

Wot anarchists fink: Anti-social crime

Much of what is illegal most people wouldn't consider a 'crime'. Remember, only a minority of people are in prison for violent, anti-social acts. A third of women in prison are in for shoplifting, and a quarter of people are in for non-payment of fines or debts. On the other hand, many things that are legal really are 'criminal' - making large profits out of people working on poverty level wages, war and violence to protect markets and oil, destruction of the environment for short-term gain, cut-backs on transport safety to increase profits. These 'crimes' are committed by the powerful - corporations and governments - so they are legal and in fact encouraged in the name of good business.

For anarchists, it's what is anti-social that is the problem, whether legal or not. Acts like mugging, random assault, burglary, car-theft, and violent crimes like rape and domestic violence, are an indictment of current society. Many of these crimes affect working class communities most, and see people with little exploiting each other. Meanwhile, the 'crimes' of big business and government go unchallenged and are protected by the law. Worse still, they promote a system that encourages

people to prey on each other, setting the scene for crimes of anti-social behaviour. Yet it is the neighbourhood crimes that fill the news - usually in graphic detail just to make us fearful - along with calls for harsher punishments, longer sentences and 'new powers' to deal with the problem. This kind of anti-social crime is a real problem for huge amounts of people. It's not so much that politicians and media are exaggerating the problem here, but that they use it for their own ends. Our political leaders don't really care about anti-social crime, otherwise they would do something about the poverty and social dislocation that breed it. Both scientific research and our everyday, common-sense experience tell us that the main cause of anti-social crime is the combination of the breakdown of a sense of community combined with poverty. Poverty can bring low self-esteem, a particularly strong factor in violent anti-social crime.

But politicians use the crime issue to justify more police on the streets, increased surveillance and the erosion of our civil liberties with legislation like the Anti Social Behaviour Order Act (2003) and curfews. This has nothing to do with dealing with the problem in hand, and everything to do with the State increasing its unchecked power.

Anarchists want to see an end to all anti-social crime - neighbourhood crimes and the everyday 'crimes' of corporations and governments. We want to see the present system of exploitation swept away in a movement of wide-ranging social change, initiated and controlled by ordinary people,

creating a society based on the principles of freedom and equality. The principle of solidarity, of sticking together and not screwing each other over, will have to be at the centre of this movement. Anti-social crime is the very opposite of solidarity, and so we are totally opposed to it.

Now, the breakdown of community and increase in poverty are not the fault of working class people. The dire housing situation, with few new homes built and almost 1 million left empty, means that families end up scattered by the winds. Job insecurity causes people to move house more - not to mention the de-industrialisation of entire regions of the country. Likewise, the relentless cuts in public services and drop in the real purchasing power of wages have caused increased poverty levels.

Despite anti-social crime not being a problem of our creation, it is up to us to find a solution. It is mainly working class people that are hit by neighbourhood crimes.

The police show little interest in protecting us from it, being more concerned with crimes that affect corporate profits, like fare evasion and shoplifting. The "more police, heavier prison sentences" tactic is a false one and doesn't work. Look at the USA with the highest rate of imprisonment in the world, at 1 in 37 people, and yet their crime rates are also among the highest!

The best way to fight anti-social crime is to join together and fight collectively to increase our material and social well-being. Local people combining to fight rent increases will both improve their financial situation and create the sort of sense of social solidarity and community we are talking about. Activities like local sports clubs, youth clubs, OAP outings, young parents groups, music projects, all work to decrease the level of social isolation that anti-social crime thrives upon. Communities could tackle problems specific to their area. Anti-mugging posters have been used to shame muggers in some areas, and serial burglars could be named and similarly stopped. Night-patrols have been set up in some 'no go' areas to make people feel safer.

We can now see why it is in the interests of the powers that be that the real causes of crime aren't tackled. Because in doing so we can only improve our own situation at the expense of their power and privilege.

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The Underdog is Walthamstow's only TRULY independent paper. We have no rich backers, and we tell it how it is. We distribute on the street, in community centres, pubs, cafes, shops and by delivering door-to-door. If you like what you read, we always welcome help: You may have local news, gossip, or opinions, letters or comments about anything we have written. Or you may be able to help with distribution - perhaps in your street. If you want us to post the next 6 issues to you as soon as it comes out, just send us 6 first class stamps. We also pay for this ourselves so if you want to bung us a few quid towards the next issue, this would be much appreciated.

W@G

The Underdog is produced by the Walthamstow Anarchist Group. We are a group of Waltham Forest residents who are sick of the system of capitalism which allows the rich and the bosses to exploit and control the rest of us. We promote working class resistance and self-organisation and through this aim to create a new society where people live together in freedom and as equals. We believe in direct action as a method by which we working class people can begin to take control of our communities and workplaces now and in doing so build a movement strong enough to challenge the entire system. If you want to get in touch you can e-mail us, phone or text us or drop us a line at, or visit our website. We also meet fortnightly at a local venue and you are welcome to meet up with us for a chat if you are interested in getting involved.

Interested in anarchism? Want to find out more?

Apart from contacting us to arrange meeting up, a short train, bus or tube ride away is **Freedom Bookshop**. Tucked away behind KFC, up Angel Alley on Whitechapel High St, you'll find it packed full of anarchist books, magazines and papers and will probably find someone to talk with about anarchism if you like. Open 12-6 Mon - Sat. Freedom Bookshop, 84b Whitechapel High St, London - nearest tube Aldgate East. Otherwise you can visit the excellent online resource www.enrager.net

Groups we support:

Anarchist Federation
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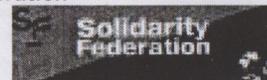
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THE UNDERDOG

Walthamstow's rabble rousing rebel rag

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Free /donation

PFI scam - Greedy parasitical spongers grab public services

Waltham Forest Councillors are falling over themselves to persuade us that the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) - which is being used to fund developments at Whipps Cross Hospital and at schools across the Borough - won't lead to a "drop in standards". Referring to their flagship project at Lammas School, Seymour Road, Leyton, the Council said that PFI contractors "must meet a set of comprehensive performance standards for all the services". Who are they trying to kid?

What is PFI?

PFI is a growing scam by politicians designed to handout literally billions of pounds (£35 billion so far) of taxpayers' money to big business. It allows private companies to build and own our hospitals and schools, which taxpayers then have to "rent" back at exorbitant interest rates for up to 30 years.

Who gains?

Why politicians like PFI is easy to see. It's a way of getting public buildings built or refurbished without having the Government spending much money right now. They get to look popular they're seen to be spending taxpayers money on services while at the same time they can get away with signing away virtually limitless handouts to big business. Then in years to come, when these same companies are acting like loan sharks, bleeding our public services dry, these same politicians will be long gone.

And they can even make these deals in secret so that we don't know exactly how much of our money they're giving away: A recent report (*Public Risk or private gain*,

published by UNISON, July 2004) found that out of these 563 PFI deals that had been signed by April 2003, there has only been *one* inquiry into the massive profits earned by private financiers. The report found that PFI deals are shrouded in secrecy "which shields both the Government and PFI companies from proper scrutiny." The London Underground PFI deal, has so far added £450m to the investment bill faced by Londoners.

What can we do?

The fact is that the odds are stacked against the ordinary people in PFI "partnerships". Companies can pull out when they want, leaving service users with nothing, while government-backed compensation arrangements ensure that business' profits can be earned at little or no risk to investors. The complicity of the State in all of these

shenanigans provides yet more evidence that this issue is less about the Government versus business and more about the Government *and* business versus the people. Once we realise this, we realise that any kind of defence and improvement of these services with a chance of succeeding can only come from the people, and not politicians claiming to speak on our behalf.

Jarvis Cock-up

Jarvis, the Company now infamous for their responsibility for the Potters Bar rail crash, are also one of the country's leading PFI contractors, and are currently on the brink of collapse with debts of £230m. Jarvis controls about 10% of the £35.5bn PFI debt: Schools, universities, hospitals and GP surgeries that have arranged PFI deals are now facing stalled building programmes and suspended services. And though this will affect ordinary people like us, private backers, like the Royal Bank of Scotland whose coffers have been swelled by PFI profits, will be unscathed. If Jarvis goes under, big business can simply wash their hands of the public services they are being paid by taxpayers to finance.

Mast campaigns on the up

A July 15th public meeting organised by locals, including members of the Walthamstow Anarchist Group, to highlight the issue of mobile phone masts popping up all over the borough was well attended and by all accounts a success. It was held at the Coppermill Lane Primary School and attended by a number of people involved in campaigns against masts in the area, and some others wanting to get involved. We can report that one such campaign, against a mast to be put in a church spire in Woodford, has scored a total victory. The effectiveness of the campaign by residents has seen the church back down due to public pressure.

This shows the effect that people power can have when directly applied.

A follow up meeting is arranged for the 14th September again to be held at Coppermill Lane Primary School. Contact us at notomoremasts@yahoo.co.uk for more details or e-mail Kim at

We've also noted an increase in direct action against the installation of masts around the country. People have come out and physically stopped contractors moving masts and machinery in to neighbourhoods in Camden, Sheffield and Scotland, with Vodafone threatening to fly their mast in over sit down protestors by helicopter!



Taser Shooting

At Selbourne walk on the afternoon of Saturday 19th June a "disturbed" man was shot by police with an electric TASER stun gun in front of shoppers. Allegedly, the man was causing a "commotion" by his "threatening behaviour". Now, we at *The Underdog* are just as concerned as anyone else that Walthamstow is a safe and non-threatening place to live, and anti-social behaviour is a serious issue that has to be dealt with (see back page). But shooting someone with a TASER gun, because they're causing a "commotion"? Isn't that a bit anti-social? Unfortunately unlike Star Trek's Captain Kirk, our local constabulary haven't the benefit of knowing that their victim will simply get up shortly after their zap with a TASER, and carry on as normal. In fact, the increasing use of TASERS by police, which delivers a massive electric shock to the victim, has had quite a few disturbing results.

The Taser sends a 50,000 volt charge through the victim's body and can bring an adult toppling to the ground in a quivering heap. It's been used for many years in the United States and Canada and now five police forces in England and Wales have been issued with them as part of a year long "trial". The human rights group Amnesty International has raised concerns, claiming that three deaths in the United States have been linked to the use of Tasers. Amnesty has called for the Met to suspend plans to use the weapon until "there has been a proper, independent, medical investigation". Police have hailed the Tasers as a step forward in "non-lethal" weaponry. But their track record of the use of any sort of weapon, especially in London, is fraught with misuses and abuse, often leading to serious injury or death of victims. There has been no thorough, independent and impartial evaluation of the medical effects of electro-shock weapons. Medical experts have expressed concern about the health risks associated with electro-shock weapons, as well as their potential for abuse. The question is, does the police's use of Tasers really make us feel safer in our communities?



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Reality Czech

The run up to the expansion of the EU to incorporate many Eastern European countries in May saw the newspapers full of sensational reports of what disastrous effects this would have for people living in Britain. Apparently, one million Gypsies were massed at the Romanian border waiting to invade Britain, sponge off the welfare state, and steal even the shirts off our backs. Three months down the line, some of us are not particularly surprised to see what a load of nonsense this has all proven to be. As we are interested in actual facts at the *Underdog*, we are publishing the following article that has been written by two Czechs who have moved to Walthamstow recently.

Real Life

Massive political campaigns were held in 10 Eastern European countries in order to persuade their citizens to vote for joining the EU in referenda. These campaigns were financed by national governments and highlighted the advantages of the enlargement whilst the disadvantages were deliberately concealed. Such things as opportunities to travel, work and live in other Member States were stressed.

Promises promises

Many people believed the promises of politicians and left for the United Kingdom in an effort to improve their situation. This opened a sphere of action to many agencies providing study and work in Great Britain. One of them is based in Walthamstow where they provide accommodation for about 500 people from Czech Republic and Slovakia. Financial profit is the only focus of these agencies with the people left behind. The worst are the 'agencies' or individuals who concentrate on less informed people and promise them to find a job in a few days even without a basic knowledge of English language. These people pay incredible amounts of money to realize soon that the reality is different. The agencies sometimes have difficulties even with providing the promised accommodation or necessary documents; don't mention the fact that they are not able to find a job for their clients. Many people don't have another option than to go back home after a few days or weeks in an even worse situation than before they left. Some official agencies operate in this sphere of business as well. Their websites are full of nice pictures of accommodation they offer and stories of happy people who made success in UK with an extensive support from their agency. The reality is that people who come with these agencies have to share one bathroom and

toilet with 10 other people (and a cute couple of mice) and when they want to have their lunch they have to wait for a free chair or sit on the floor. Help with finding a job consists of providing a list of agencies half of which no longer exist.

Dream of a better future can disappear very soon. People from New European Countries usually earn not much more than the minimal wage and if they don't want to eat potatoes every day, they can hardly save any relevant amount of money. We don't have concern for those who come to earn a fortune. Nevertheless everyone should have the right to choose the country where they want to work and live. However a proper consideration is essential in advance. Don't rely on the information from mainstream media and promises of politicians and other cheaters, try to get information from alternative resources or local communities and always create your own opinion.

Czech? Slovakian? Polish? You can write to us in your home language and receive a response at the following e-mail address: wag@atlas.cz or alternatively, leave a voicemail at 07810 288 889.

London Abstains

Despite all the "London Elects" hype preceding the Mayoral election of last May, two thirds of Londoners declined the offer to cast their vote.

Not voting in elections has been increasing for decades now and was first dismissed as "apathy" that would soon be overcome by gimmicks like e-voting and ballot boxes in supermarkets. However, voting levels have continued to decline, causing a more detailed analysis to start as to why people don't vote.

A study published by the Electoral Commission in the run-up to the London Mayoral election (*Public Opinion and the 2004 Elections*) questioned non-voters in various elections of the last 4 years or so and found that they were split pretty evenly between "circumstantial" non-voters - people who claimed to want to vote but couldn't due to work, social or other commitments - and "deliberate" non-voters - people who have adopted a definite anti-election stance, more often than not based on the opinion that voting doesn't actually change anything. So one third of Londoners appear to have adopted an anarchist position on elections. Much as we'd love to put this down to the influence of *The Underdog* (!) we think its more likely a result of the failure of social democracy as a realistic route to a society free of capitalist exploitation. The politicians are now reaping the distrust and failure that they themselves have sown.

158 = 15Late

Any one else sick of waiting for the 158 and 58 buses? Now, the 158 is run - in to the ground in the case of many of the antique buses on the route - by First, who saw a handsome £111 Million profit on UK buses in 2003. The 58 is run by another dodgy outfit -Stagecoach, who made £67 Million profit in 2003. Both routes are a disgrace - rammed like cattle trucks in rush hour, and frequently late (or missing out one or sometimes even two each hour) outside of work hours. Integrated public transport? - a front for making company profits more like, and all the while there's passengers getting stressed and people having a go at the drivers, who then get grumpy. When it gets this bad, pensioners and single women and the like just don't go out in the evening or shell out for local cabs as an alternative. London Buses, who give out the contracts for the buses to these jokers, have a complaints line. It might be worth having a few words in their ear on 0845 300 700

First Strike - Bus Drivers Win!

Meanwhile, at First Bus (the same company that runs the 158) in South Yorkshire, 1500 drivers showed us all the way how to fight back by going out on strike at the end of July, and stuck out to win all their demands. While the company makes large profits, drivers were striking for a 40 hour week, a reduction of the maximum hours a day to eight-and-a-half hours and a quicker increase in pay for 'starter rate' drivers, who previously had to wait three and a half years to earn more than £5.85 an hour! Some new drivers earned so little that they qualified for 'family credit' to supplement their wages (think of that as a subsidy to company profits). The strike was completely solid from the start and solidarity campaigns from drivers around the country saw off Managers' threats to run buses themselves. Passengers weren't fooled by First bosses media war either, surveys showing three-to-one support for the strike. Drivers were not just concerned about defending their conditions, which they did spectacularly, but believe that, for the sake all in the UK bus industry, its vital that the abuses of multinational companies are stopped.

Discuss with us...

We have an online discussion forum at: www.enrager.net/forums Click on London, then Walthamstow Anarchist Group, then contribute freely :o)



Correction: Ooops - the web address for Mad Pride was wrong in the last issue. It is in fact www.madpride.org.uk

THE UNDERDOG'S Survival Guide - Safer sex

We continue our regular column offering advice on surviving in this capitalist world.

Like all other aspects of our lives, our sex lives are affected by the society that we live in. Openness about sex, diverse sexual expression and sexuality, rates of pregnancy, unwanted or wanted, and levels of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) differ massively between different parts of the world and for different social classes. The reasons are too complex to deal with comprehensively here, but there are some clear things about government policies and general attitudes to sex that make a difference. **Openness works best** Generally speaking, where sex education is high and available in schools, where people talk to each other about sex and parents talk to their kids, where all types of sexual activity



"Sit down, Son. I think it's time I told you about the birds and the dinosaurs."

are not stigmatized, and access to contraception and abortion are good, there is a tendency towards low unwanted teenage pregnancy rates, low rates of STIs, and people feel more confident and happy with their sexuality. Holland and Sweden are good examples of this. Openness and being informed about sex means that people know what they are getting into and have a chance to do it on their own terms. Studies show that well-informed youngsters tend to delay their 'sexual debut' a little and are better able to negotiate safe sex and contraception with a partner.

Where a more conservative, moralistic attitude towards sex dominates, and where abstinence is preached, with less of the provisions mentioned above, this has negative consequences. The US and UK are prime examples of this, with very high rates of undesired teenage pregnancy and STIs. Research has shown that the recent trend in the US to focus on abstinence and virginity until marriage and deny any real sex education only makes youngsters more vulnerable to coercion, unwanted pregnancy and STIs when they inevitably do have sex.

Double standards

This isn't to say it's all just a matter of being open. People's 'choices' depend on their access to education, abortion and contraception and their social situation. A young working class woman may be more likely to be pressured into having sex, into having a child that she doesn't want, or equally to have an abortion that she doesn't want due to financial pressures. And while abortion is supposed to be readily available on the NHS, moralistic attitudes of some doctors, waiting lists and poor facilities mean it is not as accessible as it should be.

At the *Underdog* we are more interested in the quality of people's lives than in preaching at people about how they ought to live. For this reason we can look at things unhindered by religious and political dogma. We see that the more 'open-minded' approach makes more sense, backed up with education and services that are accessible, so people can as far as possible make informed decisions about their sex lives. There is a lot of decent advice and support you can get if you know where to look. Here are some places you might want to start:

Hurst Road Health Centre: Free confidential advice, contraception and emergency contraception available. No appointment needed. Hurst Rd, Walthamstow,

London E17 3BL Tel: 020 8928 2388 Open Monday 4.30-5pm, Tuesday 3.45-4.30pm, Thursday 11.45-12.45pm

ELOP (East London Out Project): is a lesbian and gay managed and run community based organisation in Waltham Forest. It provides a range of advice, information, support and counselling services. 388/392 High Road, Leyton E10 6QE. E-mail elop@btclick.com Tel: 020 8509 3898.

Sexwise: Confidential telephone line and website providing advice about sex or contraception to 12-18 year olds. www.ruthinking.co.uk Tel: 0800 28 29 30

Brook Advisory Clinics (outside WF): Islington: The Northern Centre, 580 Holloway Road, London, London, N7 6LA 020 7272 5599 (during Centre hours) Walk in sessions Tuesday: 2.00pm - 4.15pm Thursday: 4.45pm - 7.00pm

Abortion Rights: www.abortionrights.org.uk Information on services and support, as well as campaigning on women's right to choose.

Intercourse: Devoted to encouraging people to develop comfortable and open ways of talking and thinking about sex www.intercourse.org.uk

You can get emergency contraception from: Contraceptive services (family planning clinics), Sexual health clinics (GUMs), Young people's clinics, Brook, GPs, or, when these are closed from the gynaecology wards in Whipps Cross Hospital and King George Hospital.

Also, we recommend this guide to what to do if arrested. Contact us for a free copy or get one from No Comment, c/o BM Automatic, London WC1N 3XX. Download it at www.ldmg.org.uk

