

FREEDOM

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BY DONATION



PLUS: 💣 THE HOUSING CRISIS ☠️ RISE OF DOMESTIC MURDER
ABERDEEN'S RADICAL SPACE ✂️ BISEXUAL ACTIVISM IN LONDON

EDITORIAL

It all just needs a spark. From Chile to Hong Kong, through Catalonia to France — it has been kicking off everywhere. What these events have in common is that they were all sparked by a government decision, of lesser or greater significance, but in all cases the States which did so thought they could get away with it, as they have done for decades until now.

These decisions have been inflicted on populations already massively oppressed by their living conditions, the politics of neoliberalism, and governments assumed that yet another form of oppression would go unnoticed because people already have a myriad of other daily life struggles to deal with and would just put up with yet another obstacle. That given a choice between striving for social change and their individual lives they would always chose the latter over taking care of their wider communities.

These assumptions were wrong, and now they are scrambling to contain mass, long-term protest movements which apparently took them by surprise. They deal with it, more often than not, with severe state repression. In Chile, for instance, the State quickly resorted to bringing the army to the streets in order to contain a protest movement which started due to its decision to raise ticket fares.

The question remains — who will be the ultimate beneficiary of this recent wave of protests across the World? Will it be the United States that, after a mix of repressions, divide and rule politics

and token giveaways, somehow manages to contain it? Will it be the far-right with their populist policies? Or will these upheavals lead to long-lasting, positive and revolutionary changes to the world we all live in, the sort of changes we will be happy to support?

In the UK one may, perhaps optimistically, assume that with almost a decade of the Tory rule behind us that spark will eventually light. Right now, as always, it is impossible to predict what might cause it. One thing is however (almost) certain — it will happen, and once it does, the previous assumption that it was impossible will be laughable. Likely, as in many other places, it will be something seemingly minor, something the government will not think about too much of implementing, but will still create a critical mass of problems which people are not ready to put up with.

While it is impossible to say what it will be, we, the anarchists, need to do all we can to get ready. There are basically two ways to go about this. We can remain in the echo-chamber of our equal parts beautiful and niche political ideas and then join the wider struggle, hoping that somehow our niche becomes a mainstream. Or we may go out there, right now, talk to people, share our ideas in an accessible form, maybe be ready for some compromises and potential criticisms. Get ready for working with people who may not necessarily share the entirety of our position, but still have

some common denominator with us. Start building structures based on the principle of mutual aid: show how this can work in practice. Share our knowledge of what the State is, and what its main principles are. Join in with local struggles. Show that anarchism, while it maintains a solid reputation of utopianism, can be and is the answer to the world-wide problems we are all facing. Do everything we can to make sure when the spark comes it is not taken over by the far-right, whose only interest, really, is to maintain the status quo of racist, oppressive states, poorly disguised as new politics and new hope, and blaming the most vulnerable people for the wrongs of this world.

This is, of course, a difficult mission to undertake. It is however the one we ought to carry on, that is, if we are serious about our own politics, and truly believe they can be introduced into wider society, and not only in our own spaces.

So get out there. Speak with your peers and neighbours. Share your resources, if you are privileged enough to have some spare. Show in practice that anarchism can work: even if it will initially only be on a smaller rather than larger scale.

And, most importantly, don't sink to despair. After all, we are in a world crisis type of situation right now, but let's all try to see it as a chance rather than already assumed failure. That's how our enemies see it.

Not all is lost, but comrades, we need to roll up our sleeves and get to work.

WHAT'S ANARCHISM ABOUT?

There are many misconceptions about what anarchism is and what anarchists want. Some of the myths are accidental, some spread deliberately — but the most famous is that we're all about chaos.

Little could be further from the truth, the famous circled A for example is historically a symbolic acronym. Anarchy is Order.

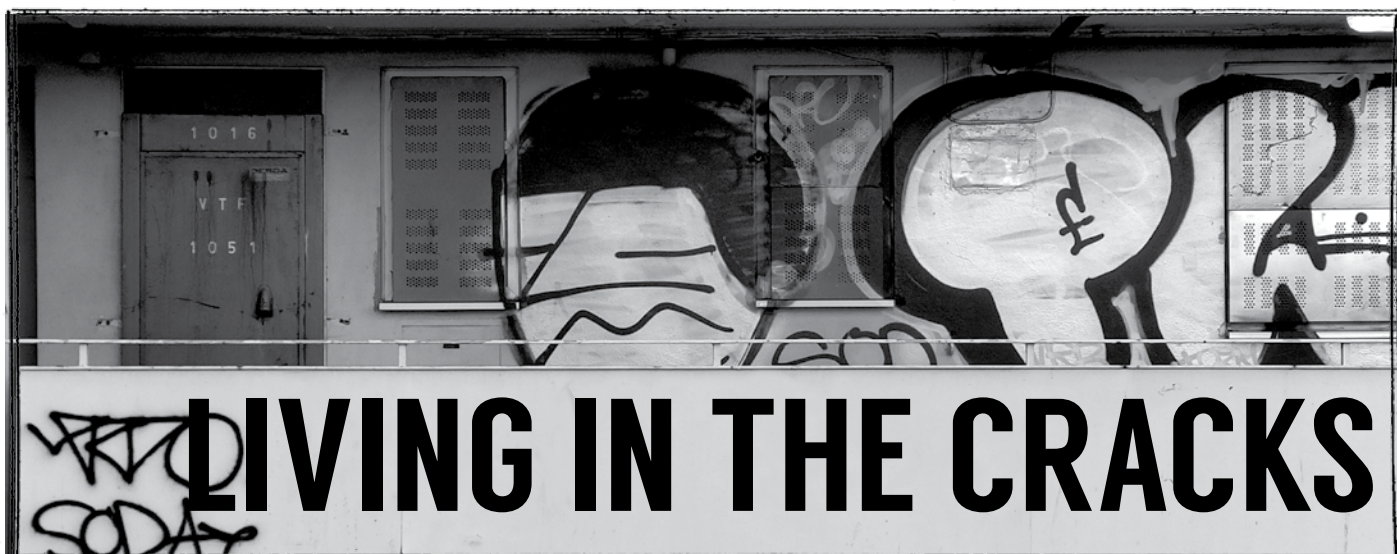
While we have our share of chaotic adherents and experiences, and sometimes comrades' methods are very

direct, we have no desire to simply break the system. We also want to replace it with something better — the beautiful idea.

What that idea represents in its specifics differs from person to person, as with every broad creed (capitalism included), but for the last 150 years, from individualism to mutualism, to anarcho-communism, anarcho-syndicalism and libertarian municipalism, the irony is that we are often obsessed with organisation.

This paper is itself produced by an organised non-hierarchical collective and covers some of the broad range of topics where you will find anarchists fighting for a better future.

Every member has an equal say in how Freedom Press runs, and no-one is unaccountable for their actions. Founded in 1886, Freedom has since its founding consisted of disbelievers in the government of the many by the few in any shape and under any pretext.



The causes of the housing crisis are, in a nutshell, the unchecked power of landlords, the 40-year attack on social housing and stagnant wages. The consequences are people sleeping in tents and doorways and under bridges, children in A&E with constant chest infections, poverty, debt, mental distress, and endless moving.

One of the major causes of the housing crisis is the undermining and running down of social housing. Since the introduction of Right to Buy in 1980, 1.5 million council houses have been sold, 40% of which are now rented out by private landlords. Alongside Right to Buy there has been a campaign of slurs by media and politicians against people in social housing, with other people encouraged to despise or resent them for the high rent other tenants pay.

As well as Right to Buy, many councils are knocking down large estates and redeveloping the land as high-density private housing, often purchased as an investment not a home. Tenants are usually rehoused locally but there is a loss of social housing in the area which increases the length of the waiting list. On many council bidding pages now the number of flats on offer is in the single figures, while 1.1 million households are on waiting lists.

Around 80,000 families are in temporary accommodation, sometimes for years. Routinely people are placed miles away from work and school. Some councils such as Harlow and Croyden are moving families into unsuitable converted office blocks. Councils are responding to the shortage by making it more difficult to apply. Some councils have a five-year residency condition, when it is very difficult for people who have to move

continuously to stay within one boundary for five years. People are ruled to be “intentionally homeless” and so not helped for actions like moving out of a private rented flat because they couldn’t afford it, or out of a place where they were not safe.

Deregulation of the private rented sector in 1988 and 1996 means that tenants in the private sector face short-term tenancies, evictions, appalling conditions of repair and very little legal redress. The Benefit Cap in the 2012 Welfare Reform Act also meant tenants claiming housing benefit often did not receive the full amount and were forced to make up the shortfall.

There are now 4.5m households in the private rented sector, 38% (1.7m) of those have children. Private sector tenants are often assumed to consist only of young people and students, while families and real adults all buy houses. This ignores the reality that home ownership is declining and many people are now spending much or all of their lives as tenants, with bad conditions damaging their health and wellbeing. Bad conditions include damp and mould, high rents, overcrowding, frequent moves and dislocations, and increasingly eviction.

The most common cause of homelessness now is eviction by a private landlord. The housing crisis, unlike in other countries such as Spain that experienced a wave of foreclosures, is a tenants’ crisis. The massive rise in the number of people forced to sleep rough (100 new rough sleepers are pushed onto the streets every week) caused the deaths of more than 700 people last year.

In response there is a wave of organising around housing issues. Campaigns have brought about some small changes in the law, including the abolition of letting fees.

However the ongoing brutality of the housing crisis has not abated. New groups often struggle to get going as volunteers can feel overwhelmed by the desperate situations people are in.

It is difficult to get to grips with the complex procedures needed to access help from the council, which vary from place to place and change quickly. It is also difficult to build up groups amongst people who are forced to move frequently, work very long hours or have language and health difficulties. However when groups are able to cohere they are able to offer vital solidarity beyond housing, and to empower members at a deep level.

It’s in these self-organised spaces where the nuts and bolts of mutual aid can be found.

~ Fingers Malone

Radical housing groups:

- Edinburgh Coalition Against Poverty edinburghagainstopoverty.org.uk
- Living Rent (Scotland) livingrent.org
- Brighton Solved Housing Union brightonsolved.org.uk
- Housing Action Southwark and Lambeth housingactionsouthwarkandlambeth.wordpress.com
- Haringey Housing Group haringeyhousingaction.org.uk
- London Renters Union londonrentersunion.org
- Streets Kitchen streetskitchen.org



DOMESTIC MURDER

WOMEN ARE ABANDONED ONCE AGAIN

In October the UK's domestic murder rate reached a five-year high. 173 people were killed in domestic violence related homicides over the last year, with women most often the targets (making up more than 60% of victims) and men most often the perpetrators (making up 93% of the defendants).

Domestic murder — often referred to as domestic homicide — refers to a case in which a person is killed by someone they are/have been in a personal relationship with. This is most commonly a partner, ex-partner or close family member.

Disturbingly, this year's crime statistics are not abnormal or unexpected. The domestic murder rate has been steadily accelerating since 2014 and the last three years have seen the toll jump from 139 in 2016, to 141 in 2017, to last year's 173 — a leap of 22% in just one year.

Domestic homicide is usually very closely tied into ongoing domestic violence — it is unusual for a domestic murder to occur without some form of abuse preceding it. This is because most perpetrators of abuse and violence gradually “escalate” their behaviour, with abusive and violent behaviours becoming more and more extreme as time goes on. According to University of Salford law professor Maureen O'Hara this escalation is incredibly common in the lead up to domestic homicide, as it is used as a tool to normalise abusive behaviour for both the victim and the perpetrator themselves.

“[Domestic] killings are often the culmination of years or months of domestic abuse,” O'Hara writes, “the severity of which has escalated during the period leading up to the woman's death”.

In practice, this means that the longer abuse cycles are allowed to continue, the more the risk of domestic murder increases.

This is particularly worrying when considering patterns within communities of migrant women living in the UK. A report by SafeLives found that Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) migrant women stay silent 1.5 times as long as white British women when



they are the victims of domestic abuse.

Although there are many factors which could play into this, one important consideration is the infamous hostile environment — a policy which targeted “illegal” migration by making undocumented migrants feel as unwelcome in the UK as possible which was originally rolled-out in 2012.

The policy ultimately impacted the lives of tens of thousands of legal migrants, refugees, and British citizens, including more than 1,000 Windrush-generation citizens who were harassed, deported

and put under immense psychological and physical stress because the Home Office had lost their documentation decades earlier.

Among other things, the hostile environment policy encouraged authorities and service providers — including landlords, hospitals, and social services — to act as unofficial border control officers, refusing support to and reporting migrants who were unable to produce official documents on demand. This created a distrust within not only migrant communities, but also black and

AND MIGRATION

minority ethnic British communities as racial profiling became particularly rife as a result.

At the end of 2018, an investigation by human rights organisations Liberty and Southall Black Sisters revealed an enormous data sharing agreement between English & Welsh police services and the Home Office, with officers sharing the identity of victims and witnesses of crime to immigration officials across almost every police force in the UK.

This history plays into the distrust felt within migrant communities towards the police and means that many migrant abuse and crime victims stay silent for longer periods, for fear that they could lose their refugee status or UK Spouse Visa.

Unbeknownst to many in the latter position, the law protects victims of domestic abuse, granting them leave to remain in the UK once their partner visa has been curtailed — a fact which makes their continued silence even more tragic.

As a result of this, migrant abuse victims are far more susceptible to domestic murder than most, as they are likely to stay silent for longer and risk their abuser escalating their behaviour further.

This is particularly concerning as the issue is still not fully acknowledged by the latest draft of the government's Domestic Abuse Bill, which fails to discuss or offer support for women who are stuck between an abuser and hostile immigration policies and attitudes.

Following a Queen's Speech which included commitments to help more women who are suffering at the hands of abusers, a fresh wave of criticism has been raised against the Bill, with several human and women's rights campaigners hitting out against it.

Andrea Simon, of the End Violence Against Women Coalition, argued that

the Bill and the Queen's promises do not do enough to tackle the issue at hand — which is public funding cuts to women's services.

"Women are being turned away from refuge services every day," she told the Independent. "We have seen a huge rise in homelessness for migrant victims of abuse. They can't access housing benefits and often can't access private rental options because of immigration checks on private landlords. Specialist services for black and minority women have experienced the most cuts".

In July 2019 the Domestic Abuse Bill was reviewed by Theresa May and her cabinet, with the aim of improving its support for migrant women. However, this review was incredibly rushed, with May submitting it just days before she stood down as Prime Minister.

This has meant the issue has not been addressed or resolved, and migrant women continue to fall through the cracks of a failing system.

When considering the increase in domestic homicide it is clear that this must be treated as an urgent issue; we cannot continue to allow vulnerable women living in the UK to lose their lives.

Domestic abuse legislation must be rectified to create a support-network for these women, and funding must be increased for local and national refuge and social services. What's more, hostile immigration policies must be dissolved, so that we can start to rebuild trust between the UK's protective authorities and migrant BME communities living in the UK. Action must be taken, and it must be taken now.

~ **Luna Williams** is political correspondent at the Immigration Advice Service, a team of immigration solicitors based around the UK which offers free and full legal aid to migrant domestic abuse victims.

REFORMS THAT LIE FORGOTTEN

The Domestic Abuse Bill was supposed to address a number of lethal problems with Britain's approach to vulnerable migrant women. Some of the issues included:

Immigration Status

Women are often dependent on a Spouse Visa, which enables abuse and control by their 'sponsor' — this can last up to five years before they qualify to seek permanent settlement.

Access to welfare

Non-EU migrants are prohibited from benefits, with domestic violence victims only being able to access three months of independent living allowance if they can show "evidence of abuse" (often impossible particularly if it is primarily psychological). This excludes trafficked and refugee women.

Impact of Austerity

Local authorities are facing huge holes in their budgets, and balancing books has meant resources being cut from DV support services, particularly those aimed at migrants.

Adapted from analysis by the Centre for Women's Justice



RADICAL COMMUNITY IN

To mark the one-year anniversary of a radical social centre appearing in Aberdeen, **Rob Ray** talks with the organising collective about their experiences, dreams — and advice for groups looking to set up new spaces.

Could you say a little about how you got going?

The demand for a social centre in Aberdeen has been keenly felt for many years and in the past there have been drafts outlining the nature and the purpose of a social centre in the town. In 2018, a group of activists approached the Aberdeen Trades Union Council (ATUC) looking to rent a space in their building. The first step was to make an agreement with the ATUC on the terms of the rental and to draw a constitution. Once this was sorted, we made an open call inviting groups and individuals to join our first organisational meeting, and after a series of those meetings we came up with a collective statement of “Principles and Values” as a framework to help us run the centre. The first local activist groups and likeminded individuals started affiliating shortly after.

You work on a non-hierarchical basis, what does that entail and how do you think your approach has evolved over the last year?

Aberdeen has a relatively small yet vibrant activist/grassroots scene, and the individuals comprising the “core group” of the centre come from relatively different political backgrounds. Working on a non-hierarchical basis was and still is one of the things that unites us and it honestly felt like the common-sense thing to do when we started, as horizontality is at the core of every self-organised initiative. Practically, it means that members come together as equals and make decisions collectively. There are no bosses, leaders, or “experts”. We always try to be open-minded and promote a culture of solidarity and active listening between us when organising events, delegating duties



Pic: Aberdeen Social Centre

etc. We also try to take an intersectional approach to inform the ways we make decisions and are mindful of different forms of hierarchy, specifically within self-organised spaces.

Of course, working on a non-hierarchical basis was and still is a learning experience and we are far from having all the answers. At the moment the “core group” is quite small, so making decisions is relatively easy. A challenge for us is to try to involve in the decision making process as many of our affiliated groups as possible. We are actively working towards that goal and this has certainly helped us to evolve our approach over the last year.

The more people come in the easier it might become to get side tracked and forget about power-relations and hierarchy, so as a group we try to use our efforts to expand the centre as an opportunity to reflect on our non-hierarchical approach, communicate it effectively, and further develop it.

What have been some of your favourite moments and activities since you opened?

The meetings prior to officially launching the centre are definitely among our favourite moments. Those were very exciting, lively and diverse meetings and we consider them the foundations of the centre. We also love the open radical cafes we do every now and then, as this is a great opportunity to talk politics and do outreach in a chilled environment!

Another highlight is definitely the thought-provoking events we co-hosted with one of our affiliated groups (Aberdeen Anarchist Group), including inviting two local co-ops to talk about how they run their spaces; inviting a comrade who left Scotland in 2016 to fight on the side of the YPG in Rojava; and having DP Hunter to talk about his book *Chav Solidarity*.

Finally, establishing our radical bookstall with books and pamphlets for folk to purchase is certainly a moment that brings excitement.

THE GRANITE CITY



What sort of conditions in Aberdeen do you think are particular to the city? Geographically you're relatively isolated, do you think that helps in terms of encouraging co-operation on the local left?

Indeed Aberdeen is somewhat isolated, which has its ups and downs. It is harder to link up with other social centres and groups and learn from them, but at the same time there is a great sense of solidarity amongst activists, and we probably don't have the same barriers that have formed amongst the left in some other cities.

Aberdeen has built up a reputation for being a not very progressive place, in large part due to the significant role of the oil and gas industry in the region.

Because of its location, and having a big university population, there's a sense of fairly transient population, therefore making it hard sometimes to sustain activist groups and movements. Despite its reputation it is a city with a rich heritage of progressive politics

and protest, for example around involvement in the Spanish Civil War and in challenging fascism locally. We see one of the roles of the centre as being to reclaim that radical edge to the city and inspire a new generation of activists.

Could you say a bit about what organised groups and campaigns there are in the city at the moment?

In terms of ongoing campaigns, we think that the campaign for climate justice and the Palestinian solidarity campaign are at the moment quite big in Aberdeen and of course in the UK and globally. Those campaigns have brought together people from different political backgrounds.

Regarding the organised groups that are affiliated to the centre, it's fair to say that we've got a relatively small yet very active political scene that promotes different political agendas which on occasions overlap with each other. Some of the groups that have chosen to affiliate with us work on promoting veganism, environmental justice, nuclear disarmament, or hunt sabotage; some focus on anarchism and anarcho-syndicalism; and others are Palestinian solidarity, socialist, or Scottish Independence groups. Like we said, these agendas often crossover and many times our affiliated groups work together to support certain causes. Have a look at our Facebook page for a detailed list of all our affiliated groups.

What sort of ambitions do you have for the centre in the next few years?

Year one was about the establishment of the centre. This has been a resounding success, even more so considering it has been achieved solely by self-funding from within the local activist community. Years two and beyond will be about developing the centre and making it sustainable. We aim to build up the facilities we have and the services we can provide, allowing the centre to be promoted more widely to other activist groups, the wider public and other like-minded organisations, as well as ensuring that existing groups maintain their affiliations.

We also want to create an Information Hub which could serve as a radical reference library and a space for activist groups to display their own literature. Finally, we aim to strengthen our links with other social centres across Scotland and the UK. We want to invite speakers from these groups to Aberdeen, and for some of us to visit their spaces. This will allow for the centre to gain as much knowledge as possible in relation to building sustainability, ideas for outreach, and developing a network of resistance.

What tips would you offer to groups which are aiming to set up their own space?

That's a tough question and there are no easy answers! We believe that working alongside comrades you can trust and can rely on is key when setting up a social centre.

Delegating duties equally is also vital as there will be plenty of those and sharing the work actively promotes mutual aid and prevents folk from experiencing burnouts. Coming up with clear collective values which will lay the ideological foundations of the social centre is also crucial.

Reflecting is very important as we all have areas of our politics that we need to develop and no one has all the answers. Of course, careful planning is of great significance given that a major issue that most social centres in the UK (including ourselves) face is funding.

There are some ways to tackle the funding problem, it's worth researching a bit and liaising with other social centres to seek advice. Finally, be patient and arm yourselves with passion and enthusiasm — it's essential.

To keep up with goings-on in Aberdeen check out facebook.com/pg/AberdeenSC (email aberdeensocialcentre@riseup.net) or for other centres around the country see socialcentrenetwork.weebly.com.



INTRODUCING: BI PANDAS

A member of the bisexual activist group writes on how they set up and why it's important for bi people to build their own voice in an increasingly corporate and hostile climate.

London Bi Pandas are a collective of bi+ activists, supporters and allies. As a community group we are trying to create spaces for bi+ folks to feel like they belong. Both bi-phobia and bi-erasure has often meant that bi+ people are often excluded from both “straight” and “gay” spaces. And as activists, we want to connect with each other on more than just our sexuality, but our values and actions. We go to protests together, we march, we host vigils, we host events.

The name came from a joke that's been floating around the bisexual community for a long time, that despite being labelled as “greedy” or “promiscuous”, bisexual people are in fact not very good at flirting!

Social theories around this talk about how most bisexual people are socialised to find only one gender attractive, which means that their romantic and sexual history is often with that one gender (i.e. as “straight” or “gay”). And when bisexual people want to flirt with or engage with any other gender or agender people that they have not had the same level of experience with, they lack confidence, they are more shy, they are fearful of that romantic pursuit. And so similarly to pandas, bisexual people simply do not have sex with anyone! It's now become a verb, “to panda”, often meaning that we are hesitating, holding ourselves back when it comes to romantic pursuits.

In addition to all of that, there are also continual other constraints on how queer people socialise. We are forever fearful of being labelled predatory, or worse being harmed and abused for our sexuality. In a landscape of rising homophobia, the risk of getting it wrong and

hitting on someone that you're not sure is queer who might turn out to assault you is quite prevalent.

The group actually started from a small community of friends and peers who decided that we needed to have a Bi+ float at this year's London Pride event. We had some amazing people in the team who helped make it happen all the way from managing the application, to driving the float, to fundraising, to organising events, to managing spreadsheets, to social media, to building our community, to engaging with activism, to managing the social media channels on the day and even more!

The float was a radical, political act that showed that you could celebrate, party, dance — but that you can also take action while doing so. The theme of the pride float was #PridelsAProtest. We spent days making placards with all of our beliefs and values. We strapped some very shocking signs like “Guillotine the bankers” and “ACAB” to our float. We had signs in queer solidarity like “No TERFS on our turf”.

We wore badges that said “No Pride in War” to protest arms firm BAE's participation in London Pride, and their sponsorship of Surrey pride. We wanted

to protest everything that we believed was wrong. We wanted to be provocative and we wanted something for everyone in the crowd to connect with.

For so many bi+ pandas, Pride has always been a challenging experience. The commodification of our sexuality, the rainbow capitalism, the focus on party over protest while we are still being harmed by the status quo, the heavy and inappropriate brand sponsorships, the involvement of the government, the police, arms dealers in the march — it meant that pride was no longer a place so many of us are connected with. We wanted to take Pride back.

The response to our float was beautiful and full of emotionally-charged connection. The cheering when people saw us, when they danced with us, when they read our signs, was phenomenal. There was an energy there that changed us all. Every fist that raised itself back with ours, and every person that leaned over to high five us, or hug us — they were why we were there.

We had a huge influx of members after Pride, and still to this day we have people recognising our t-shirt, or patch, or badge and coming up to us to tell us that they loved the float so much. Our little humble community now has over 600 members on Facebook.

We regularly participate in activism, but we also try to create spaces for Bi+ folks that are more community-based including a Book Club, Panda Dungeons and Dragons, Open Mic nights, Drag Bingo nights, Queer Life Drawing, Workshops and a regular and informal social meet up!

From a rebellious Pride float we have grown so much. Today we're so many things for bi+ people — we're a collective, we're a community, we're a movement.

You can join us on Facebook: bit.ly/ldnbipandas



PROTESTER SUPPORT NET

A lot has changed in the world of activist legal support and many people have been left wondering who they should turn to for advice and support. **Carl Spender** of the Activist Court Aid Brigade is here with the answers.

Who should I contact for advice about protesting and the law?

If your query is urgent, call (07946) 541-511. This will connect you to the 24/7 legal hotline previously operated by the Green and Black Cross (GBC). This is the number listed at the bottom of bustcards.

If the matter isn't particularly urgent, email your query to courtsupport@protonmail.com or consult the GBC website.

In either case, avoid explicit discussion of any plans you may or may not have to break the law and keep all questions hypothetical (i.e. "If someone were to do x, what might the legal consequences be?").

I was arrested at a demonstration – who can support me going forward?

The Activist Court Aid Brigade (ACAB) provides support for activists who have been arrested and/or are facing prosecution (previously the role of the now-defunct Legal Defence Monitoring Group).

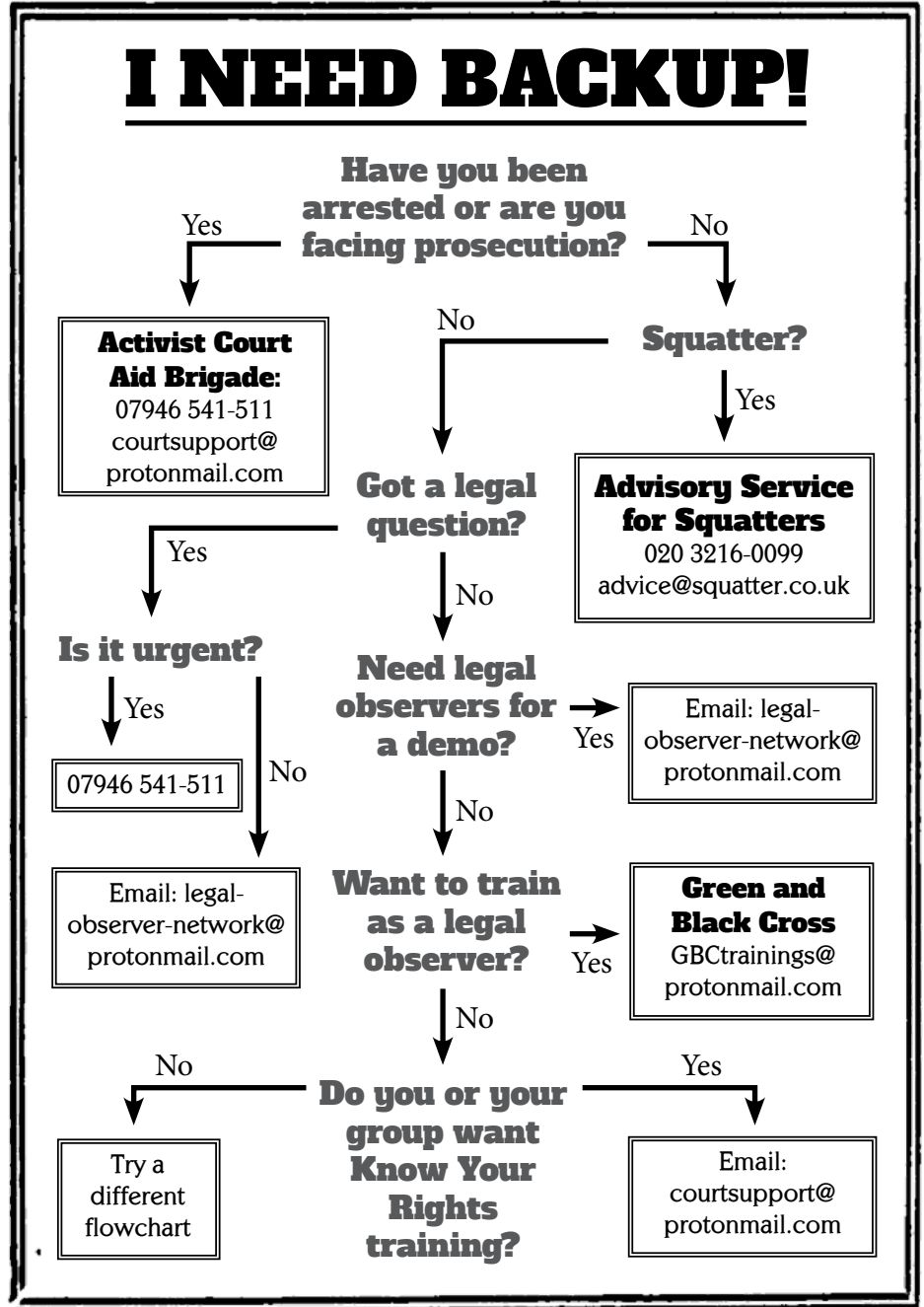
You can get in touch with ACAB via email at courtsupport@protonmail.com or by calling the hotline on (07946) 541-511.

I'm organising a demonstration and would like to request the presence of legal observers — who do I contact?

Email legal-observer-network@protonmail.com. This is the address of the Independent Legal Observer Network (ILON) who are now responsible for legal observer callouts and back office support.

I want to train as a Legal Observer — who should I contact?

Legal observer training is delivered by the GBC Trainings Collective. You can email your request to GBCtrainings@protonmail.com.



My organisation would like to receive training on our rights when protesting. Who can deliver this?

Send your request — detailing when, where and a rough idea of numbers — to courtsupport@protonmail.com.

3216-0099 or email advice@squatter.org.uk. Out of hours, you can consult the ASS website or if it's truly urgent call the legal advice hotline (07946) 541-511.

I'm a squatter in need of advice – who can I talk to?

You can visit the Advisory Service for Squatters on Monday to Friday 2-6pm above Freedom Bookshop, call (020)



LEFT MUSICAL WAVE DEFIE

Having worked around the music industry for many years, mainly as an organiser of benefit gigs and now running an online platform, I can say that artists are rightly fearful about what may soon occur. Deal or no deal.

Since one of their income sources (actual record sales) disappeared into cyberspace they've pretty much relied upon touring to break even. European audiences represent a huge part of those earnings and reaching them could well become a bureaucratic nightmare. John Baine (AKA punk poet Attila the Stockbroker) has been on the road long enough to remember what life was like before freedom of movement was introduced and he recently explained why, thanks to Brexit, he could stop crossing the channel:

"I am not paying over three hundred quid for a sodding ATA carnet, noting every bloody plectrum, string and date, time and place of purchase of instrument (which I can't remember anyway) CD, book, record and badge on it and presenting same to some unnecessary bureaucrat having sat in a poxy queue behind a load of lorries for four hours. I'm not unloading a load of musical equipment onto a grass verge just so some petty mainland European official make me to unscrew the nut of my violin bow to check there's no heroin in there.

"I'm not going to — because I used to have to before 1992, regularly, and the whole completely unnecessary and ridiculously expensive process sucked. Then we grew up, stopped the whole pointless charade, and rock n roll musicians of every conceivable hue, from hard core thrash to the most abject prog, breathed a huge sigh of relief and got on with their work, unimpeded by ludicrous bureaucracy."

New blood in the waters

The fact that so many young musicians could soon find themselves at the mercy of customs officials could deter many of them from leaving this miserable island. Which would be very sad because right now we are experiencing a renaissance of truly inspiring political tunes in pretty



Lowkey (main pic) performs in memory of Grenfell, and scenes from DIY anarcho festival Convoy Cabaret (right). All photos by Guy Smallman

much every genre. As rapper Lowkey said recently: "Music is often ahead of the curve, where music goes society and politics follows." This is presently being played out, even at the most corporate end of the music business.

Those of us old enough to remember Glastonbury as a haven of beautiful chaos that you could jump the fence into, or get let in free as a traveller, found ourselves giving it a brief approving nod for the first time in well over two decades in 2019. It is still very much what it became in the late '90s, an exclusive party for posh white people whom can afford the ticket price.

However Stormzy had about 100,000 of them jumping up and down singing "fuck the government, fuck Boris." which must have really stuck in the throats of those at the top who feel that they own this event and the votes of its participants.

At the other end of the sliding scale our very own techno punks Killdren were catapulted from obscurity to infamy by getting banned from the same festival after a puerile campaign against them by the Murdoch press. They showed up anyway, playing to bigger audiences than

they had been originally booked for and have been lapping up the free publicity ever since. Their song 'Kill Tory Scum' and its hilarious low-budget video now has its place in music history. Corporate acts would sell their kidneys for this kind of free PR.

The arrival of Trump and his misogyny has energised one of the most exciting developments on the live music scene. For the past few years a new wave of exceptionally talented feminist punk bands have articulated feelings of anger over gender inequality like no one else. Bands like Dream Nails and Pussy Liquor express their rage through a series of brilliant songs and also ensure that their gigs are a genuinely safe space for the vulnerable. Women and non-binary people are invited to occupy the space at the front of their shows ensuring that mosh pits are no longer a place where drunk men can bully and grope.

A boom in promotion

Offstage new collectives have sprung up to ensure this ethos is pushed into the equally unequal world of promotion.

S RACISM AND BREXIT



absolute zero tolerance to oppressive behavior of any kind. Their recent fourth birthday gig saw several generations of feminist punk celebrated with Hagar the Womb (first formed in 1980) playing alongside The Menstrual Cramps who are presently leading the charge of the new wave.

Further north, Manchester-based record label Hell Have No Fury are releasing similar music and organising regular gigs and festivals. Their founder Holly recently told us they are “providing a platform for womxn, non-binary and queer folk within the DIY punk scene. I often get under people’s skin, more often than not from cis men, as to their horror; I very rarely book all cis-male bands. I get called sexist, fascist, discriminatory against straight cis men, a gig saboteur (for being concerned over a band’s safety), oversensitive.”

If a post-Brexit hard-border stops these bands from taking their message outside the UK then the European scene will be a much poorer place without them. In Germany their ethos has long been part of the live music framework. Further to the east sexism and overt homophobia still flourish around the punk scene and local activists and promoters would welcome any intervention to help them get shot of it.

Perhaps the best response that we recently saw to 2019’s non-election of an overtly pro-Brexit, racist, sexist and Islamophobic Prime Minister in the form of Boris Johnson was a joyous celebration of musical defiance that occurred the following day. The event was announced on Facebook with:

“Boris will be sworn in as PM on July 24th. We will be ready to greet him. We will be ready to reject him. And we will be ready to reject every single one of his cronies and everything they stand for.

“At the time he gives his first speech as PM, we will hold a street festival celebrating the power of our communities. There will be music and art. There will be noise. Bring your friends + bring the volume – bring rigs, sound systems, portable speakers, whatever you have. We will make ourselves heard – we will not let this man become PM without a fight.”

An open top double decker bus was sourced for the protest along with a sound system and a competent engineer with experience in mixing for protests. By the time the demo was making its way down to Westminster from Russell Square up to eight thousand people had joined it.

Less than ten extremely nervous cops accompanied the procession down to Downing Street with musical accompaniment being provided DJ Ashman & MC Big Ben. At Whitehall there were live sets outside Downing street (which was now effectively blockaded) from the Female Allstars, AWATE, Peaky and Aruba Red. The gathering remained defiant as the crowd danced and let off smoke grenades in front of lines of outnumbered riot cops.

A perfect reminder of how music has the power to bring people together and focus their anger when combined with grassroots organisation.

The existing racism empowered by the Brexit result three years ago has reared its ugly head in many forms. But we’ve yet to see any *cultural* breakthrough for either the populist right or fascism. They remain not just isolated by live and recording artists, in their entirety, but also roundly condemned by them.

At the Free Tommy rally last summer we witnessed the biggest fascist-organised mobilisation since the 1980s, largely bankrolled by the US and Canadian far right. But the only song played endlessly on a loop through their speakers as their hate-rally gathered was by millionaire, attention-seeking has-been Morrissey. They’re welcome to him.

No amount of dark money can buy the artistic resources that we have at our disposal.

~ **Guy Smallman** is a London based photojournalist and edits finalhours.org.uk



Four years ago musician Cassie Fox launched Loud Women, a London-based organisation that now has a network of contacts across the world and has staged around ninety successful gigs promoting women/non-binary led bands and an



SOLIDARITY FOR WEST

“Those Papuans of yours are some 700,000 and living in the Stone Age.”

John F. Kennedy made this comment in 1963 as he approved an agreement to hand over control of West Papua to Indonesia, ceded from the Dutch. That figure the US president so glibly negated an entire people with was a few hundred thousand off the mark and rife with cultural supremacy and bigotry — reflecting former imperial influences and rising Indonesian intolerance.

The Papuans comprise several Melanesian ethnic groups sharing a heritage which is distinct from Indonesia's Polynesian and Micronesian peoples. Their history on the island goes back 50,000 years with rich cultures, languages and traditions.

When their lands were summarily handed from the Netherlands to the Indonesians in a deal aimed at solving Dutch colonial problems and US fears over Soviet influence in one stroke, their situation went from bad to worse. The Indonesian State set about pillaging the resource-rich region and suppressed indigenous communities with an iron fist. Over the next 40 years more than 500,000 people were murdered at the hands of the Indonesian State in what has been termed “The Neglected Genocide”.

Educated Papuans were murdered and villages napalmed using British and US-made weapons. It was a brutal slaughter. Melanesian girls were tortured, raped and murdered en masse. Elders were put in helicopters and kicked out mid-air in front of their families. Anyone detained faced torture as their entire villages were bombed from the air.

Natural resources were quickly sold off to British and US interests, most infamously the Grasberg gold and copper mine digging deep into sacred lands which was handed to Freeport-McMoran in 1967. Forests were torn down and farming lands seized. Through the 1970s and '80s there was a vast programme to culturally and genetically cleanse West Papua of Melanesian influence.

In 1969, the UN insisted on an election so Melanesians could democratically decide their future, dubbed the “The Act of Choice”. The reality was that 1,025 men



This piece and the front page picture were produced by Indonesian anarchist artist and writer Anzi Matta. For more of their work and to support production of libertarian Indonesian material check out pateron.com/anzimatta

were rounded up at gunpoint and told that if they voted for independence they would be committing treason. Indonesia won by a landslide. Papuans call this artificial plebiscite “The Act of No Choice”.

The world remained silent. Indonesia had successfully put down Communist and Islamic insurgencies and protected corporate profits, why rock the boat?

Meanwhile the Melanesians found themselves in a guerilla war. This came to a head when the Presidium Council of West Papua chairman Theys Eluay was abducted and murdered by Kopassus Special forces officers in 2001. Eluay was a controversial figure who utilised a militant force of nationalistic young Papuans in the Satgas Papua (Task Force) to maintain order and secure villages from violent provocateurs. He also allegedly received funds from Pancasila Youth, an Indonesian right-wing paramilitary group.

This resulted in a period of relative liberty, with Melanesian forces displaying

the Papuan Morning Star flag (a criminal offence risking 15 years in jail) and holding public demonstrations of strength, but once Eluay was killed and buried there was a re-escalation of Indonesian pressure.

The struggle against colonialism was not simply defined by Theys Eluay. Independence protests and marches roared into life after his murder, from civil demonstrations and protest to militant action. The response was a State crackdown arresting as many leaders as possible. One such man was Koteka Tribal Assembly (Demmak) general secretary Benny Wenda who was arrested in 2002 for allegedly leading a procession of people in an independence rally. Subject to death threats and facing 25 years in jail, he escaped prison while on trial and fled the country. Eventually finding a home in Britain, he became a leading spokesperson for the “Free West Papua Campaign” which works to bring awareness of the issue to the world stage.

PAPUA IS OVERDUE

Over the next ten years he would highlight the plight of West Papua as his people would time and time again face crackdowns and brutality. During this time Rio Tinto and BP consolidated their interests, bringing with it low pay and vast ecological damage which saw a wave of cross cultural worker organising, again violently repressed.. The slow motion ethnic cleaning of West Papua continued, with the Indonesian government obsessively hunting down members of the Free Papua Movement (OPM) which they claim is a global terrorist network.

In 2013 the aboriginal community caught the world's attention with a "Freedom Flotilla" in the form of two ketches named The Pog and Trudy which sailed from Australia to West Papua. Indigenous elder Kevin Buzzacott of Arabuna in South Australia sought to deliver sacred water from the mound spring in Arabuna, alongside ashes from various aboriginal embassies around Australia, to West Papuan elders to reconnect the land and people who had been joined by a vast land bridge some 10,000 years before.

In response the Indonesians arrested four community leaders who had attended a church meeting to pray for the flotilla. They were charged with treason and faced up to 20 years in prison.

Though the Trudy was forced to return early for the safety of those onboard, The Pog completed the journey and was met by two dingies off the coast of West Papua, filled with activists and community leaders. The following days saw house to house searches for the organisers by the police force, leading several people — including a pregnant woman and children — to flee for their lives. This beautiful action of solidarity was not in vain, it placed West Papua in the global spotlight, with Vanuatu Prime Minister Moana Carcasses Kalosil speaking in support of international action for West Papua at the UN General Assembly.

The Indonesian State however continued regardless with its reign of terror, outlawing journalists and silencing activists despite persistent large scale demonstrations for independence

On August 17th 2019 a large group of Indonesians, including members of the

military, accused Papuan students of destroying an Indonesian national flag and held them in siege, locked in their dormitory under a hail of abuse and bricks. When police turned up they demanded the students come out, before shooting tear gas into the building and arresting 43. All were released the day after, no evidence of any crime was found.

Video footage of the event spread across West Papua. On watching the students taunted with calls of "monkey!" "Dog!" and "Pig!" spontaneous protests took place nationwide, including in the capital Jakarta, flying the "Morning Star" flag and holding placards with slogans such as "Free Papua, this is what the monkeys want." By August 22nd the local parliament building in Manokwari had been torched along with prisons in Sorong and Jayapura.

September started with leaked footage of security forces opening fire on Papuan students in Deiyai, West Papua, as they held their hands up, with at least eight being killed and 15 wounded. This has only seen protests swell even further with Melanesians going into full revolt, joined by a large part of the student population. Since September 23rd there have been huge demonstrations in nearly every province with numbers in the tens of thousands. Their actions are unified by the following major demands:

- Reject the Criminal Code Bill
- Revoke legal reforms weakening the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK)
- Pass a Bill against sexual violence
- Remove problematic KPK leaders picked by the government.
- Ban Indonesia's military and national police personnel from holding official civilian posts
- End militarism in Papua and other regions and immediately free Papuan political prisoners
- End prosecution of all activists
- End the burning of forests in Kalimantan and Sumatra and punish corporations responsible
- Resolve human rights violations and put human rights violators on trial
- Restore rights of victims

The student and indigenous movements, while not being in agreement on every matter, have come to each others' aid in a youthful and progressive wave that seeks to remove the "dinosaurs" in the "New Order" authority. After years of inaction the students seem to be engaged in a full strength campaign which refuses capitulation despite two deaths and numerous injuries. Student council leaders even refused to meet with the president after he rejected putting the talks on television.

The West Papuan cause has also been taken up by Indonesians who are tired of the corrupt and racist state, with one facing a treason charge for their actions in support of West Papua. Among these activists have been the anarchists, who maintain an active anarchist network with autonomous cells and points of action spread across the various islands and communities. They have faced a wave of oppression since Mayday in 2019 when more than 700 comrades were caught up in raids, with many being stripped, shaved bald and beaten up amongst other things.

The near future looks to be particularly difficult. Protests continue across the board, however they now have to contend with the legalisation of civilian militias and consequently jihadi groups mobilising against "OPM" (ie. any West Papuan). Dozens have died already at the hands of a racist security force, the threat of an unchecked and unregulated militia fuelled with religious fervour is deeply disconcerting.

What they need more than anything from the rest of the world is an end to the silence. They need recognition, international awareness and solidarity. As we stand with the Kurds, the Mapuche and the Hunkpapa Lakota in their struggles we must also back the Melanesians of West Papua in their struggle.

Papua Merdeka! Free West Papua!

~ Peter Ó Máille



WCF IS COURTING EUROPE'S FAR-RIGHT DISTURBING ALLIANCES

It has been more than two decades since Allan Carlson, a former member of the National Commission on Children during the Reagan administration, first met Russian scholars Anatoly Antonov and Victor Medkov¹.

His visit in 1995 inspired the foundation of the World Congress of Families (WCF), a transnational network of far-right and religious fundamentalist groups closely associated with US Christian right organisation the Howard Centre for Family, Religion and Society.

Through the large annual international conference, the World Congress of Families has become one of the most influential transnational groups of its kind, creating a hostile environment for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex, asexual and gender nonconforming people. In recent years the organisation has been focusing its activities on European countries, collaborating with the local governments, connecting to a wide variety of national and international NGO groups. This engagement has led to a number of new laws, most prominently the introduction of the gay propaganda law in Russia in 2013 and the banning of the Gender Studies Program at Budapest's Central European University last year.

While the World Congress of Families has been reaching out to European States, namely Georgia, Hungary, Moldova and Italy, it remains unclear how the collaboration persists. When Matteo Salvini spoke at the group's 2019 conference in Italy, he was still the country's minister of interior affairs — but only a few months later, he was removed from office.

A similar fate befell Moldovan president Igor Dodon. After several months of mounting crisis in his government he was forced to resign². What that the loss of power means for the working ties



Italian far-right leader Matteo Salvini meets US Vice President Mike Pence in 2018. Christian and far-right groups have used their political footholds as a means of buddying up to powerful elites.

between European far-right groups and the World Congress of Families remains to be seen.

Nevertheless, the popularity of far-right parties is certainly not declining in Europe. Even though these parties may not remain in government for long, their defeats in countries like Italy and Moldova are by no means the all-clear signal. Not only have these events given the WCF's organisers an opportunity to connect with State representatives, the conference also serves the purpose of networking among non-governmental organisations and like-minded investors.

The WCF held its regional 2019 conference in Accra (Ghana) from October 31st to November 1st, themed around "The African Family and Sustainable Development: Strong families, strong nation". The program schedule included mostly Americans and Ghanians, but also featured speakers from other African countries.

During a press conference in preparation of the upcoming event, Moses Foh-Amoaning, Executive Secretary of the National Coalition for Proper Human Sexual Rights and Family Values, stated that "The duty of building a desirable Africa rested largely on the family and moral wellbeing of the society"³.

The event is one of many regional conferences that the WCF has been organising throughout the year. Besides its efforts strengthening the ties in Africa, the organisation is also engaged with a number of Russian groups and individuals — in particular the Russian oligarchs Konstantin Malofeev and Vladimir Yakunin⁴. A central figure for the Russian-American connection is the Russian WCF representative Aleksey Komov, who is involved in many transnational organisations associated with far-right and religious fundamentalist groups such as the Russian Orthodox Church.

~ TK

1. motherjones.com/politics/2014/02/world-congress-families-russia-gay-rights

2. nytimes.com/2019/06/09/world/europe/moldova-president.html

3. ghanaianimes.com.gh/introduction-of-comprehensive-sexual-education-will-undermine-cultural-moral-values

4. politico.eu/article/how-russia-became-the-leader-of-the-global-christian-right/



THE RECONSTITUTION

Whoever is in charge at Westminster, we can expect constitutional change to be at the top of the agenda for future governments.

The Brexit process and the situation of having a minority government has elevated the constitutional arrangements of Westminster into sharp relief. For some they have shown that the constitution works. For others they have shown major inadequacies. There are growing calls for constitutional change and while the two main parties will claim that this is in the name of democracy, the truth is that each party will ensure it is their people who benefit. For the Tories this will mean the hierarchy of law and order and authority coming to the fore; for Labour it will be the hierarchy of the trade union movement which speaks democracy but delivers a stifled working class, continually suppressed from achieving their aims.

For some the Supreme Court judgement ruling the September prorogation of Parliament void was a shining example of the UK's separation of powers, for others it was tantamount to judicial interference in executive matters. There have been hints from some Tory quarters that the court could even be abolished. At the very least it would be safe to assume that if the Conservatives get into office they may seek to change the powers or role of the Supreme Court.

The Fixed Term Parliament Act 2011 took the power of declaring general elections away from prime ministers and granted it to parliament. That legislation was primarily aimed at locking in the Conservative-Lib Dem coalition of the time for a full five-year term. The knock-on effect amid the minority government and Brexit division was to let Parliament block an election when it would otherwise benefit the government - in essence the power to declare a general election passed from the Prime Minister to the Leader of the Opposition.

The Tories will want that repealed, and will be aiming to make practical changes (at least in their eyes) restoring the power of government to enforce a more ordered politics - ie. strengthening the notion of parliamentary government. It is this arrangement, where government emerges



through Parliament, which enables the executive to wield enormous power in the UK system. It has been eroded by hung parliament and minority government, and in future the Tories will want to resist any form of constitutional change that could make such things more common, such as a move towards a proportional voting system which is strongly favoured by the smaller parties.

Another reform that the Tories would certainly resist is the idea of a codified constitution. At present the fabric of the UK's uncodified constitution allows for gradual and organic change but a rigid, written down in one document codified constitution is being called for by the Green Party. It is unlikely to get very far for the very reason that many consider the UK constitution to have worked well in these odd times. More likely will be smaller slates of reforms to individual parts of the system.

The Tories want harsher law and order and immigration policies, and to repeal the Human Rights Act. Tougher sentences, more prisons and more cops. Actually it's the other way around. You can't really hire thousands of extra police

officers without altering the prison and probation service. Again, these aren't strictly constitutional changes but they set the agenda potentially for generations, becoming paradigms that will be very difficult to shift. They set the tone within government departments.

Labour meanwhile wants to create new government departments to change the direction and politics of the civil service. A new department defending workers' rights, in order to change the emphasis that the Establishment has on labour relations. Getting workers onto the boards of major companies and issuing shares to the workforce. Not strictly constitutional change, such plans would effectively bring the trade unions back into the governmental fold and increase the trade union voice in Westminster and in the City.

One area of reform which neither lead party wants, but which may be unavoidable, is Scottish independence. The fact that Scotland voted to remain in Britain, added to the fact that the 2014 referendum on independence saw EU membership used as an argument for them to stay within the UK, has brought this issue to the fore again.

If anyone thinks the turbulent times are ending they should think again. Constitutional change seems to breed more constitutional change. It seems to produce knock on effects that nobody expects. See the Fixed Term Parliament Act for that. Whatever happens constitutionally following the election, expect changes to lead to more changes as the fabric is rearranged. The UK constitution is a large pattern and making changes is like pulling a thread. The election will pave the way for new initiatives in relation to the constitution and right now it's possible to see very different countries as a result.

~ Jon Bigger



A TRIBUTE TO DONALD

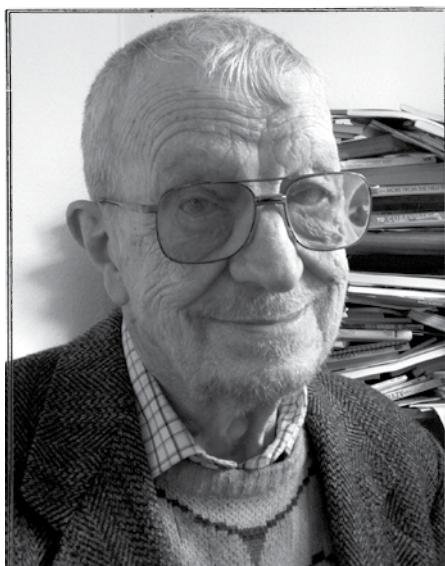
Donald Room, who passed away on August 21st 2019, was the longest-serving member of Freedom Press in the group's 133-year history.

Born on April 20th, 1928, Donald was among the last to remember a Britain at war with fascism and although too young to be called up, a principled horror of war and bombs would infuse his later work as a cartoonist and writer.

The young Bradfordian's first steps as an anarchist were taken via a Kent hop-picking project in the autumn of 1944. Sent to the fields as part of a Ministry of Food placement scheme, the 16-year-old took a trip to Hyde Park on his day off, where he came across an anarchist speaker. He recalled: "Everyone was talking about something unusual. One bloke said he was God from the Old Testament and was putting us right on some of the book. Philip Sansom was selling *War Commentary* outside the park gate. It was a very good time and I was very interested. I had until then been, along with my mother, a member of a Communist Party front, the Society for Cultural Relations, and what interested me about the party was the socialism.

"When I heard the anarchists speaking the general idea was that you couldn't have a socialist society by ordering it, that's not how the world works. I got the anarchist message from them."

He took out a subscription to the paper, but after heading back from the fields his introduction was quickly cut short, as no issue appeared that November — the



anarchist press had been raided and its entire editorial team arrested for sedition. Writing to enquire over his missing papers, he received a note explaining that along with all the staff, *War Commentary's* subscriber lists had been taken as evidence in what would become the infamous *War Commentary* free speech trial of 1944.

A month later, unbeknownst to young subscribers, a takeover attempt by anarcho-syndicalist backers of the paper, soon to revert back to its original name *Freedom*, was also made against the editors, which though it failed would set the tone for much of the next few decades of splits and arguments which he would have to navigate. Vernon Richards, a major figure in Donald's political life, would emerge from the scrap as proprietor of Freedom Press and *Freedom* newspaper.

But the young man was not yet at the heart of these events as he was, aged 19, conscripted for two years. Demobbed in 1949, Donald was awarded a resettlement grant and spent the next four years studying commercial design at Bradford Regional Art School. His interest in anarchism continued and he was an active participant in the 1949 anarchist summer school in Liverpool, as well as beginning a stint of public speaking.

His connections to *Freedom* also grew as he submitted his first cartoon strips to the Philip Sansom-edited *Syndicalist*, 'Scissor Bill', and towards the end of his

education he was involved, with two others, in organising a meeting on behalf of the London Anarchist Group campaigning against the death penalty. The experience of that campaign taught him a valuable lesson: "Pick on the things where society is weak."

Qualifying as a commercial artist, Donald moved to London in 1953-4 and became involved in a whirlwind of political activity. He spoke in Hyde Park and helped set up the Malatesta Club, one of only two anarchist social centres in London at that time. The club lasted for four years before being pushed out by rising rental prices in 1958, then from 1961 he began hosting his own monthly "off centre" discussion meetings which lasted until the latter part of the decade.

In the 1960s Donald's career as an illustrator began to take off, as he got work in the *Mirror*, *Private Eye* and *Spectator*, as well as beginning a long-running association with *Peace News*. He also wrote for Freedom Press, including in its *Anarchy* series of pamphlets, interrogating the philosophy through an individualist lens.

Of particular note around this time was Donald's involvement in the Challenor Affair, on July 11th 1963. The famous case, in which Donald outwitted a senior police officer who was attempting to frame him at a protest, made forensic and legal history.

Arrested while demonstrating against a visit by far-right Greek Queen Frederica, Donald was placed before Detective Harold Challenor, who produced a brick as "evidence" that the cartoonist had an offensive weapon. Realising Challenor had never actually placed the evidence on him however, upon being bailed Donald and his barrister ran to the office of a commercial scientist who proved that not a speck of brick dust could be found in his pockets, or anywhere else.

At trial the cartoonist was sensationally acquitted and Challenor was himself sent to trial charged with conspiracy to pervert the course of justice. The officer made an, astonishingly, successful bid to escape justice however by having himself diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia. Eventually a full Parliamentary Inquiry also found Challenor innocent, which was widely decried as a whitewash.



ROOUM

Less politically active in the 1970s as he studied for a degree at the Open University, Donald did find time to briefly take on a cartoon strip in 1974 for Philip Sansom. *Wildcat* only lasted a year, but featured the first iteration of what was to become his most famous cartoon creation and he would return to the angry feline from 1980 when Sansom, now back at *Freedom*, invited him to restart the column.

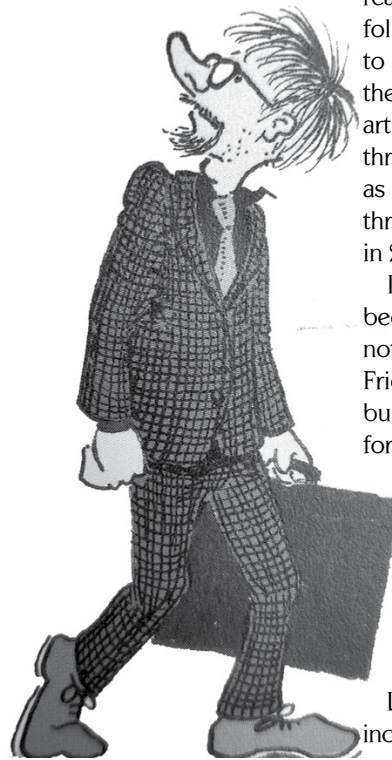
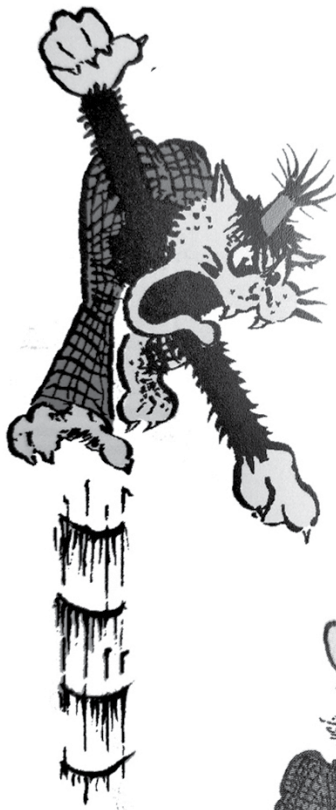
It was to be a remarkable run — 34 years of one artist pitting his satirical wit against the issues of the day. Speaking on his general thinking when creating the lead pairing of his *Wildcat* and free-range *Egghead* characters, he told *The Final Straw*:

“I thought about the contrast between the anarchists that I knew. Some of them were, like Colin Ward, very anxious for anarchism to become intellectually respectable. Some were just the opposite and wanted to go around throwing things. I thought the cat could be the wild anarchist, and the free-range egghead could be the intellectual.”

In 1983 Donald was able to retire from lecturing aged 55, moving briefly to Taunton, but on his return to London in 1985 it was to find *Freedom* in crisis, barely coming out on a monthly basis. He immediately got stuck in helping and after an intervention by Vernon Richards was named as part of a new editorial collective. In the event, Donald was one of a very few people who kept the faith, and kept *Freedom Press* going.

The '80s and '90s also saw the first selection of what became a series of books charting Donald's cartoon series and its consideration of anarchism and society. *Wildcat Anarchist Comics* was published in 1985, followed by *Wildcat Strikes Again* (1989), *ABC of Bosses* (1991), *Health Service Wildcat* (1994) and *Twenty Year Millennium Wildcat* (1999).

His joint editorship of *Freedom* lasted until October 1989 when Richards decided to take the paper back to being a fortnightly and while Donald continued contributing, he thought that frequency was too much, stepping back into an auxiliary role while continuing with other projects, including his excellent illustrated introductory text *What is Anarchism?*.



Towards the end of the '90s Donald found himself having to take on more responsibilities as the Press struggled to connect with a new wave of anarchism. It was increasingly run by just four comrades, directed by Richards via letter and among the many jobs Donald ended up doing over his long association with the press, he finished up as its de facto book keeper.

Vernon Richards died in 2001, leaving the Press in disarray and isolated. Donald recalled that at the time he “would have then liked to make overtures to the rest of the movement, but [editor] Charlie Crute especially was very much anti the rest of the anarchists. We were very much plodding along when Toby Crowe arrived.”

Toby had energy where *Freedom* seemed to be lacking it. Despite quarrels

(1928–2019)

which led to Charlie and Kevin leaving, Donald felt there was, at last, a chance for him to step back and in April 2003, on his 75th birthday, he retired.

Stopping activity didn't entirely suit Donald however, and by 2005 he was back, occasionally helping out and coming to meetings to offer kindly advice. It says a lot about Donald that in the face of more crises than can reasonably be counted across the following decade, he could be relied on to remind everyone which way to aim their rhetorical guns. He contributed articles alongside his *Wildcat* strip through to 2014 when *Freedom* closed as a monthly, supported the Press through one more financial crisis, and in 2016 retired for the “last time”.

I place last time in quote marks because even then, aged 88, he was not quite finished, instead joining the Friends of *Freedom*, which holds the building at 84b Angel Alley in trust for the Press. He continued that role into 2018 before finally stepping down aged 90.

Looking through correspondence, a note jumps out which says much about the man and why he never gave up on *Freedom*: “I have worked for *Freedom Press* since I came to London in 1954, in various capacities including editor, subscriptions manager, and shopkeeper, but never needed to be paid because I had a job, or more recently a pension. I suppose I follow a working-class tradition. My family, and most people I know, have always spent much of their free time doing voluntary work.”

Donald Rooum's association with *Freedom Press* was our privilege. Many of our books, and perhaps even the press itself, would not exist without his astonishing seven-decade dedication to the cause of a libertarian dream.

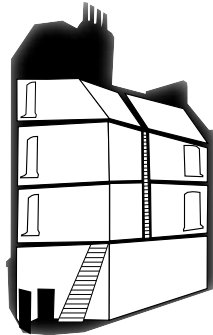
~ Rob Ray

A longer version of this obituary is available at freedomnews.org.uk



FREEDOM UPDATE

Freedom Press was founded in 1886 and has been promoting anarchism from its current home in Angel Alley, London for more than 50 years. Below a collective member rounds up some of what we've been doing recently.



In the Bookshop

The bookshop is doing better than ever due to a new influx of volunteers. We have an increasingly diverse and high quality selection of books, t-shirts and other gizmos for clientele of all stripes to be intrigued and enthused by. As ever some of our most popular titles are available via the website, for those of you who can't make it all the way down to Angel Alley, but if you are in London be sure to stop by and say hello as we are in every day and love a good chat.

As volunteers by nature do move on we are always needing new folk to keep those doors open, so if you're interested in helping out please get in touch either by stopping by or via email (see below)

Festivals and talks

There's been a lot going on since our last paper edition. First there was the highly successful Anarchist Festival in June, a three-day celebration of anarchist ideas and practice with talks, workshops and events nationwide. Several events were hosted at Freedom, which remains one of the few physical anarchist spaces in London and we are always happy to host future events either in the bookshop or the social centre upstairs, Decentre.

Freedom has also had the privilege of holding stalls at multiple radical bookfairs, including Dorset and Manchester radical bookfairs. As always we love to attend other radical and anarchist bookfairs and are always looking for volunteers interested in travelling up and representing Freedom wherever possible.

Freedom's Big Rebuild

Freedom Press celebrated 50 years in its building at 84b Angel Alley in Whitechapel in 2018 with the launch of *A Beautiful Idea* covering our history since we were founded by Charlotte Wilson and Peter Kropotkin

in 1886, alongside an announcement that long-awaited initial repairs to our building had finally been completed ... so we're on to the next stage of refitting and fixing up the inside of the building!

As visitors will know, there has been a major overhaul of the shop downstairs over the last couple of years, transforming it into a bright and much more welcoming space with a wider variety of stock and not infrequently, hosting informal events such as film nights, open group meets and talks. Throughout the building holes in the walls have been filled and we've started putting some paint on to brighten the place up a bit — a second coat of red is on the stairs and the rusty window bars have also been getting some attention.

Thanks to some very comradely work by our builders, we've also been able to get many small fixes done on the rest of the building, but there will be some more major works down the line. Fundraising is thus still ongoing, so if you can please do donate.

The view from Freedom News

Freedom News is consistently increasing its readership and there is happy news in that that the tireless work of the editor has now been supplemented with a new and exciting editorial collective, which aims to expand both the readership and diversity of content available so watch this space!

We have covered activist happenings in Britain and worldwide, broken news stories before anyone else, published some good analyses, and have had some articles going (mildly) viral. We also managed to distribute the entire print runs of the last couple of issues of this journal. If you are interested in getting involved either by joining the editorial collective or submitting articles and updates please contact us (see below).

What's up at publishing

Freedom's publishing efforts have gone from strength to strength since we

tentatively restarted them on a micro scale in 2015, and we've been averaging three new books a year since 2017.

In 2019 several new and exciting titles have been released. Early in the year we published *Our Masters Are Helpless*, the essays of George Barrett. In October we released a new and timely work, *The Trouble With National Action*, in which Mark Hayes investigates the fascist group along with its subsequent banning by the State. And in November we published the first English translation of *Anarchism is Movement* by the veteran Spanish anarchist Tomás Ibáñez, discussing the evolution of modern libertarianism. Ibáñez is a longstanding militant who played a major role in the 1960s-70s CNT as it pushed at the boundaries of Franco's repressive regime.

We have an exciting line-up ready for 2020, including a book on Indonesian Anarchism, *Fighting Women* by Isabella Lorusso which consists of interviews with female participants in the Spanish civil war, an updated and expanded edition of *Why Work?*, one of our most popular titles, and potentially others!

Contacts

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Books: publishing@freedompress.org.uk
Distribution: sales@freedompress.org.uk
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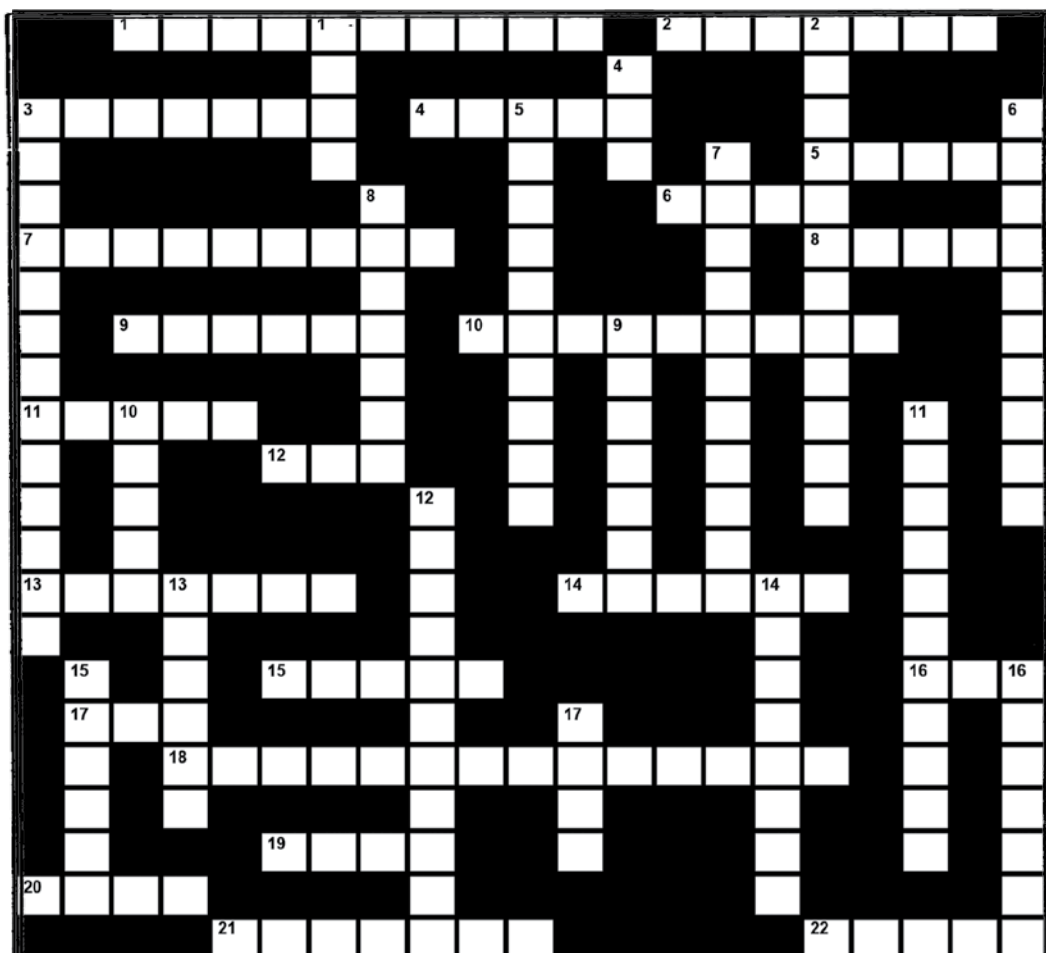
Crossword solutions



CROSSWORDS AT DAWN

ACROSS

1. Don't be a scab. never cross a ... (6,4)
2. See 1d
- 3/4. Oldest (and sexiest) English language anarchist publishers in the world (7, 5)
5. "_____ News" pacifist publication with strong ties to Housmans Radical bookshop (5)
6. _____ Richards, former editor of *Freedom*, long-standing and controversial anarchist, d. 2001 (4)
7. The Prince, latterly known as _____ (9)
8. Better than letting homes rot, you should ... (5)
- 9/10d. Longstanding writer, editor, and cartoonist for *Freedom*, creator of 8 down, d. 2019, (6, 5)
10. Anarchists' favourite drink (6, 3)
- 11/13. 1871 radical uprising strongly influenced by anarchist ideas (5, 7)
12. Spanish anarcho-syndicalist union confederation, founded 1910, acronym (3)
14. Founder of *Freedom Press*, Charlotte _____, (6)
15. Radical charity providing books to prisoners (5)
16. Anarchist abolitionist group providing prisoner support and political literature, acronym (3)
17. Mutual ____, primary tenet of anarchist philosophy (3)
18. History of the *Freedom Press* anarchists (1,9,4)
19. Initiative run by Dog Section Press providing free newspapers for homeless people to sell (4)
20. Anarchist infoshop and social centre based in Whitechapel, acronym (4)
21. 1990 riot against Thatcherite policy, leading to its abolition. Direct action works. (4,3)
22. Solidarity forever, it sure does make us strong (5)



DOWN

1. If you can't dance at the revolution, she ain't going (1d 2a, 4, 7)
2. Sci-fi account of an anarchist society: "The _____" (12)
3. Ouch, elf picket, anagram (4,3,6)
4. Squatters legal advice service, founded 1975, acronym (3)
5. Heretic hat, anagram (3,3,4)
6. Squatters' legal safety net — offence to force entry into a non-residential squat (7,3)
7. If in one direction there are insurrections, what are some solutions? (11)
8. Comic strip created by 9 across, published in *Freedom* (7)
9. Marie Louise _____ War Commentary/*Freedom* editor in the 1930s-40s (7)
10. See 9 across
11. Union organising without hierarchy (11)
12. Site of 1936 battle between Mosley's fascists, the police, and anti-fascists. The anti-fascists won. (5,6)
13. International workers day, commemorating the 1886 Haymarket Affair (3,3)
14. The Battle of _____, 1984 violent clash between police and picketers at a steel works

- during the Miners Strike (8)
15. Emiliano _____, Mexican revolutionary and influence behind the contemporary revolutionary body based in Chiapas (6)
16. _____ CFC, antifascist football club (9)
17. ____ Parsons, US anarchist and labour organiser, founder of the IWW

~ Scorsby



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.

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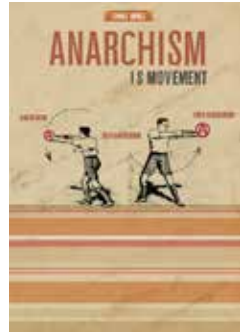
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BY TOMÁS IBÁÑEZ
FOREWORD BY PETER GELDERLOOS

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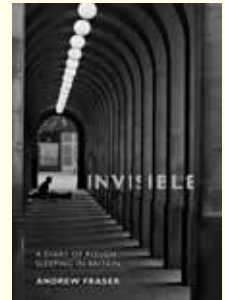


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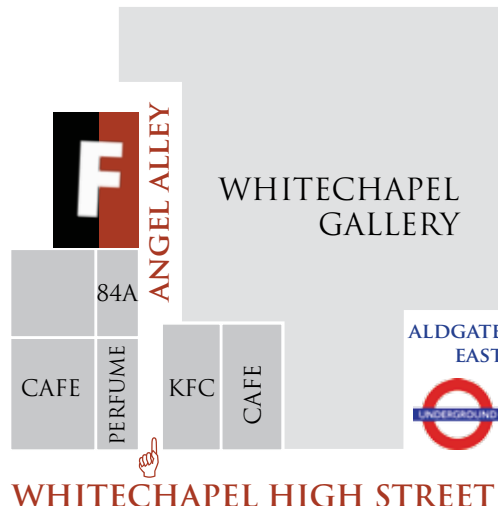
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