have been entrusted to us by people in the movement who have often spent years or decades building up collections and approached us to look after them properly and make them accessible.

We have almost complete runs of publications by important historical groups/papers such as *Anarchy*, *Organisation of Revolutionary Anarchists*, *Freedom*, *Class War* and *Black Flag*, and left-communist groups such as *Solidarity*, *Subversion*, *Wildcat*, *Workers Playtime* and *Careless Talk*. We also have thousands of pamphlets, little-known journals, etc.; snapshots of what anarchists have been thinking and getting up to since the 1940s. We hold significant collections of publications which flourished in the late 1970s and 1980s, such as punk fanzines and the papers of local anarchist groups.

These sorts of materials are available to anyone in our public archive. We also carefully "keyword" items and annotate

the catalogue entries to make it easier for people with particular interests to search.

As well as this, we hold hundreds of books and radical papers relating to struggles in our area, working closely with the People's Histreh project in Nottingham.

## What have been some of your most important additions? And your favourites?

The most important would be those which are uniquely preserved, such as internal documents relating to some of the groups above. We are particularly fond of the archive of the Syndicalist Workers' Federation because of how seriously it took the preservation of its own internal documents.

Other favourites would include what appears to be an original of issue one of a key anarcho-punk fanzine, *Kill Your Pet Puppy*, which we will digitise soon. We will always be very attached to Issue 38 (1964) of *Anarchy*, which took Nottingham as its theme and connects us to local legend, the late Ray Gosling (who gave a notorious lecture at the Nest), and which we which put back into circulation in the city by reproducing it.

## What's involved in the digital archive you're building, what are you prioritising?

There are already a couple of thousand documents available online in our Digital Library. We prioritise things which are unique and unpublished, not digitised elsewhere, which we use as part of our own personal research, and which are falling to bits. We are always happy to be led in our digitisation efforts by the requests of visitors. Much of our Digital Library has been built up after someone was doing some research and we digitised items for them.

## How is the project organised?

We are a small collective of five or six people with support and advice from

various others, are funded entirely by small donations from individuals, and from the Anarchist Federation and Solidarity Federation for our work for them, and would like to involve other people who get what we are doing.

We would like to be able to open more regularly and do more outreach work. Most of all, we want to work with people who are pursuing their research projects. We have realised that people often simply don't know just how much is actually possible and how much we have to offer. We would also like people with specific knowledge to help us curate and interpret our holdings, e.g. contributing to the data stored in the catalogue as they are working with the documents. People have also used documents for art exhibitions and even found old protest songs to inspire whistling choir compositions.

## What next?

In 2018 we are organising more events (meetings, talks, discussions as well as displays) given that it will not only be our tenth anniversary, but also the other anniversary of big historic events, so we want to organise events e.g. regarding critical interpretations of suffrage (1918, 1928), or the events and repercussions of the movements of 1968. So, please join our mailing list to find out more, and even better, offer to come and give a talk and give us an excuse to display lots of related materials.

There is something else of importance to say about anarchist archives. Projects like ours aren't just set up by book nerds or people avid about anarchist history and ideas (although we are all of these things!). The point is to provide a platform for the contribution of ideas, examples and experiences to the future. To help our movement access materials which it can use to shape the future.

[thesparrowsnest.org.uk](http://thesparrowsnest.org.uk)

# WELCOME TO PARTISAN

Manchester has been struggling along without a stable radical social centre since 2007, when The Basement was ruined by flooding. So when Partisan Collective announced they had secured space for progressive events and projects it caused quite a stir. Below, collective member **Madeline FJ** writes about their efforts so far.

The first public meeting for Partisan Collective took place in February 2016 in the city's Northern Quarter venue and Gulliver's pub. There was a large response and the first few months were spent by members figuring out what Partisan was going to be. A website and social media pages were set up almost immediately to publicise it and attract people who would want to contribute. The website made it clear that it would use Leeds' Wharf Chambers and DIY Space For London to help model itself on.

After monthly meetings and a sustained effort to find an appropriate space, a temporary space was found. Working with an organisation called 3space, a non-profit urban agency which works with corporates, government and developers to maximise under-utilised or surplus commercial property, Partisan ran a temporary space for four months from June to September 2016. It was used for activist meetings, panel discussions, music events, art exhibitions and more. It was a great opportunity to see how Partisan came to life in a physical space and to test how it would be co-ordinated.

During this time, the collective's internal structure was also organised. The internal structure is as democratic as possible whilst also ensuring that things get done. There is a collective and a co-op. The collective is anyone that is signed up as a (paying or non-paying) member and does regular things like attending meetings and occasional volunteering (not that that is compulsory). The co-op is made up of a handful of people who put in four hours a week of work into Partisan and have to approve decisions made by the collective for something (e.g.



an event) to go ahead. They tend to deal with the day-to-day running of the space and can also approve new co-op members.

The group communicates through a tool called Slack, which can be accessed through a smartphone, tablet or computer. Different channels for different working groups are set up on this. Within the collective there are a few working groups including accountability and accessibility, bar and café, community outreach, events, finance and fundraising, media, podcasts and sound, which effectively divides the labour. Anyone can get involved in these at any time.

In July 2017, after 18 months of searching, Partisan secured a permanent space on Cheetham Hill Road in the northern part of the city centre, very close to Manchester Victoria station. Partisan occupies the first floor (as a social space) and a basement (for gigs) of a listed building.

There have been great efforts to make Partisan accessible both physically and socially. Since the space is across both a first floor and basement, it's not yet fully accessible. However, we remain 100%

committed to building a lift and a ramp as soon as possible. The space was opened before this could be built in order to generate funds to allow this to happen.

Accessibility is also maintained in that there are no rules, spoken or unspoken, about who you have to be in order to get involved. There are new people joining all the time, a testament to how welcoming an environment it is.

We've found that it's essential to maintain a strong social media presence. Being in Manchester, it's been relatively easy to reach out and find progressive people to get involved. But using the Internet definitely helped.

In summary, not only has Partisan Collective been a brilliant initiative for a collectively owned and accessible space for the arts and activism, it has created an uplifting sense of community between like-minded people who have a shared goal for progress. Let's hope it continues well into the future and that it inspires others to take similar actions in their own communities.

[partisancollective.net](http://partisancollective.net)



For all that “nerd culture” has become hegemonic on our screens, role play games (RPGs) have remained on the fringes of that success with Dungeons and Dragons being the only truly famous example, known for its geekiness. But today’s RPGs encompass far more, spanning everything from horror and the Old West to sci-fi.

In that latter category sits Eclipse Phase. By turns utopian and dystopian, it explores themes of transhumanism, AI singularity and post-Earth scenarios. Woven into its fabric is a complex tale about an anarchist-led fight for autonomy against corporate oligarchy.

Since its award-winning launch in 2009 EP, as fans know it, has spawned a 404-page introductory work, dozens of subsidiary stories and an astonishingly dense lore.

Rob Ray interviewed EP co-creator Rob Boyle for the upcoming launch of their second edition, which drew no fewer than 13,000 backers on Kickstarter and raised £142,000 — quintupling their target.

**Given the radical and political nature of EP were you taken by surprise that the RPG community proved so enthusiastic?**

Not necessarily, there’s a large portion of the RPG community that swings left, and quite a few that are interested in games as a way to explore sociological or political issues, especially in “indie RPG” circles. We’ve definitely attracted some attention for our openly political nature, but it’s mostly been positive. There’s a heavy right-libertarian streak in transhumanist circles, and we draw some of that crowd, so we occasionally get some flak for portraying anarchism positively.

That said, I think Eclipse Phase was well-timed with its initial release, following a wave of great transhuman fiction (Stross, MacLeod, Sterling, Morgan, etc.). It’s hard to break ground with sci-fi games, but we hit the point where cyberpunk was too synonymous with reality — it was time for the next thing.

**How would you say anarchist theory has had an influence over the project? Any theorists and thinkers in particular?**

I first identified as an anarcho-communist back in high school in the 1980s, and through the ‘90s and beyond I was heavily involved with anarchist publishing and organising projects. EP co-creator Brian Cross also identifies as an anarchist, and he has a background as a sociology professor. We obviously injected a lot of our outlook.



If I had to highlight my specific influences I would say Murray Bookchin, for his approaches towards confederalism, technology, and social ecology, and probably the entire German autonomist/antifa movement, for its non-dogmatic approach to synthesising radical ideas. Anarchist science writer Brian Martin probably impacted some of my views on scientific responsibility.

Overall, politically, I think my ideas have been strongly shaped by the Sojourner Truth Organisation, active in the ‘70s-80s, who have had a larger impact than I think most modern anarchists realise. I should probably also give a shout out to James Hughes and George Dvorsky, who helped shape and cohere the technoprogressive side of transhuman politics.

**The use of extravagant homebrew high tech in anarchist zones places them as main foil to the hypercorps. Was that intended as a hub of story creation?**

Definitely, we wanted to illustrate both the dangers of technology used for control but also the possible uses for liberation. So we detail how nanofabrication tech can create an almost post-scarcity situation where people are liberated from basic needs and how mesh networking, AI assistants, and real-time online polling can facilitate more cooperative and consensus-based organisational models. And, frankly, we wanted to show how capitalism aims to perpetuate cycles of work and bondage so elites can hoard wealth and power, even when it’s entirely unnecessary.

### Could you run through your thinking around the anarchists being portrayed?

I think we're all well aware of the difficulties of social revolution. For EP, we looked at the likelihood of future space expansion and resource exploitation and saw an opportunity there for autonomists to establish their own presence outside of capitalist control. The vast distances and time scale of space travel make it challenging to exercise dominance over remote outposts and the technologies available make it possible for autonomists to establish self-reliant colonies. So they were able to thrive without interference.

And, of course, they are an attractive safe haven for refugees, escaped indentureds, and others sick of corporate exploitation. The Fall of Earth in the setting (during a war with self-aware AIs) helped to boost their populations, and also threw the forces of capitalism into disarray. By the time new capitalist powers had arisen, the autonomists were entrenched and a significant counter-power. Capitalist expansion hasn't grown to the point where the two are forced into direct conflict yet.

### Regarding human augmentation, how has EP tended to handle the threat that in the future, a heavily upgraded, functionally-immortal elite might eventually simply out-tech us?

We've taken the view that technology empowers everyone, not just the ruling elites. Yes, the elites have more resources and gain early access, but there are several mechanisms countering that. First is the cyberpunk maxim that the street makes its own uses for things, meaning that even technology deployed for purposes of control is often subverted and repurposed.

Second is that hierarchical systems of control are slow and cumbersome in relation to agile and flexible decentralised systems, which is why social-media-coordinated uprisings have led to toppled regimes and 4th-gen guerrilla warfare networks are able to mix it up with the world's advanced militaries. And even as technology advances, we see that hierarchical systems are riddled with vulnerabilities.

And even as the elites develop advanced technologies, it's important to remember that they do not have access to it first — the scientists, engineers, programmers, and other workers that make it do. So in Eclipse Phase we had a number of elements who have taken this

corporate technology, gone rogue, and taken advantage of a space exploration resource rush to establish their own autonomous zones and then open sourcing the tech.

In EP we've assumed that self-improving artificial super-intelligences are more likely to appear before super-intelligent augmented humans, so that's been made the primary threat.

### What did you hope for in the use of disposable bodies (sleeves) and a "humanity" essentially uploaded onto the web as a core feature of storytelling?

Well the main element here was to explore that sort of functioning immortality. For RPGs character death is a pretty big deal, and many game directors will avoid it so as not to upset players who have invested lots of time and emotional energy into their characters.

So for many players the option to come back after you die is quite novel, even if there are repercussions in the form of lost memories or remembering your death (depending on how your backup was restored). This of course has some interesting effects on gameplay — it is not uncommon for PCs to sacrifice themselves for others, for example.

The secondary aspect was to really dive into the idea of switching bodies. While for gaming purposes this means you get to treat your body as customisable gear, the whole idea of literally becoming a new person, with a potentially different sex, ethnicity, or number of limbs — or possibly a synthetic, virtual, or nonhuman body — is a really great storytelling exercise. There is just so much you can do with that.

### You mention in the first edition that use of sleeves has the effect of essentially eliminating sex (indeed most biological attributes) as a discriminatory factor. Has this had any interesting feedbacks?

Yes, prejudicial notions become all the more quaint when people can take whatever form they want. My personal sense is that with other games, you often have players (usually men) who simply always stick with the same gender (usually male) when making characters.

With EP, players are much more willing to take on characters with different gender, sex, or other characteristics, and to then repeatedly change that as they go. By putting it out there in the forefront,

and sometimes having it forced upon them by the game director, we definitely create a situation where players often have to think about the ramifications of body dysmorphia, and so put them in a spot where they have to think about what transgender people feel on a daily basis.

We've gotten some attention from transgender sociologist Katherine Cross for that (she is contributing to Eclipse Phase's second edition).

### Have you got any tasty teasers for what's in store for the autonomists?

We have received some criticism that our depiction of autonomist space is sometimes "too utopian," so in the future we'll be focusing a bit more on some of the problems that might arise within a transhuman anarchist society, which is I think a good exercise for us as radicals.

● A longer version of this article is available at [freedomnews.org.uk](http://freedomnews.org.uk)



# MODELS OF CLIMATE

## A technical look at neoliberal crisis dogmas

The creed of neoliberalism redefines labour, land and the climate. It's politically dominant and reinforces capitalism's demand that Earth's climate be construed as part of nature as an external object — a computer-modelled system. The neoliberal state builds upon this concept and engineers it into rentable, marketable units, transforming the meaning of "climate" and its relationship to capital.

The neoliberalist "climate" sees humans as transcending nature and nature as belonging to us. The concrete ways in which it has externalised the climate have provided materials for innovations such as climate rent and climate commodities. By regarding our climate as a chaotic but ultimately modellable form (technically termed as "global coupled models," or GCMs), pollution has been made abstract, with compensations and equivalences put in service to override local barriers to extraction, production and circulation.

### What created the neoliberal climate?

Modelling experts have updated older nature/society, fact/value, science/policy dichotomies into a single system/context dualism linked to capitalist production management. Shaped by the rise of computing, climatology went through a revolution. GCMs produced a climate system as well as an external context, or social system, into which everything — political decisions, individual preferences, class struggle, ideologies — was placed. But the new system/context dichotomy, like the older nature/science one, is plagued with contradictions.

A working example is from the most recent report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which was formed in 1988 in order to make regular assessments on climate change. These studies include the scientific basis for climate change, its impacts and future risks and aim to articulate potential adaptation and mitigation to policy makers. In effect the IPCC endorses a conception of science-based policy. Its fifth report (IPCCAR5) is its most contemporary to date.

### Working group One

The role of the IPCC's Working Group One is to assess on a "comprehensive, objective and transparent basis — the scientific, technical and socio-economic information for the risk of human induced climate change, its impacts and options for adaptation and mitigation."

This quote highlights an objectivity requirement, both in the assessment of scientific information as well as in the information itself. It suggests that objectivity in assessment of the science in climate modelling can help us to understand the biases involved when looking at the risk of human-induced climate change and its impact on adaptation/mitigation strategies. In short the objective assessment of the science should be able to influence policy decision making and the desideratum is that science and its assessment in Working Group One are both apt and objective policies.

The group guidance note further advises that even with mathematical methods to determine uncertainties, its statements still require the use of expert judgment. So the physically-based sciences need a subjective process (expert judgment) to provide a comprehensive uncertainty statement to, for example, assess the range of projected global mean temperature increases for a particular emissions scenario.

The challenge here is to arrive at an uncertainty range from a synthesis of the available information. Expert judgment is part of the end of the synthesis of an uncertainty range. It is important to realise that though expert judgment is a subjective process, in the eyes of the IPCC it is the that judgement which provides an increase in objectivity via their "expertise."

One can therefore consider the need of objective science to be upheld by expert judgment on the standard model as prescribed by the IPCC. However there is no formal available procedure specified in the guidance note. As a consequence the subjectivity in the process may override any increase in objectivity.

Frigg et al show that the subjectivity in climate modelling does not only happen



Pic: Ted McGrath

in the uncertainty estimate, but that expert judgment is used throughout. This in turn shows that the whole of the science involved in climate modelling can be seen as subjective and *not* objective.

Treating the planet as a system amenable to management has still presented nature as a-historical, something predictable and controllable. The systems approach represented a new way to help neoliberals address all social issues through price discovery. This is how the neoliberal "climate" became integrated with the economy.

### Effects

These political mechanics cannot be anything but trouble. As we have seen the science/policy process models for optimising climate change, so-called truth machines, culminate in contradiction.

Thus the economist's view of climate comes into conflict with that of climatologists. However the onset of chaotic outcomes (New Orleans, Puerto Rico) paved the way for new waves of disaster capitalism: creative destruction.



# CHAOS

Environmental policy in the neoliberal era sees the value of nature as dependent on applications of economic/ecological expertise to an external non-human entity, rather than as the historical interactions of commoners and commons.

## What is wrong?

From an ecological Marxist, indigenous or feminist perspective, neoliberal natures look more like an elaboration of their industrial forbears rather than an alternative. Practices of treating the climate not as a neutral backdrop to human activities but as an integral part of many moral/political orders tend to be ignored.

Furthermore political action, now relegated to a rudimentary interface between the two structures and mainstream climate politics, becomes a matter of border controls between nature and society and not about questioning them. New rents, commodities and markets which help define the neoliberal climate are constructed and maintained overwhelmingly through the expanded activities of the State and international agencies. In keeping with neoliberal tenets, the new climate is built in ways that help State and corporate actors evade much of the burden of social problems that markets are now advertised as cheaply solving.

## What can be done?

The very understanding of neoliberal climate requires a point of resistance. To understand is to resist neoliberalism and its forerunner capitalisms. As Larry Lohmann puts it in *Neoliberalism's Climate*: "Putting in perspective the neoliberal claim that it can provide alternative, cheaper ways of preserving and stabilising a singular timeless non-human climate "needed by humanity entails listening to indigenous, peasant, labour, feminist and commons movements with the experience to perceive the classicism, racism and neo-colonialism inherent in such construals of nature."

Uzma Malik



Pic: Mark Robinson

# LEARNING FROM OUR TRAVELS

I love being an anarchist. Why? Because whatever bigger city you go to, you're bound to find a liberated space inhabited by your siblings-in-arms. It's like you're part of a big family — always bickering, but when the worst comes to worst you always have each other's backs. And you can rely on the fact that if you're stranded in strange territory, there is always someone who will share a beer and local knowledge with you, and if you're in need of it, a couch. You're family, after all.

But despite all of us sharing the same general goals — liberation, solidarity and all that — you can find different ways of working towards them wherever you go. If you cross a national border and meet with the anarchists there, you will find that they have entirely other methods of abolishing that border than your own group might. It makes sense, of course. Different environments require different tactics.

But on my travels I saw some things that might work just as well in Cologne as they do in Belfast or Barcelona — we simply hadn't thought of them before! The things we can learn from each other are almost infinite. Ask the libertarios of Barcelona Sants about resisting eviction and how to connect with a working-class neighbourhood. Ask Sinistra Anticapitalista in Italy about how to work against the housing crisis.

Learn about the squatting hotlines in Brescia, syndicated strike action in Paris, the newspapers in Madrid, the radical

bookstores in London, the antifascist gyms in Athens.

It's truly incredible what we can come up with, and to every problem that the elites and capitalism confront us with, the radically free are quick to find a creative solution. With the means of oppression globalising, our resistance has to follow the same development.

We have to connect with each other and learn about things that already exist in our own environment, and those that are yet to come. Union busting, to name one example, is rampant in the US, and elites in Germany and the UK are going heads over heels to apply the same tactics here. We need more connection between activist communities, locally and globally. International — or rather antinational — conferences and actions are something we cannot leave to our enemies only. Let's spend some of our funds on sending each other greeting cards of love and rage, so that when global capitalism attempts to crush us, we have the united power of anarchists everywhere to fight back.

From Europe to South America to Asia and everywhere else — we are the Antinazionale!

La Maupin



# MIND THE GAP!

The 2017 snap election was notable for many things, not least the Tory party itself proclaiming that its policies have not worked. Well, it did not quite say that — the problems it admitted existed seemed to have no cause, they just were. No mention of who was in office for the past seven years nor whose ideology had dominated the political landscape since 1979.

Yet, at the same time, the Tories were keen to portray the dangers of a Labour victory that would undermine “our strong economy,” “prosperity” and “strong economic fundamentals.” How can you have that when increasing numbers of people are finding it harder to make ends meet or joining the “just-about-managing” is left unasked, never mind unanswered.

The economy exists, surely, to ensure people’s needs are met? Not under capitalism — hence the contradictions in the Tory campaign, contradictions which reflect the nature of capitalism itself.

The Tory mantra that being in work as the best way out of poverty rings hollow when used to answer the question of why so many people in work are in poverty (child poverty has been steadily increasing since 2010, with two-thirds of poor children in working families). Britain was unique amongst developed nations for having economic growth but falling real wages (wages fell almost 10% in 2007-14).

Wages, moreover, have not risen in line with productivity so far this century, yet marginal productivity theory is still taught in universities as if it explained the real world. Ironically, as the economy was forced, by State intervention, to more closely approximate the economics textbooks by means of anti-union laws, so the link between productivity and wages ended.

The share of wages in UK GDP has fallen from a peak of 76.2% in 1975 to 65.8% in 2015, which is the real fear underlying all the talk of Labour taking us “back to the 1970s.”

The impact of Thatcherism can also be seen outside of production. While average pay packets increased by 19% in nominal rather than real terms since 2006, the bills

of the privatised utilities have increased far faster — the average gas bill by 73%, electricity by 72%, and water by 41%. It has become so bad that, after denouncing the energy-cap proposed by Ed Miliband as Marxist madness, the Tories recently embraced it — much to the horror of company bosses.

As for water, consumers are paying around £2.3 billion more a year in water and sewerage bills to the privatised companies than if they had remained in state ownership and almost all the industry’s post-tax income is paid out in dividends, while capital expenditure is financed by borrowings (now standing at £42bn when there was no debt burden at the time of privatisation).

So the gap increases between product and pay, between profits and people. Property is theft is still true — how else can the many enrich the few?

The Tories are caught by the contradictions of capitalism, stuck in the gap between reality and rhetoric. Capitalism is not freedom as it is based on despotism in production — the worker sells their liberty and labour to the boss who, in return for ordering them around, keeps the product of that toil. Property is monopolised by the few and so any “free agreement” in such circumstances will benefit the stronger party — as shown by neo-liberalism. And as inequality rises, social mobility stagnates alongside wages.

Some kind-hearted liberals proclaim all this as examples of “market failure” but no: it is how capitalism is meant to work. That the resulting inequality undermines society and the economy is just one of many contradictions facing capitalism.

Little wonder May and Hammond have been left defending the abstract notion of a “free market” capitalist economy — mere months after proclaiming that they did “not believe in untrammelled free markets” — in the face of an opposition which simply seeks to save capitalism from itself.

The Tories have no ideas and are simply, at best, offering watered-down versions of ideas first raised by Labour. That the opposition are setting the agenda is significant: “There is no alternative” convinces fewer and fewer, particularly as it meant a new form of feudalism. Invoking the 1970s will not counteract a life-experience of being ripped-off daily in the world the Tories have created.

We are faced with the gap between rhetoric and reality. This system of economic contradictions will continue until such time as we end it, by our own efforts. The task is to convince people that they need to act for themselves, to fight for what they need by their own direct action and solidarity.

More — we must raise libertarian alternatives to both private and State capitalism: instead of privatisation/nationalisation, we must urge socialisation rather than replacing the boss with the bureaucrat (or vice versa); water companies owned by their consumers and run by their workers; railways under workers’ control with strong links to passenger associations; solving the housing crisis must go beyond replacing the private landlord with a State official, tenants must control their homes collectively and individually; co-operatives should be favoured over capitalist firms in both production and consumption...

The biggest gap remains, as ever, that between what is and what could be. We are a rich country which could provide well-being for all but the distribution of wealth and power is so dysfunctional even the Tories have to pay lip-service to doing something about it. The answer to the social question remains, as ever, in our hands and not in those of politicians, regardless of how nice or radical they seem. The answer lies in whether we remain content to let others act on our behalf or whether we take control of our fates.

Iain McKay



# FREEDOM 2017 REPORT

In common with much of the rest of the world, it seems, Freedom had an intense 2017 with a major fundraising drive which was launched this time last year, extensive personnel changes and what has become a root and branch reorganising of how we work.

## The Big Rebuild

In 2016 the Freedom building at 84b Whitechapel High St was hit with a very scary-looking estimate for works needing doing, particularly on the roof and outer walls, totalling £40,000. After a fraught debate over the future of the space, the various building users agreed to launch a fundraiser aiming to pick up £13,000 for initial vital works.

We formally launched it last October, and cannot express our gratitude enough to the anarchist community, which in a year where many anarchist causes were in need came through magnificently — we're now in a position to start Year One works and are looking for people with building expertise to help manage the project (please do get in touch via [shop@freedompress.org.uk](mailto:shop@freedompress.org.uk) if you have that sort of experience, we'd love to hear from you).

## Bookshop

People may notice fewer familiar faces around at the moment, as several old hands have left, prompting a look at how we work and keep the place running.

The good news is that we've had a number of new people come forward over the last couple of months and have been cooking up some big plans for what to do with the space.

We remain self-sustaining and have expanded our range of books considerably. We're looking for volunteers to come forward with more suggestions and have started an "adopt a shelf" initiative so people who really know their stuff can help us maintain our status as the best anarchist bookshop in Whitechapel.

## Publishing

It's been a year of updating, expanding and republishing as we've brought out three titles for 2017 — *Anarchism & The State*, *The Slow Burning Fuse* and *deep ecology and anarchism*.

Each represents an important contribution to anarchist theory and history from different eras, and we've gone the extra mile to expand, update and explain each one.

Financially we're looking, on a small scale, pretty healthy with stocks of everything current and enough left over for entirely new works which we have planned for 2018.

## Media

We brought out two free journals in 2017 with the help of Aldgate Press, one for May 1st and one for the Bookfair. It's a project we'd like to expand on, but distribution and energy remain, as ever, the major factors. We're always open to help and contributions, and you can get in touch at the address below.

Online meanwhile we've managed to maintain a daily newswire over at [freedomnews.org.uk](http://freedomnews.org.uk) and have been slowly building a reputation for covering anarchist stories you're not likely to find elsewhere.

We're very nearly there with a major overhaul of the site which should make it much more accessible, and are welcoming a new editor.

There's plenty of room for writers, more editors and people to commission content and we're committed to building the site into a go-to platform for the movement in Britain and beyond.

## HOW FREEDOM WORKS

Freedom consists of both a collective engaged in publishing and book selling, and a building which houses several progressive groups:

### The Freedom Collective

Currently an all-volunteer, non-profit association consisting of three working groups who work in the Freedom Bookshop, on [freedomnews.org.uk](http://freedomnews.org.uk) and in the publishing of related books and journals. Some mandated roles exist within the collective, but all decisions are made via monthly meetings working on the basis of consensus where possible, free vote if not.

### The Building Group

Consists of organisations which have rooms within 84b. The Group covers business rates, utilities etc, and acts as a forum for discussion on works needing doing and ideas for activities. Members include Freedom, the Advisory Service for Squatters, Corporate Watch, Haven Distribution, SolFed, AFed and the National Bargee Travellers Association.

### The Friends of Freedom

Set up in 1982, the Friends are a dormant company holding the building in trust for Freedom Press and the wider movement.



## ABOUT US

First established in 1886 by Charlotte Wilson as a voice for the anarchist tradition, Freedom has published more or less erratically ever since, making it the oldest such organisation in the English-speaking world.

Alongside our own extensive back catalogue we stock thousands of books, papers and pamphlets, as well as the latest magazines, periodicals and newsletters from all the major anarchist and radical groups.



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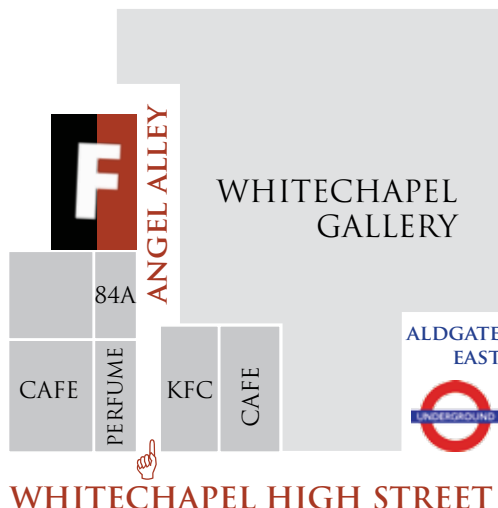
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In order to make anarchist material as accessible as possible Freedom Press titles are sold at the cover price given when they were printed.

The exceptions are pre-decimal compilations of Freedom, which are now £3 each.

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