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AS OUR RIGHTS ARE TAKEN AWAY BY ANTI-PROTEST LAWS AND VIOLENT COPS ONLY FOOLS MAKE UP ENEMIES



FIGHT THE REAL FOE

DISABILITY & AUTONOMY

Andy Greene of Disabled People Against Cuts writes on the ways in which anarchist and disabled interests and actions dovetail in the face of State oppression.

Anarchism and independent living are two concepts that may not immediately seem related. But as many people reading this will know from personal experience, they share a common thread: a desire for autonomy, self-determination and a DIY culture. In the context of changing anti-protest legislation, the relationship between these (sometimes though not always) two communities becomes particularly relevant.

There are disabled people who don't believe that the State is inherently oppressive (I'm not one) but also accept that individuals should be free to make their own decisions without interference from external institutions (I am one). This isn't a million miles away from the core politics that birthed the Independent Living Movement.

Independent living is a movement that seeks to empower disabled people to live as independently as possible. It promotes the idea that disabled people should have control over their own lives and have the right to make their own choices regarding issues like housing, employment, and healthcare. Both groups revel in a healthy disregard of governments.

In recent years, there has been a growing trend of governments around the world passing anti-protest legislation. This is particularly true here in the UK (see p12). Let's be honest, not being able to revert to type and kick the shit out of disabled activists without public scrutiny has thrown all 40-odd of the police forces here into a tailspin.

It hasn't stopped them trying. Ask Jody McIntyre, who was dragged from his wheelchair by the Met during student protests in 2011. Ask disabled activists who had their wheelchair and shoulder respectively broken outside the Department for Work and Pensions. Ask the anti-fracking disabled activists who (along with being beaten, groped and arrested daily) were reported to benefits agencies and social services, lost mobility cars or were sectioned following



collusion between police and these other State institutions. The ultimate forms of State violence.

But this wasn't enough control for some. In the last few years a whole raft of laws restricting the ability of individuals and groups to assemble and protest against government policies or actions have been passed. From the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act and its fucked-up offspring the Public Order Bill, to laws covering migrants and trade unionists – control is the watchword.

Control over the ability to decide what a response looks like, how it manifests and who gets to do so are a significant threat to freedom of assembly, speech and expression.

All of these laws represent a direct



Andy Greene

Pic: Guy Smallman

attack on our shared values and beliefs. Our communities rely on the ability of individuals to come together and organise in order to effect change

Disabled people and cop watchers have both been at the forefront of protests against these (and other) laws. We have long been involved in protests against the State, we aren't about to let this or future governments further consolidate their power and suppress dissent.

Along with our shared opposition to these shit laws, our communities also share a commitment to direct action and civil disobedience. Whether it's blocking city centres or occupations we have found effective tactics which have both challenged State power AND challenged ableist ideas and practices.

Anarchists/disabled people also share a long-time commitment to mutual aid, supporting one another directly, without relying on outside authorities or institutions. We see mutual aid as a way to build stronger, more resilient communities that are less dependent on the State; and as a way to provide support systems outside of traditional support systems.

Despite some half arsed, council-run covid response versions during the pandemic, mutual aid has become increasingly important. As governments crack down on protests and dissent, individuals and groups will have to rely once more on themselves and each other.

Nobody's coming to save us. Nobody ever was. Anything we've won, we've won with chains, D-locks, flames and often with blood. The mood music might change. But the song remains the same.

That's why DPAC, anarchist groups and every other group out on the streets need to find ways of working alongside each other in ways which iron out the wrinkles and make the most of our skills and experiences. By proactively engaging, by recognising what each other have to offer and dovetailing our energies – we know we have the skills, knowledge and creativity to make these laws unworkable. We can make the streets ungovernable. Safe in the knowledge that we can rebuild in our own image.

And what a sight that will be. See you in the squats and squares!

~ Andy Greene

NECESSITY BREEDS REVOLT

This is not protest, this is standing up for common sense. Citizens around Europe and the West are getting imprisoned for preventing harm. The State's response is draconian, flailing for an adequate response to the civil resistance that is building. The ruling class is out of its depth.

Leading Earth scientists such as Tim Lenton and James G Anderson think climate tipping points are upon us. By 2035 there will be no more summer ice in the Arctic. The jet stream and the gulf stream will be even more out of kilter.

We will see heatwaves this summer to put Wimbledon 1976 in context, never mind 39°C in the shade – the south east will be looking at 41 or 42°C. More wildfires will be followed by flooding, with the ground too desiccated to take on water.

There are so many capitalist-made problems oncoming that the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reports seem to be immaterial.

Take the British government's licensing of new oil and gas. Faith Birol of the International Energy Agency has explained that by the time any new North Sea fields become operational they would be too late to allay the energy price crisis caused by the war in Ukraine, and by 2030 would simply be adding to emissions.

So the campaigns of civil resistance by groups like Earth First!, Just Stop Oil, Insulate Britain, Letze Generation and Declare Emergency in Europe and the US to stop new extraction are on the money.

And oceans? The talk is for 30% of seas to be placed within marine conservation areas by 2030. Once again this crucial year, and yet what's wrong with now? After all it's not four fifths, or five sixths, it's one third. We can re-farm the oceans with beneficial sea plants and regenerate fisheries by leaving them alone.

Urgency is demanded by environmentalists. The recognition is that a paradigm shift to mutual aid and fairer, circular economies is required. Writing in the *Financial Times*, Martin Wolf has talked in defence of capitalism, but tinkering with a flawed system is too little, too late.

The IPCC Synthesis of their Sixth Assessment Report (once again) talks of "now or never," yet the large-scale response is all wrong – China upping its



coal-fired power stations, while State capitalist countries and dictatorships clamp down on free speech.

Look at Macron, Erdogan, Putin, Netanyahu and the out-and-out dictators like Min Aung Hlaing in Myanmar, all increasing the brutal policing of restive populations, from Burma to Russia, with socialists and anarchists fighting against increasingly fascist, neoliberal policies.

Not that such oppression will do the job it hopes. I was the first person to be convicted under the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022, for stopping M25 traffic in 2021, and have been through the judicial system on numerous occasions. Unjustly criminalising a section of society does not work. What happens is that in prison you tell your truth and it has a positive impact. Prisoners are by default opposed to the government and this only increases their rancour. People join you, people who will fight back and not take things lying down.

What is coming in the next four to five years is a time of social fluidity where the navel gazing of the bureaucratic centre/left will be swept away. The inklings are there. The recent Declaration of Conscience by 120 leading British lawyers for example announced they would "withhold

services in respect of supporting new fossil fuel projects and action against climate protesters exercising their right of peaceful protest."

The whole mantra of economic growth, parroted by global elites, is being seen for what it is – fat cats and global financiers saving their own skins as a death spiral hits the poorest. Although no one will be spared eventually.

When full-scale rationing comes, the mantra will be energy conservation and consumption reduction. Perennial planting will take over from factory farming and trawling. Protests will reignite, and people will take over the means of production for realistic, sustainable food systems.

The dreams of living in space and luxury electric lives are mad professor escapism. Their philosophy is built upon bankrupt foundations – trashing ecosystems to the point where they are spent and despoiled then moving onto the next project. The simpler pathway, surely, is to avoid the worst ravages of irreversible tipping points.

On a positive spin, once nations' social tipping points are reached, global food systems will change by necessity (you can't grow food in hotter average global inland temperatures) and a switch to plant-based diets will be prevalent.

The obscenity of rich nation resource waste and overconsumption will pass and there will be a reckoning. The socially responsible path is the necessary one.

~ Jan Goodey



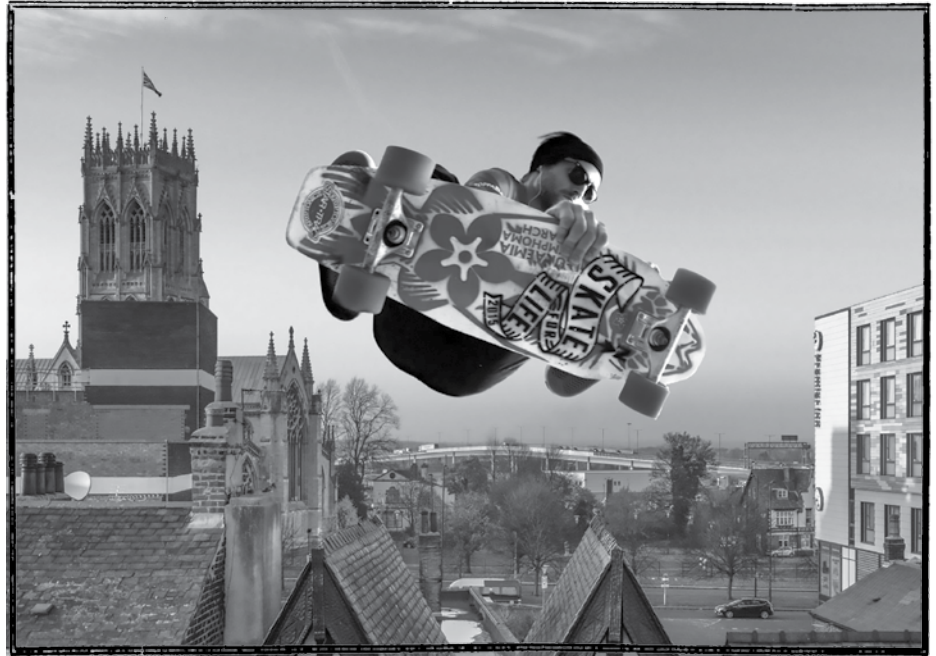
SKATE NOT STATE

Skateboarders have always been seen as alternative, autonomous, and anti-authoritarian. Subcultures tend to recognise like-minded movements and often work closely together, assimilating many of the ethics and traits of their allied groups. As such, skateboarding shares a kinship with alternative scenes like hip hop, punk, DIY culture and anarchism. Indeed, the circled-A appears regularly on skateboard artwork. It could also be argued that the way in which they positively and trans-legally reclaim and repurpose public and private spaces is definitely a trait shared with more practical, community-minded anarchists.

An initiative in Doncaster is taking this one step further. A newly formed workers' cooperative made up of skateboarders — many of whom also volunteer at the nearby Bentley Urban Farm, an “upcycled community market garden” itself run along anarchist principles — have taken over Twisted, an indoor skatepark in the shadow of Doncaster's notorious “Doncatraz” prison. The co-op also includes members of A Commune in the North (ACiN), who have used their experience of cooperatives to build the framework for this new worker co-op.

Having anarchists involved with the formation of the co-op has not only deepened the local links between skateboarders and anarchy, it is also shaping the way the co-op is rebuilding the disused café area of the skatepark. They are currently in the process of creating a much-needed medium sized music venue, a vegan café and an anarchist library and information centre. As with Bentley Urban Farm, the plan is propaganda through osmosis, using music, skating and other artforms to introduce people to the possibility of a better, braver, brighter way of living.

The commitment to anarchism goes beyond the boundaries of the skatepark. As mentioned, Twisted lies in the shadow of HMP Doncaster, a Serco operated



Category B private men's prison situated in the Marsh Gate region of Doncaster (yes, that's right, they built a prison on a swamp). The prison is consistently overcrowded, routinely housing around 1,100 inmates in a space designed for 738, many being forced to double-up, 23 hours a day, in cells designed for a single person.

Serco, of course, exists to make money from misery. Their business is “defence, justice and immigration,” which translates into war, incarceration and dehumanisation. Serco famously had to repay the UK government £68.5 million when it was caught overcharging the State for its electronic tagging services. They still have the contract to tag offenders and asylum seekers despite 63% of people feeling that Serco should have been stripped of all government contracts. In 2013, Serco tried to cover up sexual abuse at the Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Centre in Bedfordshire. In 2015 a young man lost his life in Doncatraz due to “serious failures in medical attention” under Serco's watch, and last year the company apologised for feeding children

maggots at a hotel housing asylum seekers in the Midlands. These are just a few of the bleaker moments in Serco's long, dark history.

The co-op are planning to coordinate anti-prison campaigning and a whole host of other activities from their anarchist library and info-centre once it is completed. In the meantime, their work involves direct prisoner support, such as sharing snacks, smokes and jokes with newly released prisoners who walk past the skatepark with their tell-tale see-through carrier bags on their way to life outside of State incarceration.

Twisted, ACiN and Bentley Urban farm now offer a trio of reasons for anarchists to pay a visit to Doncaster. The library and info-centre are in their early stages, so it would be great if people could get involved and help the co-op to realise their dream. Why not pop down, catch some air, support some prisoners, and build some revolutionary bonds ...

Twisted Skatepark, 3 Marsh Gate, Doncaster DN5 8AF : 01302 439875

~ Warren Draper



EMBEDDING MUTUAL AID

The Cost of Living Crisis is commonly portrayed in the same way as an earthquake or a tsunami – an unpredictable and inevitable catastrophe, which spontaneously erupted and evenly harmed everyone from workers and disabled people to corporations and landlords.

But the Cost of Living under the Tories Crisis is anything but spontaneous or evenly meted out. It is the result of long-term government policies which encourage companies to pay workers poverty wages, while increasing sale prices, in order to pay shareholders billions in dividends and allow landlords to squeeze those pitiful wages back again in the form of rent. It is yet another point in an ongoing series of crises of capitalism, all with the same result: an increase of value and assets transferred from the working to the capitalist class.

At Cooperation Town, a nonprofit building a movement of community food co-ops, members talk about the anxiety caused by increased rent (including social rent) and evictions, by energy bills and forced metre installations, by shrinking purchasing power at the shops and by the isolation and shame that go hand in hand with poverty, even when everyone around you experiences the same.



One member, Amina, said about rising costs: “I went to one of my neighbours crying like an idiot, but then she was struggling too, and said ‘is it really worth living,’ and it broke my heart.”

But members also talk about how organising at community level helps to defend us from some of those attacks on our class.

Since 2019, households around the country have been using the Cooperation Town model to start food co-ops on their streets or estates. These are essentially small buying groups purchasing food in bulk and accessing free supermarket and producer surplus. Each group of 20 households forms its own autonomous co-op, which is organised and run by members. Most London members pay £5 a week for a shopping basket worth anything from £25 to £45, saving around 40-50% on weekly food costs.

Carol from Cooperation Lismore says “I couldn’t be without the co-op. We make friends here. Sometimes we get too much for a fiver and we share the extra food with our neighbours. Nothing gets wasted”.

Each co-op is different, with urban ones accessing supplies through the big wholesale markets and more rural co-ops purchasing directly from growers. Some develop their own constitution, while others are solely based on trust and an ongoing rhythm of activities – but follow the same basic principles. They have access to support from Cooperation Town organisers and fellow cooperators, as well as practical resources and a programme of peer education sessions.

In north London a growing cluster of co-ops led to the formation of a small logistics hub, where food is sourced and distributed at a larger scale, leading to further cooperation and savings. There are currently 27 co-ops in the movement, from Lincolnshire to south London.

The Cooperation Town Hub offers opportunities beyond food – from a free community laundrette to a growing

project. In January 2023 we launched the Gospel Oak Living Room, a partnership between Cooperation Town, three Tenants and Residents Associations and the local church, where neighbours are invited to spend time without having to share details, participate in any formal activity or pay. The five spaces offer nutritious hot meals (cooked by our friends Refugee Community Kitchen), refreshments and snacks, room for kids to play and adults to chat and friendly spaces to rest and socialise.

Sally from Gospel Oak says: “I had an operation on my foot, and was totally immobile for 10 weeks. I had weekly visits from co-op members who delivered food and visited me with their children, which really cheered me up. It meant I was in touch with the world outside and kept me part of the community”.

Those shared conversations while packing food, over lunch or while building raised beds in the garden led to discussions around class, our messed up food system, housing and the wider economy.

The aim is to build confidence and power on our estates and within our class, to find a common language to describe our social and economic conditions, our allies and enemies and to develop a collective infrastructure to defend ourselves against the violence inflicted on us by both State and capital.

These defences go beyond saving money on food – Cooperation Town members support each other around housing rights and organise eviction resistance, work with asylum seekers to fight the Home Office and encourage people in the wider food industry (for example drivers and warehouse workers) to join trade unions.

The anarchist principles of autonomous self organisation, mutual aid and direct action guide every aspect of our movement, but you will rarely find members or organisers discussing political theory or using anarchist terminology. Our politics are explored, developed and articulated through action, accessible and actionable by all.

~Shiri Shalmy
cooperation.town

MUST BRITAIN'S BORDERS

REBUTTALS TO DEADLY ASSUMPTIONS

Much has been made by the press and political intelligentsia of “small boat crossings.” This is a euphemism designed to strip refugees of any humanity. Their plight isn't described in human terms; they are just blips popping up over the horizon. Small boat crossings.

The purpose of this language is to make it easier to persecute asylum seekers. This persecution includes a scheme which attempts to deport people to Rwanda, and a new bill proposed to Parliament by Home Secretary Suella Braverman which aims to immediately strip anyone who crosses the Channel of any rights they have to asylum, including access to modern slavery support. This is all appalling. Nevertheless, tried and tested talking points by politicians and pundits serve to undermine any sense of moral outrage that should justifiably be felt, and dismisses any calls for change as idealistic, radically left-wing, or as a demand for open borders.

Now, speaking as an idealist on the radical left who doesn't believe in borders, I don't particularly enjoy being associated with Keir Starmer, who was recently accused by PM Rishi Sunak of being “just another leftie lawyer” (don't make me like him now, Prime Minister). In that sense, part of this article's existence is a kind of gag-reflex at the notion of being considered in lockstep with the Labour Party, who seem to be doing all they can to distance themselves from any semblance of decency which emerged under courageous – if deeply flawed – leadership of Corbyn. Personal motives aside, the following text is an attempt to compile all of the arguments against treating those seeking asylum with any empathy, and responding to them with the type of basic research and reasoning that always makes conservatives (and I am including the Labour Party here) angry.

“We Can't Take Everyone”.

Recently, Suella Braverman wrote an article for the *Daily Mail* (a newspaper which is basically *The Onion* without any

self-awareness) in which she, without a hint of irony, stated the following:

“There are 100 million people displaced around the world, and likely billions more eager to come here if possible.”

Billions. Where do we begin? There is simply no prospect of billions of people wanting to come to the UK. It's a statement so absurd that it can't even be disproven. As for the 100 million figure, she's broadly correct, but using the number in the context of potential UK asylum applicants is outrageously misleading. About 50% of these people are internally displaced (meaning they are still in their country of origin), and 32 million of the remaining 50% are already refugees (meaning, have already sought, and gained asylum).

About 5 million people are currently seeking asylum globally. Of those 5 million, in 2022, the UK received applications of asylum from just under 90,000 which, while still higher than Braverman can count, is nowhere near the billions hilariously suggested. The truth is that for every 10,000 people in the UK there are about nine asylum applications (which doesn't take into consideration whether these applications will be accepted). This is lower than the European average of 14.

“Britain is a compassionate country.”

Britain is not a compassionate country when it comes to housing refugees, and anyone who suggests as such can be immediately dismissed as statistically illiterate. We give less money to refugees in the UK than other European countries. The weekly allowance for refugees in the UK is £36.95, compared to France's £58.50. The UK doesn't allow refugees recourse to public funds, and doesn't allow them to work, whereas in the European Union refugees are permitted to look for work after nine months if their application hasn't been decided upon.

These are all fairly easy statistics to find, in fact, this article was researched with the help of less than ten sources (Amnesty International being a key one).

They can be found on your phone in less than the time it would take between a refugee boat appearing on the horizon and making it to shore. There is no excuse for not knowing these facts, and even less so for deliberately misrepresenting them in order to push through a racist policy.

“You're in a safe country”

Conservatives will point to the fact that asylum seekers invariably come to the UK by passing through safe countries. This is true, it's a natural result of being an island nation (or rather, a one and a little bit of another island nation) which doesn't have neighbours in the midst of war. Presumably people who take this line of argument would only accept French or Irish asylum seekers. Although the right-wing case for leaving the EU was largely not to have to deal with them either.

People who tediously bang on about refugees should really be challenged on what they want. If they don't accept anyone who has passed through a safe country, then who will they accept? It is a matter of international law that asylum seekers need not seek asylum in the first country they reach. If taken to its logical conclusion, banning anyone who has come from a safe country from seeking an asylum in an island nation effectively means banning anyone. And make no mistake, that is what these people want. They want a moratorium on asylum claims.

When confronted with this, eventually, conservatives will retreat: “but they shouldn't come here illegally.”

Illegality

The substance of the claims of illegality is deliberately thin. Conservatives will constantly mention that the Illegal Migration Bill is to stop people from crossing the Channel in small boats, on the grounds that this is illegal. Though there are many ways of entering a country which are illegal, and which aren't given as much airtime as refugees crossing the Channel.

BE A SITE OF BRUTALITY?



What if a refugee were to drive to a country to seek asylum, but had a broken headlight? What if they had an expired driver's licence? What if they didn't have one at all? What if they were driving in a car which was uninsured? What if it was a rental car and was driven outside of the contracted regions of the rental company? What if (and you'll forgive me for my George Carlin impression) they were driving an uninsured rental car with a broken headlight, no driver's licence and outside the jurisdiction of the rental company?

I doubt that many people would say that this is reasonable grounds for breaking international law by deporting them to another country or detaining them without trial. The whole point of rights, after all, is that they still apply to you even if you've broken the law. This is why the 1951 Convention on the Rights of Refugees explicitly states that asylum seekers should not be penalised as a result of illegal entry. This is made even more necessary because there are no legal routes for many of these people to take.

Safe Routes

The reason a lot of people arrive in the UK on boats is because there are no legal routes for them to take. Specific legal routes exist for all of three territories: Ukraine, Afghanistan and Hong Kong.

Each of these schemes have woeful inadequacies, which is why you will often see people from Afghanistan arriving in the UK by crossing the Channel. As for asylum seekers from other countries, no such routes exist. None. For Albanians, Iraqis, Iranians, and Syrians, (four of the top five countries of origin for asylum applicants in the UK) there is no possible legal route in order to claim asylum.

Solutions

The solutions to this problem are obvious, and it takes an extraordinary effort on the part of the media and political classes to convince you that they aren't. If we were to implement these five things, the situation would be resolved within a month:

- Immediately grant all current applicants from territories recognised

to be at war (civil or otherwise) immediate British citizenship, regardless of how they arrived.

- Allow all asylum seekers to work, have recourse to public funds, and full civil rights.
- Scrap both the Rwanda scheme and the Illegal Migration Bill.
- Allow people to apply for asylum from any British Embassy in the world.
- Set up offices for asylum applications in major refugee camps and hotspot areas.
- The first three are matters of internal policy and could be done tomorrow. The last two could be funded with the money currently being used to fight ridiculous legal cases attempting to deport people to Rwanda.

And for the record, this would not mean an influx of billions of people coming to the UK. The common denominator in asylum applicants is, and always has been, desperation, not ease of access. If you refuse to recognise this fact, you have no right to wince when your morality is questioned.

The truth is that many of the people who cause such a fuss about refugees and asylum seekers are doing so out of racism, and it's tiring to have to pretend that this isn't the case. We have a government that is enacting policies specifically designed to harm black, brown and Asian people, propped up by a media which explicitly draws on racist stereotypes.

In a world not dominated by indoctrination, it would be easy to recognise that you have more in common with the people fleeing the bombs, sometimes made by us, than with the billionaires telling you to hate them. Any party which cannot announce this simple truth is not worthy of your support, and any person unable to hear it is not worthy of your politeness.

~ Ellis Fox



TAKE ME DOWN BUT I'M

CW: This personal account includes descriptions of serious violence, including rape.

When I was 13 a boy approached me as I went into my mum's house. I was new to London, fresh from the countryside. I was very much still a child. He asked me if I wanted to hang out and be friends and asked for my phone number. Wanting to be polite and a little unsure, I said "sure." The next day, he knocked on my mum's door and asked if he could come in to see me. My mum asked if I knew him and I said yes, a bit hesitant. My mum, a mother of five girls at the time, of which I was the oldest, and who was getting over Hodgkinsons' cancer, let him in. And this was when my life was turned upside down.

I'm MADALDN, an artist, producer, rapper, editor, mother, cleaner, you name it. I've recently dropped my new single called *Fallen Star* (search MADALDN on Youtube and streaming platforms), which tells my story, someone who survived violence from gangs at a very young age. This is my backlash against those who fucked me up. This is my story. This is my protest. And profits made from this will go towards Positive Youth Education; a project working with young people who are predominantly victims of violence and knife crime in London.

We went upstairs and he got on the phone to his friends quite quickly, it's all a bit of a haze now, but he told his friend to come. Before I knew it, there were about four boys in my box room, of our council home in Plumstead, SE London.

They put on their music and made themselves comfortable. At first, as a child, I was flattered, and felt popular. I was never that sure of myself and was quite insecure. But things became clear, very quickly, that these boys, who were a number of years older than me, did not want to be my friend.

I was told I belonged to them now. They pulled my hair and pushed my head down onto the bed. They told me if I ever told my mum they would burn my mum's house down and kill my family. They wanted me to sit on their lap and dance for them. They put their hands all over me. I was too

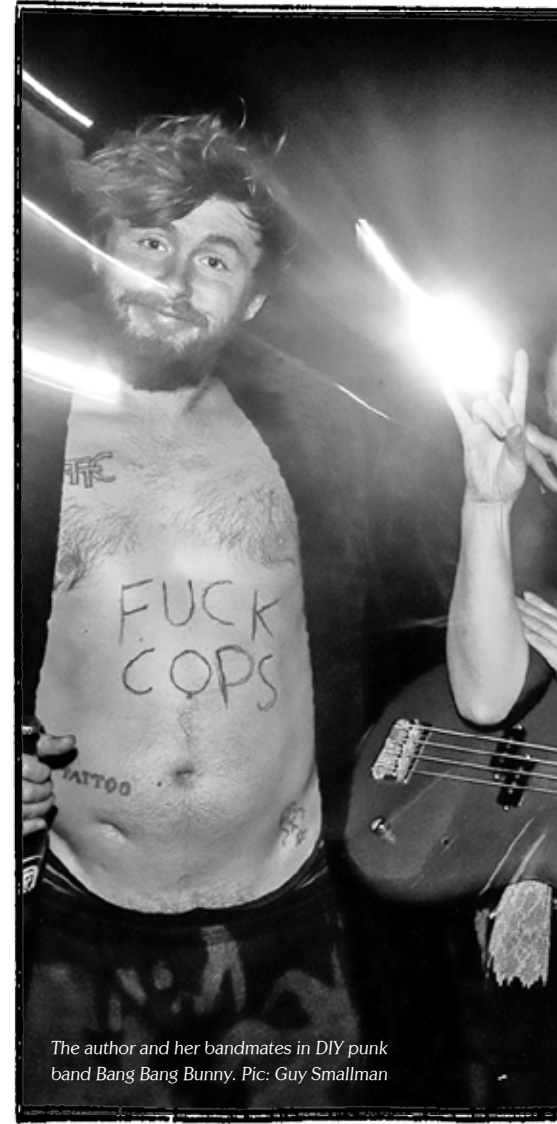
young. I was not ready. And I was scared.

Needless to say I was raped a number of times by a number of teenage men. That is to say when I was 13 coming on 14, they were around 17 to early twenties. They would wait for me outside of school, they would be in my home when I arrived back from school. It got worse when conflicting gangs got involved and tried to "take me." I was hit over a car bonnet at age 14 and had my nose and front tooth broken just because I was affiliated with the gang. I was told I had to leave my mum and come to where they were because, if I didn't, the punishment would be worse. I felt like I was taking myself to the grave. I was spat at, slapped, kicked, threatened with a baseball bat, shot at, and knives poked into my side as I was robbed.

Life in London wasn't going so well. There was nothing it seemed like anyone could do. The school failed to see, as did any family. It finally came to a head. I said, "Mum, I'm being raped." Soon afterwards my mum was attacked by a gang and I had to leave my family home and my school. My life continued to go quite downhill for a number of years after that. I was homeless at 15 with no qualifications, hanging outside police stations all night as I thought they wouldn't bother me there. I shared accommodation with sex workers who took me back to a house where blood had been squirted up the walls from a man who had been axed in the head, to be raped. I recall hiding in a bush as men pulled up in cars looking for me.

Luckily, after a lot of effort and persistence with Greenwich Council, I was housed on my 16th birthday in temporary accommodation. I escaped these gangs only with the help of a bigger gang guy, who also was abusive to me. However the abuse now was only coming from one direction. I don't want to talk much of him, because despite the abuse I feel like he saved me. Some years later, I was diagnosed with a type of PTSD, called dissociative seizures, a disorder which affects mostly those with a history of trauma and which I still suffer from nearly two decades on.

I'm telling this story because it still affects me, but more profoundly it is still affecting, dare I say, millions of young



The author and her bandmates in DIY punk band Bang Bang Bunny. Pic: Guy Smallman

people, to various degrees or another, today. I'm not sure of the numbers of gang rape, but Rape Crises reports the highest number of rapes between a 12-month period was recorded by police in the year ending September 2022 – which was 70,633. The jails must be full of rapists. Not quite. Only 1% of rapes recorded in the year prior resulted in a charge, let alone a conviction, which is among the lowest since records began. Even if you are taken seriously by the police, persuading the judge to put that fucker in jail is another thing entirely. The demographic of those who have been raped or sexually assaulted show this is something that effects women more where, one in four are women, one in six are children and one in 18 are men.

BACK UP AGAIN



It needs to stop, and it needs to change. So what did I do about it?

When I was 19 I managed to get back into school. I enrolled at the University of Greenwich where I met a very intelligent, eccentric guy called Tom Palmer whilst doing a philosophy degree. The coalition government had been elected and tuition fees were set to triple. I already thought how lucky I was, coming from the background I did, to even get to that university, and I thought about all those who were like me, who would now struggle threefold.

Tom took me to my first-ever protest – those ones that you see on the TV that you think “how the fuck does everyone know about that” – and we shut down

London. The police then started bringing in new tactics called “kettling” and new oppressive measures were seen, police infiltrating the protest as undercover, and a diagnosis of paranoia and madness to anyone who suspected such a thing. Some years of protesting went by: I got up the duff; we were on top of Admiralty Arch shouting ACAB slogans at the chief of police; and Tom Palmer died under suspicious circumstances a year later.

A few others in the group ended up in mental hospital and wracked with anxiety from police brutality and battling bailiffs. I had a one-year-old and I withdrew from the protest movement, as a gang that was even bigger than the gangs I had known from my days on the estate were using psychological and physiological coercion. That gang was the Met police, in conjunction with MI5 and those puppets in Parliament.

Tom Palmer taught me music, he taught me guitar. And so I strummed that fucking thing all through my grief and my sadness until I had about 100 songs to play with. What was great about music is that you could say fuck the police, and the State, and you seem to be able to get away with it due to artistic licence. However, the same is not true for the street gangs, where people are personally called out and threatened and sometimes those threats in music are realised and blood is spilled.

Yet some more years later, I taught myself to record, and produce music to a basic level, and edit music videos. Relative poverty will do that to you; when you can't afford to pay and you won't suck someone's dick for a beat. I could never shake off what had happened to me, and after someone exploited me, I wrote this song. Women are often parodied for their way of thinking, where when one thing goes wrong, it spirals into everything that ever went wrong in our life. So I wrote *Fallen Star*, and not long after I started volunteering with PYE. It all now seems to be just slowly going in this direction. Where I am telling the world what happened, and what is still happening. I am one person behind those graphic statistics out of tens of thousands last year, hundreds of thousands the last

decade, and millions in the last however long, and that is just in Britain. And likewise a man reading this is one of the millions of rapists walking free out there because of our failed police and judicial system, and a political system that leaves young people open to abuse.

I gave a talk on this to a group of women doing tremendous work in Brixton to support survivors of domestic violence and the question I commonly get asked arose yet again – where was your mum? But then someone quickly redacted, where was your dad. We are quick in our society to blame the parents, but many parents are exhausted and undersupported by a society that capitalises off many living hand to mouth in communities that have long been torn apart by the history of land grabbing and monopolisation of business.

So here I am, in brief, telling my story, and creeping out of the shadows, where even before this anti-protest Bill happened, protest was being curtailed by the biggest gangs in the country, through kettling, and spying, rape and violence. Protest is pretty shambolic as it is already in this country, but because of this gang mentality, it's about to get a whole lot more pathetic. I want to make it clear here that a gang is an organised group that commits crime, and as the latest reports show, the police are not an exception, rather they are the archetype, and the same goes for those in Parliament, and leaders worldwide, who commit atrocities en masse against whole peoples. This is why in the music video for *Fallen Star* you see clips of protesters battling police. If you think of a gang as the black boys shooting weed on the street corner you'd better understand that that is racist and you need to perhaps consider these arguments.

This was my story, this is my protest. I hope we can all continue to stand together against violence, whether that be street or w! Speak up, Stand up and unite, forming communities that stand up to gangs.

~ MADALDN



THE STORY SPYCOPS TRY

*The closing hearing in the first “tranche” of the Undercover Policing Inquiry (UCPI) took place earlier this year. This summary from the **Undercover Research Group** (undercoverresearch.net) offers an overview of what has been learned.*

The Inquiry was first ordered in 2014 following multiple scandals around two undercover units – the Special Demonstration Squad (SDS) and National Public Order Intelligence Unit (NPOIU). From 1968 to 2010 their officers infiltrated predominantly left-wing groups, and the SDS’s motto “By Any Means Necessary” proved far truer than anyone imagined.

They stole the identities of dead children to form their cover, took positions of power in target groups, deceived women into relationships and in some cases even fathered children. No group was out of bounds – to be seeking social change was sufficient. The final straw leading to the Inquiry was the revelation that they had targeted the family of Stephen Lawrence and Duwayne Brooks while they were engaged in the Macpherson Inquiry, which found the Metropolitan Police to be institutionally racist.

The Inquiry

The UCPI has been excessively slow. It was not until November 2020 that the first public evidence was given and it is looking at evidence in four tranches: 1968-82, 1982-92, 1992-2008 (all SDS) and 1999-2010 (NPOIU). February’s closing hearing covered the first of these, with tranches two to four to be crammed into the next two years – though no further evidence will be heard until Spring 2024.

Much of the delay comes from the Inquiry’s excessive secrecy. For instance, every document goes through a nine-step disclosure process. A huge amount of power has been given to the police, which sought anonymity for every undercover. Just over half the cover names of the approximately 144 undercovers have been disclosed, with the majority of the NPOIU restricted. Unless there was a sexual relationship, real names have all been restricted. Inquiry chair John Mitting has, more often than not, found in their favour.

Tranche One

The 1968-82 era is important as it covers the Special Demonstration Squad’s founding, when many core issues, such as sexual relationships and use of dead children’s identities, were established.

The Inquiry provides many SDS cover names and identifies the squad’s managers from this time, along with thousands of reports. It released documents relating to squad management and oversight, and the role of MI5 and the Home Office. Indeed, it appears that the Inquiry has drawn heavily on MI5’s archives as the police do not appear to have kept their own reports.

To a seasoned watcher of the State there is nothing truly surprising there. The overall picture demonstrates an ideological bias against anything progressive, let alone left-wing.

Limited and skewed as it is, there is much to be gleaned from this source material. One powerful aspect is seeing for the first time what we all suspected was happening. It gives a proper frame to the fears and concerns we had as political activists. It is possible to delineate what was paranoia and what was justifiable fear. We see how they used individuals and manipulated campaigns.

Everyone a target

For most undercovers, they were simply placed to see what they could find. This led many to the SWP, where they took up roles in local branches and districts. Reporting is often incredibly banal – accounts of branch meetings.

Anyone on the left is fair game. The reports on individuals contain highly personal details and commentary, such as on children’s parentage. Racist, sexist and homophobic attitudes pepper the reports and it is not unusual for politically active schoolchildren to be reported on as well.

The undercovers justified this saying they were overseen by management, who signed it all off. None said their reporting was ever corrected. Also striking is the lack of any kind of training given to the Tranche One undercovers.

Seemingly all reports were copied to MI5. The squad nominally existed to report on potential public order issues by

political groups and while there is some reporting there, it is more a smokescreen, disguising wider political surveillance for MI5 and the expansive Special Branch filing system. At least one undercover noted that groups with a reputation for violent public disorder were avoided, as infiltration would require them to break the law – something at odds with the unit’s supposed objectives.

Much of the public order reporting is missing, if it ever existed. Evidence indicates that when it happened, it was passed on to another Special Branch squad who anonymised and packaged it up for the Met’s uniformed public order division, A8.

Other undercovers are clearly involved in public disorder issues, and even talk about how they were on the receiving end of police violence. HN13 ‘Barry Loader’ was arrested twice for public disorder, once after receiving a battering from his colleagues.

HN298 ‘Mike Scott’, who seems to have initiated the use of dead children’s identities, was involved in the 1972 ‘Star & Garter’ incident, when anti-apartheid protests blockaded a South African sports team. He, along with others, was convicted for this, but it was never disclosed he was a spycop – he was convicted under his cover name. Recently, several related convictions were quashed due to this abuse of the judicial system.

Richard Clark, aka Rick Gibson, one of the first spycops known to have had a sexual relationship, founded a Troops Out Movement branch and used it to become London organiser before being outed.

We also learned how much was known throughout Special Branch. The SDS was an open secret, and many of its managers went on to take senior police roles. When the surviving ones were asked how the various abuses came about, to a man they denied responsibility, saying they were simply continuing practices already in place. Their evidence was an exercise in evasion and convenient memory loss that leaves an impression of incompetence.

None of the managers recall the sexist banter that went on or that there were sexual relationships. They turned a

TO HIDE: PART I



blind eye when Scott tracked down and punched a prominent Irish campaigner who had (correctly) identified him as a cop. Scott broke his finger doing it.

One is left with a picture of an open-ended operation, gathering intelligence on autopilot, with little real oversight. Its political masters kept it going as it fitted an ideology that saw everyone on the left as a threat. The material released by the Inquiry thus demonstrated the extent to which Special Branch are political police, holding hundreds of thousands of files on anyone left wing and their family members. Its profoundly anti-democratic nature is finally on view.

Tranche One is mostly focused on Trotskyists, followed by the Maoists. Anarchists also receive attention but it is clear they cause difficulties. In its 1969 annual report the SDS unit chief wrote:

“Anarchists characteristically pose problems difficult to solve with limited facilities. The distasteful nature of the way of life of such people, which officers must assume, adds to the difficulties of penetration. Small groups can be and have been penetrated with some success by the S.O.S. but their tendency to act in isolation makes the value of full time coverage questionable. Nevertheless, indirect information through technical aids and informants is available.”

There are several early attempts to get undercover into the anarchist milieu, often unsuccessful. HN326 ‘Doug Edwards’ (1968-70) attempted near Piccadilly Circus but failed. He later shows up trying to infiltrate West Ham Anarchists in 1969 and has brushes with the Family Squatting Campaign. Reading between the lines, Doug did not fit in.



The Angry Brigade is named, as is the Stoke Newington 8 defence campaign, but generally indirectly. There are hints there was a failed attempt to place one undercover in or near it.

Although HN298 Mike Scott had some involvement with the anarchist group Croydon Libertarians, it is not until the mid-1970s that a successful infiltration takes place. HN300 ‘Jimmy Pickford’ (1974-77) began infiltrating the Anarchist Workers Association, basing himself in Kingston. He also reported on *Freedom* and other anarchist publications such as *Lower Down* and *Pavement*, as well as groups around Wandsworth, where his focuses included campaigner Ernest Rodker. Reporting on personal matters of the Rodker family included illnesses and the birth of a child. He was also involved in *Up Against The Law*, which fought miscarriages of justice.

Pickford was followed by HN304 ‘Graham Coates’ (1976-79). Bored by the SWP, and with a self-proclaimed interest in anarchism, he worked on the East London scene, including the *Anarchy* and *Zero* publishing collectives. He said he used Dave Morris as an introduction – Dave, a core participant, has given four statements to the Inquiry regarding being targeted.

For some reason, two undercover who targeted anarchists in the Tranche One period were moved to Tranche Two. These are HN85 Roger Pearce who infiltrated from 1979, particularly *Freedom*, using the alias ‘Roger Thorley’. Likewise, HN20 ‘Tony Williams’ who infiltrated the Direct Action Movement in 1978-82.

As a number of undercover are restricted, it is unclear the extent to which anarchists were targeted between 1968 and 1982. There may be more that has not been disclosed. Later tranches will cover cases such as Neil Richardson (Class War), Jason Bishop (Reclaim the Streets, Disarm DSEI, Earth First!), Jackie Anderson (Reclaim the Streets, Earth First, WOMBLES), Rod Richardson (WOMBLES, Movement Against the Monarchy, environmentalists), Dave Hagan (Class War, Movement Against the Monarchy) and Dave Jones (WOMBLES, environmentalists).

For all the Inquiry’s slowness, there is more to come.

STRIPPING AWAY OUR

Netpol's **Kevin Blowe** rounds up the set of incoming laws which threaten to outlaw all but the most useless forms of protest..

Nothing quite illustrates how a spark can seem to catch and then fail to fully ignite than these two grim facts. There are young people in prison in Britain today because they came onto the streets in 2021 and tried to prevent a harsh law restricting the rights of both protesters and of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities. Two years on, Parliament has rubber-stamped the Public Order Act – another piece of anti-protest legislation containing all the most draconian changes the government failed to push through previously – with barely a whimper.

This is not meant to single out anyone for criticism. Stopping a government from passing laws when the ruling party has an enormous majority was always, at best, unlikely, even when thousands protested against the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill in 2021. We simply lacked the numbers and the momentum.

Knowing this should, however, give pause to everyone who devoted so much time and energy trying to lobby Tory MPs with brilliantly worded arguments about the importance of human rights and negative consequences of the proposed new laws.

Appealing to politicians did not work in 2021 and it has not worked to counter the Public Order Act. The Tories, now ideologically far-right and authoritarian, simply have no interest in reason.

Climate culture wars

The State has treated the right to protest with even greater intolerance than usual since the emergence and political challenge of new environmental civil disobedience movements like Extinction Rebellion in 2018.

This was accelerated by the Johnson government's landslide election victory and by the global pandemic, which led to the greatest restrictions on our human rights in generations.

I think sometimes we underestimate the profoundly negative effect that halting our ability to gather together, no matter how important this was at the time, has had on State attitudes towards protesters. Nor

am I talking only about the police, who have always treated protests as a little more than a nuisance and who revelled in the opportunity that lockdowns provided to “impose order.”

Government attitudes too have hardened against any sense that the right to protest is inherently valuable in a supposedly democratic society and this is certainly reflected in its legislation.

Woven into the government's reaction to mass climate activism, is, of course, protecting the fossil fuel industry. The focus for ministers has shifted towards more aggressively framing political debate over the consequences of inaction on the climate emergency into a populist cultural battle between “disruptive environmentalists” and “hard working citizens” (as though these were two entirely separate groups).

Restricting disruptive protests

The government has sought to restrict the right to so-called “disruptive” protest in three ways. Firstly, ministers want to narrow the idea of “acceptable” disruption to mean only minor inconveniences.

Secondly, they are expanding police

powers to offer senior officers what they might potentially find useful at some point, rather than on what is genuinely reasonable or proportionate (the standard for human rights compliance).

Thirdly, they are introducing new laws to criminalise the methods by which serious disruption might potentially take place, rather than focusing on the actual degree of disruption a protest could lead to.

In all cases, the importance of fundamental rights to freedom of assembly have been almost completely ignored.

The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 was the starting point: it enables the police to limit protests based on a vaguely worded and highly subjective decision about whether they are too noisy. It is significant that over the last year, this power has not yet been used. Instead, the police have relied heavily on another part of the new legislation, the revised offence of “public nuisance”. This was hardly ever used against protesters in the past but is now more often the preferred charge, instead of “obstruction of the highway”, for blocking roads. This is because it has proven the most convenient way to



RIGHT TO DISSENT

shut down protests, and it has enabled the imprisonment of a record number of campaigners.

New disruption offences

The new Public Order Act, meanwhile, creates a number of new offences related to disruption, particularly against business interests. These include “obstruction of major transport works” like road building or “interference with key infrastructure” such as oil or gas exploration. The Act also creates a new criminal offence of “locking on” to another person or an object.

Now in every instance, there was already wide-ranging public order legislation in place for all these kinds of activities and under existing laws, arrests were already made and prosecutions already brought. So why create new offences?

Primarily this is because they carry much tougher sentences, including imprisonment. It is also easier to convince a court to remand detainees or impose restrictive bail conditions. It also helps to justify new stop and search powers against anyone suspected of going to commit an offence of obstructing the highway, or public nuisance, or any of the

new offences in the Public Order Act.

The greater severity of new offences also provides a pretext for targeting a few key organisers with another alarming part of the Act – Serious Disruption Prevention Orders. These are essentially an anti-protest banning order that can prevent an individual from associating with named others, going to certain areas or attending protests. It may mean anyone who has an order imposed on them is required to wear an electronic ankle tag.

These are civil orders, so courts will be able to decide whether an individual is likely to cause disruption – based solely on intelligence from the police.

The threat of intrusive surveillance

The impact of intrusive intelligence-gathering has long been recognised as having a possible “chilling effect” on whether people feel able to go out and protest. This is particularly an issue in Britain, because surveillance is at the core of the police’s approach to protests. There is, after all, an ongoing public inquiry into spying by police units on campaigners over many decades.

Surveillance is always rationalised by the labels the police apply to those who are targeted: agitator, subversive, extremist. In Britain, the new label, as Netpol is now trying to highlight, is “aggravated activist”.

The government wants to convince us that Serious Disruption Prevention Orders will impact only a hardcore of protesters and that the wider movements have nothing to fear.

In order to build a case for imposing banning orders, however, officers will seek to gather intelligence on hundreds of people in the movements their targets are part of, who they know and on the places they work, even if they personally have never committed any kind of crime.

So on top of new, more severe offences and police powers, the Public Order Act represents a massive increase in police surveillance. It is about criminalising entire movements, particularly environmental campaigners, with the intention of sending a warning that civil disobedience is liable to result in an aggressive police response.

That is the danger for us all – that regardless of what the law says, any protest seen as “disruptive” will face more oppressive policing.

Defending dissent

None of this means that protest is now illegal, but it has become a lot more uncertain.

This is why Netpol’s priorities are much less on the passage of legislation through Parliament or efforts to amend government bills and instead are focused on creating the conditions to challenge the spread of uncertainty once new laws are passed. As campaigners and as movements, we can all help to do this, in four ways.

Firstly, by making sure everyone knows their rights, which gives people confidence to challenge the misuse of police powers on the streets.

Secondly, by resisting police surveillance – protecting the members of our movements most likely to be targeted and building greater awareness of the basic security practices which can help us challenge police intelligence gathering.

Thirdly, by getting better at offering practical solidarity – so trying to avoid seeing ourselves in isolation from other campaigns and understanding that the threat of oppressive policing falls on all of us.

And finally, it means actively monitoring what is happening around the country. Netpol needs your help to know when new powers are used and in what circumstances so we can build a case for why we believe they exist primarily to disrupt and further criminalise the right to dissent.

We have an encrypted monitoring form and a number to send us information via Telegram/Signal. You can find more information on our Defending Dissent campaign at netpol.org/defending-dissent

Netpol’s latest book *Local Police Monitoring: A Practical Guide* is available now at freedompress.org.uk



NON-ACCIDENTAL DEATH

Cathy McCormack, who died in August 2022, was a Scottish activist, community mobiliser, public health promoter, intervention researcher, popular educator, film-maker, broadcaster, actor, author, blogger, campaigner, public speaker, consciousness-raiser, and critical thinker.

Cathy was a fatality of *the war without bullets*, a term she coined to refer to the many vicious forms of violence being waged on people deemed surplus to the requirements of neoliberal capitalism.

This violence is delivered by development and deployment of policies and practices which manufacture unemployment, inequality, material poverty, and socio-economic apartheid. It is underpinned by so-called “social-scientific” practices and associated “knowledges,” which lay blame for whatever goes wrong at the door of those upon whom the class war is being waged.

Cathy lived most of her adult life in Easterhouse, a township of then 60,000 people, thrown up to accommodate the tenants of demolished tenements in inner city Glasgow. When Cathy moved in it was characterised by astronomical unemployment, dire relative and absolute poverty, catastrophically poor health, damp fungal spore infested housing, absent community infrastructure, and rudimentary public transport. Moreover, the people living in Easterhouse were positioned by many journalists, politicians, and even public health professionals as being responsible for their own misery, ill-health, and reduced life expectancy.

In her book *The Wee Yellow Butterfly* Cathy recalled what it was like to be a young mother in those days:

“Although my children were bouncing with health when they were born, as soon as I brought them home to our freezing-cold damp flat my life became a constant battle for survival between my family and the fungus family.”

And elsewhere she has written:

“... dampness started to affect my mental health. I became really depressed because no matter how much I loved

my children or tried to take care of them, I could neither keep the doctor at bay nor the fungus that was destroying everything it came into contact with.”

Whenever Cathy contacted the Housing Department, which owned the damp houses and was responsible for their upkeep, to ask for something to be done about the damp, she was told the dampness in her home, and that of her neighbours, was their own fault. It was alleged they were boiling too many kettles, not opening enough windows, not heating the flats enough. Indeed, people in the deprived communities of Scotland were blamed more generally for their poor health by health professionals who ignored poverty, inequality, unemployment, psychologically pathogenic employment, bad housing etc. as causes of ill health, and instead told community members their high rates of cancer and heart disease could be prevented if they ate brown bread, started jogging, ate less pies and more fruit, and so on – classic victim blaming.

At her wits' end, Cathy went to her family doctor, who took stock of her physical and mental condition, and offered her ... wait for it ... anti-depressants. Cathy realised she was suffering mental health problems directly caused by toxic material living conditions which were also wrecking the health of her children, husband, and neighbours, but was being offered a pharmacological fix for her mood. Cathy asked the GP for a prescription for a warm dry home instead, and when she was told that was beyond his remit, she left the surgery determined to work for decent housing for her community through activism.

Cathy brought her Easterhouse community onboard a project which brought together tenants and researchers, including environmental health officers who measured humidity, damp, and fungal spore presence in houses, and health researchers who measured the health, and mental health, of children and adults with scales of widely-accepted reliability and validity, in a double-blind design using a random sample of houses in the community. In turn, activist tenants like Cathy committed to maximising participation by residents.

The project demonstrated that children living in damp homes had significantly more respiratory problems, sore throats, vomiting, diarrhoea, headaches, pain, and other symptoms than children living in dry homes. Both adults and children in damp homes had more emotional problems than those in dry homes. Children and adults in damp houses with fungal mould had significantly poorer health than those in damp houses without mould. Crucially, whether or not a tenant's house was damp depended on which street it was in and where it was located relative to the prevailing weather i.e., the tenants' behaviour was not the cause of the damp housing or associated health problems.

This was not the end of the story though. The tenant activists had agreed to maximise participation in the study in return for the researchers agreeing to remain committed to promoting the interests of the tenants beyond simply publishing their findings. Accordingly, the research was reported in local newspapers, on local radio and on local television. It was used to stimulate concern in Glasgow's housing department, environmental health department, the Regional Council, the community health council, legal centres and Shelter. The research was cited in court cases by tenants; by the Scottish Grand Committee in Westminster, and by the Minister of State for Housing in Scotland; by the Housing Department when applying to the Scottish Office for extra funding; by local forums of GPs, local councillors, and tenants, to bring about action.

Cathy and her fellow activists organised a weekend competition in which teams of interdisciplinary technical experts, chaired by tenants, were tasked with designing affordable interventions to prevent dampness and fungal spore infestation in a sample of Easterhouse houses. The competition winner was titled Retrofit Solar Improvement of Thermally Inefficient or Substandard Housing. Cathy and her colleagues applied for and obtained a promise of funding from the European Commission, if a substantial local government contribution were made. Despite sustained opposition from local (Labour) politicians, Cathy obtained

OF AN ACTIVIST



the required commitments, and a demonstration project was implemented. A later evaluation, which did not include Cathy's house, showed that the demonstration project simultaneously eliminated dampness and fungal spore infestation; reduced poverty by huge fuel savings; improved mental and physical health; and massively reduced carbon dioxide emissions.

From Easterhouse Cathy took her message to Glasgow Council, then to the Scottish government, then to the UK government, then to the European Commission and finally worldwide. She spent time in Nicaragua building alliances with people and groups, and was the subject of a much-lauded feature-length documentary film made in South

Africa comparing South African race-based apartheid to Scottish class-based apartheid. She was invited to address the UN in New York, and undertook countless international speaking engagements at conferences and workshops.

In her biography, Cathy recalled that, because her family needed her wages to survive, she "was dragged out of school kicking and screaming" at the age of 15. Cathy had been employed in a dairy

before leaving school and later worked for a jeweller, in a cigar factory, and cleaning hotels. How, you might ask, was Cathy equipped with the skills and knowledge to steer this massive, extended community project to success? There is not room for a full answer here, but there is, fundamentally, one main answer: Cathy's activism was enabled and supported by peer and popular education, and myriad networks of people and progressive social structures inside and outside her community.

Although Cathy wrote that she "wasn't allowed to carry on (her) education" as a schoolgirl, she received a radically enabling education as an adult. Cathy did Open University courses run by a local pre-school centre; learned about liberation theology from a local minister; undertook intensive training in Ireland and England on how to help learners examine structures of power and inequality within the status quo; and learned about the work of Ignacio Martin-Baro and Paolo Freire from middle-class allies working in Easterhouse. Cathy wrote that she received "an education no university could have given (her)" during her study tour of Nicaragua, and her high degree of practical know-how, combined with critical literacy, may well have been because – rather than in spite – of her leaving school at 15.

Cathy's activism was enabled by pre-existing resources. She worked with the local Residents' Association, community and community development workers, workers, Technical Services Agency, College of Technology, Benefits group, Workers Education Association, the Legal Services Agency, and Edinburgh University. Cathy's effectiveness lay, in part, in her capacity to catalyse integrated action by a huge variety of diverse individual organisations and individuals.

Despite her activism, which produced huge benefits for her community, Cathy herself was only 70 when she died, a fatality of the war without bullets, waged through policies and practices which have manufactured unemployment, inequality, poverty, socio-economic apartheid, and oppression in neglected ghetto-townships.

~ David Fryer



REVIEW: SICK OF IT ALL

by AWW & ACG
2022, PM Press
ISBN: 978-139992-6-1-88
£12

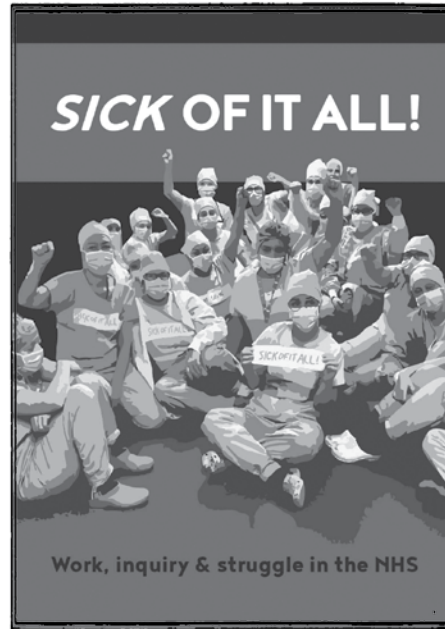
Featuring 12 essays by authors working in health and social care, the introduction for *Sick Of It All* states that its aim is to effect analysis of Britain's health and social care services, and look at the potential for radical change and non-capitalistic healthcare models.

Following on from the 2019 pamphlet *Our NHS? Anarchist Communist Thoughts on Healthcare*. It states it has been produced for both workers in the sector and also for anarchists seeking to gain a greater understanding. In addition to the essays, there are three "class hatred" bulletins interspersed between essays relaying stories that elicit empathy and provide added context to the essays.

It begins with what the NHS actually is, how it is resourced, and how it all fits together. It explains who works in the sector (what they do and how they are paid), looking at the NHS both as an organisation and also as an employer. It finishes by reviewing contemporary shifts in healthcare policy and legislation, and how this is shaping the future of the NHS.

It then moves on to how our healthcare provision came to be how it is and why. The author examines how those in power came to be interested in public health, and provides a history of 18th century changes to healthcare (with an interesting reference to de-hospitalisation movements). There is analysis here in terms of the examination of social problems and their solutions and how they are derived from contemporary material conditions.

Next are the thoughts of a worker in the system, covering the emotional and physical toll of working daily in the domestic care side of the sector. How everything together can wear down the workers, and discussing the de-personalisation this can cause. But there are also descriptions of militant chats in



the canteen and feedback on reformist institutions such as the sector union Unison.

A piece on the history of industrial action in the NHS notes that there appeared to be little industrial action in the first 20 years of the NHS, but that declining wages compared to other professions saw this change, particularly in the 1970s. The author reminds us that the NHS has always been a poor employer "offering low wages for long hours ..." despite high union membership.

In post-pandemic Britain, an essay argues that capitalism produces plagues. The author takes us back to look at early industrial capitalism, outbreaks of disease, cholera riots and 19th century conspiracy theorists. It looks at what provokes certain feelings in society when it comes to mass events, and how panic provoked by contagion threats is more likely to favour reactionary activities.

There is a report from a worker in a residential care home which looks at the current quality of social care, and how workers are treated. We all know care workers are undervalued and underpaid, and I don't think we need to guess the logical conclusion. The words of the

author will resonate with many of us: "Until social care is valued by society, and not just in the sense that everyone is glad someone else is doing it, things are unlikely to change."

A chapter on mental health under and after capitalism begins with a short history of mental health services, with private asylums, for example, first appearing in the 15th century. This chapter looks at popular narratives on mental health, stigma, but also our understanding and stance on mental healthcare as anarchists.

The book then moves onto looking at the deeper reasons why the social causes of illness are not given the attention or examination they clearly require. We get to ponder on what a human being is, in terms of society's historical understanding, and whether this stands in our way of caring for each other.

How we care for each other in age and infirmity; how capitalism views ageing, sickness and death; what we can do now and in the future (including lessons from abroad and a chapter on struggle in Greece) are all discussed as the book nears the end.

The publication brings this collection of stories, thoughts and experiences to a conclusion hoping to have provided a useful look at where we are in terms of healthcare, how we got here and what can be done. It concludes that from an anarchist point of view, to bring an end to capitalism, we need to "understand work, and the relations it encompasses and produces".

Sick Of It All states that we don't just need an analysis of work in the NHS itself, but also analysis of the potential for struggle and resistance in the workplace. And this is certainly true.

Gaining insight and understanding is essential to both what can be fought for and won right now (as current events show), but also how struggle, mutual aid and better understanding point us towards how it can all be done better in a post-capitalist world.

~ Phil



UPCOMING TITLES

FREEDOM PRESS

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by Colin Ward

Publication: October

ISBN: 978-1-904491-45-3

This year marks five decades since the release of Ward's most influential book introducing anarchism in the everyday. This seminal piece will be republished with supporting essays from writers in the modern era.

● **Anarchism and Covid**

from The Anarchist Studies Network

Publication: November

ISBN: 978-1-904491-44-6

Covid provoked a fundamental shift in how we think about and act within our society, including an impressive wave of mutual aid. This selection of essays tracks the shift from in-the-moment crisis to our uncertain contemporary moment.

ACTIVE DISTRIBUTION

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Trilingual novel set in the 1930s detailing the struggle against fascism within the German community in Mexico City through the experience of anarchist worker Otto.

AK PRESS

● **Why? or, How a Peasant Got Into the Land of Anarchy**

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120 pages

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A revolutionary fairy tale about anarchy from the first days after the Russian Revolution.

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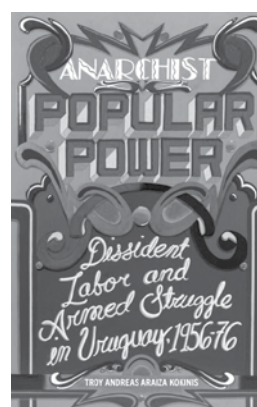
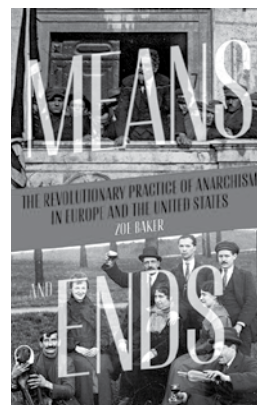
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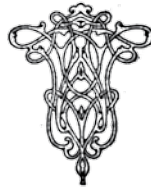
RED & BLACK REBUILT

Traditionally anarchism in Germany has had many faces – and the last decades in particular were often dominated by individualist tendencies focussing on autonomous structures that reject organisation and class consciousness.

However, in the last few years anarcho-communism has been on the rise again – with syndicalist union FAU (“Free Workers Union”), platformist organisation Die Plattform, Perspektive Selbstverwaltung (Perspective: self-governed), as well as smaller local groups gaining members and momentum. These groups, which hardly constitute a strong movement anchored in social struggles, try to navigate their way through German leftist circles that all-too-often do not recognise the importance of a materialist world view and the reality of class struggle.

To create a news, information and discussion hub for all those connected to class-struggle and social anarchism in its broadest sense, German-speaking media project anarchismus.de was founded in early 2021 by a collective of anarcho-communists located in Germany, some of whom had already been working on the anarchist podcast “Übertage” (a mining term from the Ruhr area meaning “above ground”), and has grown rapidly.

With anarchism being a tradition that emerged from 19th and 20th century working class struggles, anarchismus.de strives to connect working class groups and individuals that advocate organised anarchist communism – by sharing news and historical information, encouraging theory development and discussion,



curating extensive reading lists (for anyone who would like to learn about anarcho-communism) and updating a map of active organisations and groups that are open to contact from fellow anarchists looking to get organised.

As a media collective, we want to make anarcho-communism visible and strengthen its formative power.

During recent major social conflicts in Germany there have usually been only two positions dominating public discourse: a ruling progressive neoliberalism and a right-wing populist “opposition.” The radical left often concentrates on fighting right-wing extremism and refrains from a consistent critique of liberalism – either out of fear of playing into the hands of the right, or because it has almost no larger ambitions itself.

We strongly believe we have to break these patterns. As anarcho-communists we need to establish ourselves as a reliable and consistent third position in debates on all current, relevant issues. As revolutionaries we have to openly question both the neoliberal mainstream and its populist pseudo-opposition.

Looking at the situation in Germany today, social anarchism does not advance its tactics often enough and rarely produces new theory to counter the two loudest public narratives and their talking points. We do however need a clear understanding of the world and what role we want to play in it in order to fundamentally change it. Historical anarchism combined with a Marxist analysis of capitalism (and including other radical theoretical traditions)

have given us a good starting point – however, further development is needed on many levels to take account of current social problems and society’s reactions to them. We simply need more revolutionary

organisations that help elaborate critical theory while being active in mass struggles, which strive to intensify and connect struggles and circulate ideas and strategies.

As a collective we also see strong media projects as a core requirement to reach people and open up spaces to encourage much needed analysis and debates. If we look at the political right, as well as neoliberals, we can see how they are unfortunately very successful in actively shaping the overall social discourse with a variety of projects. To keep up with a rapidly changing world we urgently need to engage, not only with updated anarcho-communist analysis, but with modern medias that have become prime information sources for the majority of people.

Within the limits of organised working class social anarchism, anarchismus.de intends to be a cross-current medium. We do not exclusively represent syndicalism, platformism or anarcho-feminism, but aim to be a first point of contact for German-speaking anarcho-communists (to be). With a strong focus on movement building and working class anarchist visibility in a range of different media, everything published by anarchismus.de aims to be equally informative and comprehensible. We neither want to publish overly complicated texts, nor do we want to insinuate that the working class is unable to analyse and understand complexities.

Hosting a news blog, archive and contact register, anarchismus.de is however not only a website, but a community project. In order to facilitate low-threshold participation we accept submissions and run an active and open discord server to connect people and projects. Our close cooperation with other media projects, e.g. podcasts or social media channels, are another important aspect of working-class solidarity.

In addition to its online activities, the collective veers into the ‘real’ world by publishing a series of anarchist introduction pamphlets and printing new translations of classic texts as well as original material of contemporary interest. Let’s get organised!

~ Anna



EDITORIAL

There's a great deal which we've not had the space to cover in this issue, and we were sent some excellent articles which would have gone in but for our page count limit. These are going on the website instead, and are well worth reading.

While we have analysis of the implications of new anti-protest legislation as part of this issue, Andy Meinke's legal roundup of what's being done with the laws already in place is a must-see, outlining punitive punishments being handed down in an effort to scare the general public into silence. Jon Bigger meanwhile has taken on a complicated task of picking through the logics of Tories and Labour in the run-up to the next election.

We are, on that subject, yet to take a substansive crack at Starmer The Boneless in these pages partly because, well, what is there to say? He's everything the anarchists have ever expected of Labour.

A wilting liberal acting the hard man, a suited quiff playing at populism, who cringes every time he's approached by the masses. A habitual liar who'll happily ramp up benefit-bashing, migrant-trashing, culture-warring rhetoric to suit his own ends, no matter the harm done.

If Corbyn's position was built on sand, Starmer is a return to the muck of the ocean floor. We could copy our critique of Blairism almost verbatim.

In fact, in the paper's May 2004 EU election issue we said: "We should leave the electioneering to those who think there is still a future in it, and become more active in our communities and workplaces, trying to build a movement which can abolish capitalism and the State."

A worthy intent, still more easily said than done. But it's nearly two decades down the line and what have elections brought us? Declining wages and living

standards. Environmental degradation and a political spiral into authoritarianism.

Cracks in our communities and holes in our infrastructure. Our dreams made smaller than ever before, stuck somewhere between brainless greed and a swirling sinkhole of conspiracies and bickering.

The fact is, as we have said many times before, there are no shortcuts to rebuilding the working class movement needed to confront and destroy our tormentors. Door-knocking for scumbags will not deliver us. Praying for redemption from enlightened leaders will not save us. Only we can do that, by our own combined hands and minds. We must regain our ambition, guile and bravery. We must take direct action, impose our needs despite their threats. To merely complain is little more than a wait for Godot.

As for King Charles, may his reign be short – and the Windsors' last.

UPDATE FROM ANGEL ALLEY

It's been a very good six months for the **bookshop**. The return of the London Anarchist Bookfair in September provided a welcome opportunity to connect with comrades new and old. As part of the festivities, our beloved Angel Alley hosted a packed-out zine fair which saw hundreds of people thronging the stalls late into the evening.

The shop continues to host events and discussions every four to six weeks. Recent highlights have included launch events for *Fractured: Race, Class, Gender and the Hatred of Identity Politics*, *The Anarchism and Punk Book Project* and the latest edition of *Lumpen*. Beyond the bookish, we've hosted a sold-out discussion between Scott Branson and Rhiannon Firth,

a gig fundraising for Kill the Bill prisoners (hosted by Efa Supertramp) and the return of Paul Case's one-man storytelling show Dead White Anarchists.

As ever, we could not operate without the time and energy of our amazing volunteers.

Beyond these pages **Freedom News** has continued its support of oppressed people and those fighting to defend themselves. Freedom holds that there can be no peace without justice, and we oppose imperialism wherever it happens, however untidy and propaganda-laden the terrain may be.

The last edition saw the end of Zosia Brom's five-year editorship, her drive and integrity has been, and remains, of huge importance to the Press. Our new editor Sylvia Mann is building on her work with

plans to further increase the scope and reach of the paper.

We continue to centre the voices of those most affected by the subjects we cover, and as ever we welcome submissions from marginalised and oppressed peoples and from those who have a story needing to be told. The reintroduced Prison Column aims to return a voice to those who have had theirs taken.

Publishing meanwhile is busy with a mix of renewing older titles as they run low (one of those good problems), and putting together our latest offerings (see pages 17 and 20). Alongside the ongoing work of selecting, scanning, copy-editing, designing, layout and printing we're looking into where we can go next with distribution and even (boo, hiss) marketing – if that's a job you enjoy then get in touch.

On a less upbeat note, the **building** group that looks after our pile at 84b Angel Alley is going to be needing to fundraise for a second round of repairs having successfully completed works from the 2016 appeal. Keep an eye out for more on our websites and via our newsletter (freedomnews.org.uk/newsletter) later this year.

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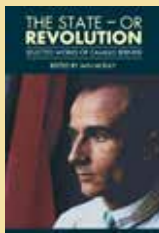
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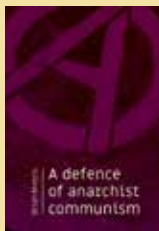


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ABOUT ANARCHISM

There are many misconceptions about what anarchism is and what anarchists want in the media. 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, known as 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. Which will happen when you’re trying to frame a whole alternative society to the one we have now.

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.

Some resources:

- libcom.org: Huge repository of history and theory on every aspect of anarchism
- enoughisenough14.org: News from all over Europe about what anarchists are getting up to
- channelzeronetwork.com: Collection of podcasts and anarchist-aligned radio shows from across the globe
- Activist Court Aid Brigade: Legal support for when the action goes a bit wrong
- freedomnews.org.uk: Our very own newswire

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Front page image by Jay Moon
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Dingbats are from 1910 issues of Emma Goldman’s *Mother Earth*.
Kindly printed by Aldgate Press.



We are socialists, disbelievers in property, advocates of the equal claims of all to work for the community as seems good — calling no-one master, and of the equal claim to each to satisfy as seems good to them, their natural needs from the stock of social wealth they have laboured to produce ... we are anarchists, disbelievers in the government of the many by the few in any shape and under any pretext.

Freedom, a Journal of Anarchist Socialism, Vol 1, No. 1, October 1886