

anarchist fortnightly Freedom

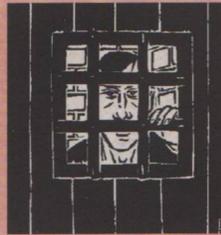
Vol. 63 No. 5

9th March 2002

50p



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Prisoner numbers set for record high

State officials were drawing up a package of emergency measures designed to limit prison overcrowding last week, as the number of prisoners in British jails was set to hit a new high within weeks. Hundreds of inmates, serving short sentences after conviction for non-violent offences, are set for an early release.

Other options under consideration by bureaucrats at the Home Office include greater use of electronic tagging and more doubling up in cells. Prison Service bosses are also starting to postpone any maintenance work which involves the closure of cells or wings.

In the first seven weeks of the year, the number of inmates increased by 3,130, a rate almost equivalent to a jail's population every week. The total prison population at the end of last month stood at 69,572. The number is widely expected to top 70,000 soon, for the first time ever. Some prisoners are already bussed round the country in a 'chase' for empty cells, while prisoners jailed in the late afternoon are frequently held in cop cells until accommodation in the prison network becomes available.

Harry Fletcher, assistant general secretary of the National Association of Probation Officers, said last week that, on the current rate of increase, and if drastic action wasn't taken, numbers would reach 73,000 by the summer. "The system will not be able to cope unless the Home Secretary can find some more means to relieve the pressure".

It is thought that the use of mothballed army camps to house low-security prisoners has been ruled out.

• Liberal prison reform group the Howard League last week condemned plans to electronically tag children as young as 12. The proposals for controlling teenagers on bail were outlined by Home Office officials on 25th February, allegedly in response to soaring levels of reported street crime and robberies.

Magistrates would be given power to impose curfew orders, monitored by private companies via tags. Six areas will pilot the scheme from April, pending an extension to the rest of England and Wales in June. Frances Crook, director of the Howard League, said "children on bail are children first and foremost, and should be treated as such. Locking them up inside an abusive home could seriously endanger them".

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Women on strike!



A lone woman defies the Taliban dress code in Kabul, Afghanistan, in 1998

Anarchists around the world were planning actions to mark yesterday's International Women's Day (8th March) and the Global Women's Strike. In London, activists from the Wages for Housework Campaign were set to gather at Waterloo for a march to Piccadilly during the afternoon.

On 8th March 2002 women and girls went on strike to demand that society invests in the enrichment of every life rather than that of a few. Women and girls do two-thirds of the world's work for 5% of the income. Two-thirds of this work is unwaged. People everywhere are demanding a total change of priorities. Women and girls do the work of giving birth to, feeding and caring for the whole world. But this vital work of survival and community is devalued and those who do it are demeaned.

To overcome this sexism, women are urged to compete with men and with each other. We end up overworked, low paid and divided – including by immigration controls which protect the worst wages and working conditions in most of the world. Corporations are claiming ownership of genes and seeds so the global market can further enslave and even replace us – threatening life and our planet.

A world which starts with people's needs, not corporate greed – without sexism, racism, ageism or any discrimination – must

prioritise caring work, value the experience of those who do it and insist on men and boys caring too.

While women must have the right to abortion, we must also be able to have the children we want, to breastfeed them if we choose, and to have time with them and others we love and care for.

We have had enough of being told we must accept the global market.

International Wages for Housework Campaign
Crossroads Women's Centre
230a Kentish Town Road, London NW5 2AB
<http://womenstrike8m.server101.com>

Editorial on page 7

Demands of the Global Women's Strike:

- Payment for all caring work – in wages, land and other resources. What is more valuable than raising children and caring for others? Invest in life and welfare, not military budgets and prisons.
- Pay equally for all, women and men, in the global market
- Paid maternity leave, breastfeeding breaks and other benefits – stop penalising us for being women.
- Abolition of 'third world debt', which falls most heavily on women and girls. We are owed much more than we 'owe'.
- Accessible clean water, healthcare, housing, transport, literacy.
- Non-polluting energy and technology, which shorten the hours we work. We all need cookers, fridges, washing machines, computers and time off!
- Protection and asylum from all violence and persecution, including by family members and people in positions of authority.
- Freedom of movement. Capital travels freely, why not people?

Freedom anarchist fortnightly

"If you are allowed to smack children you should be allowed to smack geriatrics as well, because they are just as much a nuisance as children, if not more."

Jack Dee, comedian

Anarchists work towards a society of mutual aid and voluntary co-operation. We reject all government and economic repression.

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Our second report on popular resistance to a new airport

The calm before the storm

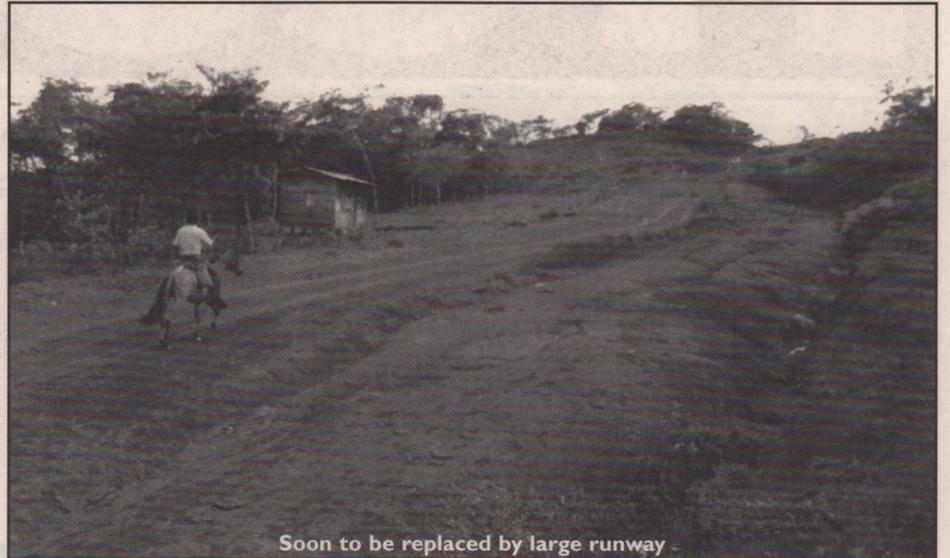
Mexico State

Arturo Montiel Rojas represents the old regime. The governor of Mexico State, he is also a member of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), which was removed from power two years ago after seven decades of one-party dictatorship. His state government sits in Toluca to the west, and the state encircles the Federal District of Mexico City to the north, taking in the town of Texcoco to the east and the nearby municipality of Atenco.

Montiel is associated with El Grupo Atlacomulco, a shady interest group which represents the interests of big business. It's named after the town where its members meet, near Toluca. Another member of the group is Carlos Slim, who headed the consortium that bought control of state telephone company Telmex in 1989, a deal which made him the richest man in Latin America. His friend, Carlos Salinas, ordered the air force to bomb villages in Zapatista areas in the aftermath of the 1994 uprising, while he was Mexico's president. It was also during his presidency that the sale of nationalised industries began.

This prophet of neo-liberalism has now been rejected by the people of what was once his one-party state. He lives in semi-exile in Ireland, while his brother Raul is serving life for narcotics trafficking. But for Slim, Montiel and the like, it's business as usual. This unsavoury collection of politicians, functionaries and businessmen began to plot the building of Mexico's new airport long before the present political era, during the reign of the PRI. It is this proposed new airport which now threatens the people of Atenco.

At a meeting of bosses from the construction industry, held in Toluca on 23rd January, Montiel outlined the benefits of the airport project. It would not, he said, be a short-term scheme, but a lifetime's project with a viability of 50 years. Its construction alone would create 81,000 jobs, and when it began operating it would create 203,000 new sources of work. In ten years, these would generate salaries amounting to US\$9bn. He said he expected investment of US\$2,248m, which would finance industrial parks, commercial infrastructure, hotels, restaurants and similar things. Early last month, Montiel visited



Soon to be replaced by large runway

Europe, taking in Britain, France, Spain and Germany, in a bid to raise this investment.

All this short-termism and political manipulation, which characterised the PRI era too, doesn't wash with the campesinos who are defending their livelihoods, history and land in Atenco. The land, they say, will be productive indefinitely, and is therefore priceless. With careful investment, its productivity could be increased. But the opposite is happening. Due to under-investment in its land and the neo-liberal policies of its governments, Mexico now imports staples such as maize, rice and fruit.

The price of products is dropping along with prices on the global market, and the exodus of impoverished people from the land to the city is increasing. Three quarters of Mexicans live in poverty. The standard minimum wage of US\$4 per day ensures that only the wealthy benefit from capitalist projects. What Mexico provides is cheap labour, raw materials, a market and investment opportunities for capital. The onus to prove otherwise is on the neo-liberals from the Party of National Action (PAN), now in government, who claim to want a state based on legality.

Montiel chooses to ignore these arguments. In comments quickly picked up by sections of the mainstream media here, he usually concentrates on criminal acts by protesters. He suggests that the protesters are not *campesinos*, or that they are not from Atenco. There is, he claims, some wider political conspiracy afoot. Meanwhile, middle class

Mexicans seem to accept the neo-liberal arguments that economic growth is essential, that Mexico needs a new airport, that the old divisions of the land (*ejidos*) are unproductive, that there's no water there any way.

Sergio Rodriguez of the Zapatista Front for National Liberation (EZLN) tells a different story. He argues that the defence of their land by Atenco *campesinos*, and the Zapatista rebellion itself, are only the most visible manifestations of a process that is largely hidden. According to him, protesters now prefer to work through invisible and unofficial organisations, rather than through established and official organisations which have mostly been co-opted by the state and are therefore ineffective. Activists, he says, want it to stay this way, instead of being tempted into following official and visible forms of opposition.

These new organisations – in factories, workplaces, universities, communities and on the land – take many forms and develop links in complex networks of solidarity and mutual support. Their guiding principle is not to allow the bosses to choose the time and place of confrontation. There is a sense of biding time, the knowledge that the neo-liberal project can only lead to a sharpening of conflict, and that the 'civil society', democratic model for social change may fizzle out. Certainly the security apparatus of the country is aware of this possibility. The armed forces are the only national institution currently benefiting from increased investment.

Jo L.

Barcelona to host EU summit

European bosses meet in Barcelona next week to discuss further trade liberalisation within the EU. Thousands of paramilitary police are expected to guard the city's Juan Carlos Hotel, where politicians and capitalists will stay during the summit on 15th and 16th March. Spanish anarchists are planning a programme of debates and discussions, with a demonstration on the Saturday. Here is a statement from one of the city's activists.

The role that the European Union plays in global capitalism is to help the activities of European multinationals, deregulating and liberalising commerce, condemning the peripheral countries to poverty and their populations to famine, through the exploitation of their natural resources to satisfy the consumeristic appetite of the European markets.

These multinationals are enthusiastically backed by the EU in their exploiting of the riches of the so-called 'third world', they are

the spearheads of neo-colonialist policies. The EU is the second biggest arms producer and exporter in the world, and clearly favours a militarist policy to support its worldwide strategic interests.

Another consequence of the way the EU is being built up is the erosion of democratic liberties under the pretext of fighting terrorism. It needs security more than freedom, because business needs social control to ensure that profits aren't endangered.

The various laws on foreigners in the EU serve to create a permanent population reserve, defenceless and marginal, forced to sell its labour for the lowest pay so that bosses can make more profit. This is the real Europe, the one of big capital and multinationals.

Hidden in their luxury hotels and protected behind several thousand cops, the bosses of the EU countries are preparing to advance their plans for building a Europe subservient to big financial capital, the weapons industry

and the multinational corporations. We must oppose the Europe of capital and war, we must globalise our resistance. We must never forget that another world is possible.

Manuel B.

MISUSES OF THE WORD 'ANARCHY'

Number Four in an occasional series

"Alexandra Fuller's book is a timely and frightening reminder of Zimbabwe's descent into anarchy", writes reviewer Jason Cowley in the *Observer* (24th February). And what does anarchy mean to him? "The white retreat from southern Africa, as settlers have fled first from the Congo and then from Zambia, Malawi, Rhodesia and post-apartheid South Africa, not forgetting the catastrophic exodus of the Portuguese from Angola and Mozambique". He's a charmer, isn't he?

Refugees victimised ... again

Bedford

Human rights campaigners last week continued to express horror at the state's treatment of refugees, following the massive fire at Yarl's Wood Detention Centre in February. An entire wing of the complex was destroyed in the blaze, which broke out in the early hours of 15th February after a rebellion by detainees.

Last Saturday, activists slammed an announcement by the Home Office that detainees were again being held in mainstream prisons. At least 46 refugees, who had previously been kept in Yarl's Wood, are known to have been imprisoned following the fire. None has been convicted of any criminal offence.

Emma Ginn, a member of the Campaign to Stop Arbitrary Detention at Yarl's Wood, said the announcement flew in the face of Home Secretary David Blunkett's promise that the practice would end. "This is a complete suspension of human rights. They haven't been charged with anything, and yet they are being kept in prison", she said.

Activists have also criticised the long delay in launching a search of the burned-out shell of the building. Although 25 people were listed as missing in the wake of the fire, cops insisted they had escaped, not died. A detailed forensic investigation of the site only began on 27th February, when search teams with dogs were deployed for the first



Police began their forensic search on 27th February, twelve days after the fire that gutted Yarl's Wood. The door is marked 'Fire Exit, keep clear'.

time. Until then, angry campaigners said, cops had been directing their energies into trawling the countryside for escapees. Only a dozen people had been recaptured by the end of last week.

Group 4, the private company that runs Yarl's Wood under contract, has also faced heavy criticism. Local firefighters insisted last Saturday that members of the company's staff prevented them from entering the building as it burned. Mick Syme, of Bedfordshire Fire

Brigades Union, said the delay, which lasted at least an hour, had been "potentially catastrophic". He also contradicted David Blunkett's claim, made to MPs on 25th February, that the fire had been started by the detainees themselves. "We're very disappointed", he said. "This is all about demonising the enemy. The reality is that when firefighters entered the building, there were a few frightened detainees running around".

But other witnesses laid the blame at the

door of Bedfordshire cops. "We shouted to the firefighters to come in, but the police wouldn't let them" one refugee from Sierra Leone told journalists. Campaigners are now calling for a public enquiry.

• Civil liberties campaigners last week attacked new plans for an EU-wide database of refugees. They said the so-called 'Eurodac' project, agreed on 1st March after months of negotiation, would 'criminalise' people already fleeing persecution.

Under the plans, a database of personal information and fingerprints would be shared by EU states, allowing cops and immigration officials across the continent to check if refugees have already claimed asylum in another EU member state. If they have, they would then be deported to have their claim processed there.

Activists attacked the scheme as 'draconian' and 'outrageous'. One anarchist involved in the refugee support network in Britain told *Freedom* it would stigmatise refugees. He also said formed part of a wider political strategy on the part of governments across Europe. "There's a slow process of criminalisation going on", he said. "Bit by bit, the terms of the debate are changing. People who used to be called 'refugees' have slowly become 'asylum-seekers', to be detained. Now they're becoming 'criminals' - how long before the UK has mass imprisonment of refugees, like they do in Australia?"

• **Central London** A peaceful demonstration outside the Italian embassy was attacked by cops on 23rd February. Around fifty people had gathered in Grosvenor Square, to protest at moves by the Italian government against social centres in Turin, Florence and Bologna. Italian police raided the centres on 20th February, allegedly to seize audio and video material relating to last year's police riot in Genoa. The search warrant named the centres as 'Indymedia offices', although Indymedia representatives denied they were.

On the London protest, some carried banners saying 'tell the truth' and 'we are all Indymedia', while others brandished videotape to symbolise the seized film. Tape was also strung across the front of the embassy building and leaflets were handed out. After a while, police started to arrive and the crowd was attacked. Cops drew their batons, and began to push protesters off the pavement into the road. A few were also punched. Some witnesses said they heard one cop say "I don't give a fuck about the law" as he hit a man in the face. Two people were arrested and taken to Saville Row police station.

• **Vauxhall** The first Carnivalista café night, held on Monday 25th February to raise funds for a South London social centre, was a great success. The venue, Bonnington's Café in Vauxhall Grove, is a good one. We served over thirty people in the space of 1½ hours, running out of food by 9pm! We even had to start turning people away. We raised over £60, and could have raised twice as much if we'd known it was going to be so busy. A.T.

• **Whitehall** Four members of Active Resistance to the Roots of War (ARROW) were cut free from the gates of Downing Street by police last week, after they locked themselves on in protest at reports that the British state was planning to endorse a US-led attack on Iraq. The four, who included *Freedom* contributors Emily Johns and Milan

News in Brief

Rai, pledged to continue their campaign of non-violent direct action in future.

"There is an overwhelming case for non-violent resistance to the Bush and Blair plans", Milan said. "We promise that Tony Blair will not be able to ignore the new wave of non-violent resistance he has provoked". ARROW is sponsoring a Pledge of Resistance to the planned war.

Active Resistance to the Roots of War
c/o NVRN, 162, Holloway Road, London
NI 7DQ
www.justicenotvengeance.org

• **London** The mainstream media was the target of complaints early this week, after the latest big anti-war demonstration. Around 15,000 people rallied in Hyde Park on 2nd March, before marching on Trafalgar Square.

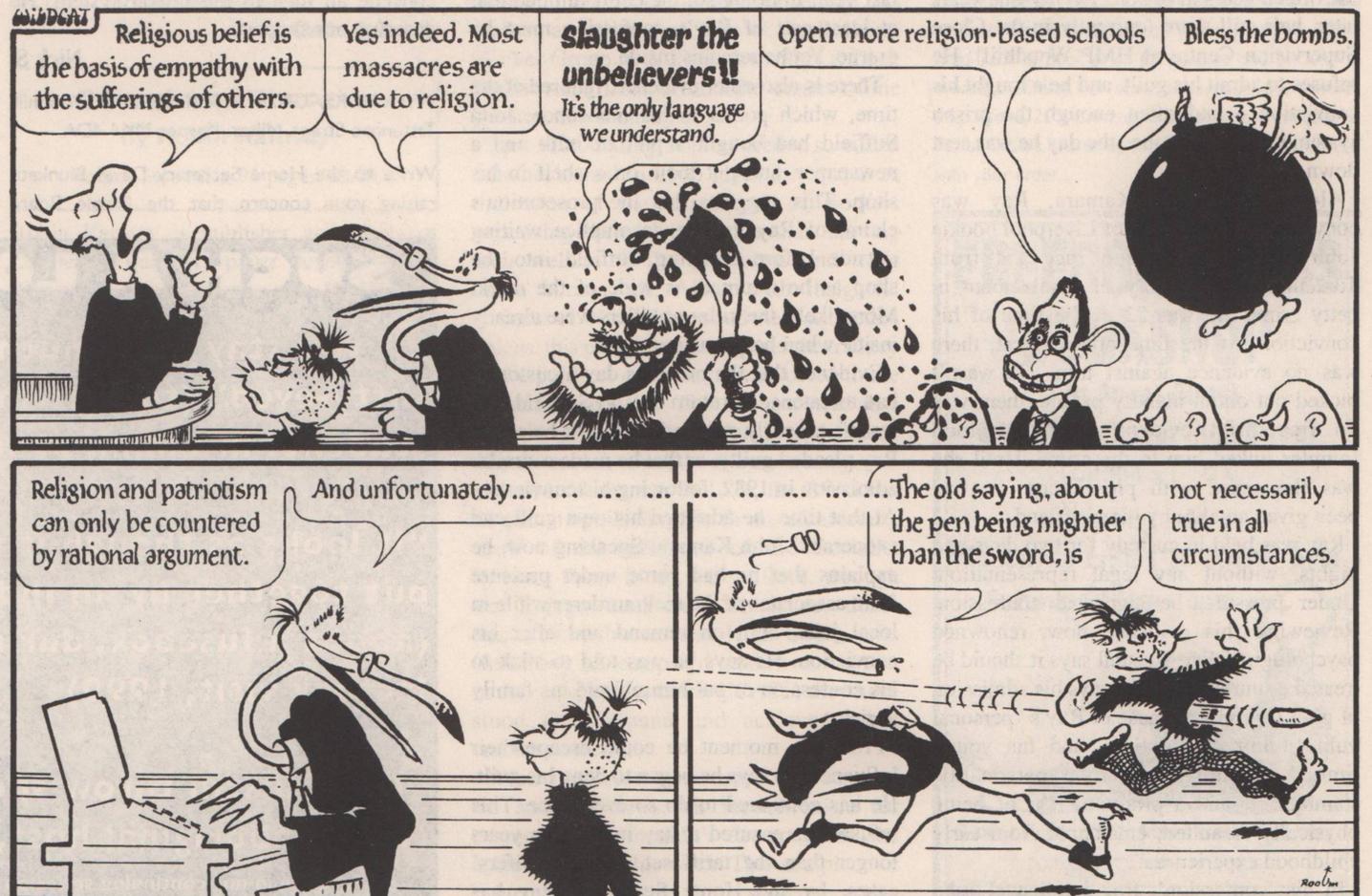
But activists said the action had received very little media coverage. "Because they've been knowingly party to the big lie for the last few months, you can't expect them to advertise any opposition with a whole heart", said one activist. "They've been complicit in the propaganda front".

The demonstration was called by senior

members of the Socialist Workers Party, who claimed they wanted to demand a halt to the bombing in Afghanistan, and to oppose the threatened campaign against Iraq.

• **East London** Leytonstone Activist Group (LAG) is a new group that has just formed in the Leytonstone/Leyton/Wanstead area of East London. It contains radicals of varying kinds, from anarchists to libertarian socialists to progressives and social justice activists who want to build a community of resistance to capitalism and the state. So if you live nearby, why not get involved?

LAG
visit www.leytonstonia.org.uk



Lessons from the ABC

It's good to see the recent resurgence in anarchist lip-service to the cause of prisoners. There's even been some genuine support work. Comrades from Brighton's Anarchist Black Cross (ABC) and Bristol's Prisoner Support Group, whose plans were reported in this paper on 23rd February, are making a start for others to follow.

With Police State practices becoming more draconian by the day, and the prison population soaring, there's a greater need than ever for a genuine movement of prisoner solidarity. But without a detailed examination and understanding of what led to its collapse before, any attempt to relaunch an ABC network will lead to the same mistakes being made again. It won't benefit the prison struggle one iota.

The ABC was put on a good course by working class militants like Stuart Christie and Albert Meltzer. They not only understood the necessity for prisoner solidarity, but also how to deliver it in practice. But for a long time, the reality of anarchist prisoner support has been buried by reference to the past work of a few good comrades, and not a little bullshit.

Campaigns like 'Persons Unknown' stand out as benchmarks of anarchist solidarity, but that was over twenty years ago. Nor should we forget that, even then, there were other things that reflected very badly on the movement. Older comrades may remember the so-called 'Prisoners' Bookscheme' for example, where money collected to provide books for prisoners ended up as the private beer fund of a few individuals. This wasn't an isolated instance. More recently, little of the money the ABC collected 'for the direct support of class struggle prisoners' reached them.

The ABC network lost its way a long time before its eventual demise. The story of how



it came to collapse, and the actions of the individuals responsible, makes for one of the most shameful chapters in recent anarchist history. An understanding of what happened hasn't been helped by a tendency to sweep unpalatable truths under the carpet.

There were several reasons for the collapse of the old ABC, but the central issue was a question of accountability – or rather, the lack of it. We neither want nor need a monolithic organisation, but democratic accountability is important if we're going to avoid creating structureless tyrannies. These weren't avoided in the case of the ABC.

Some people find it convenient to confuse libertarianism and liberalism, in order not to be held accountable for their actions. But an organisation still has the right to distance itself from the most unacceptable behaviour (and the responsibility to comment on it too).

It simply can't be acceptable for individuals within the anarchist prisoners' support organisation (for example) to engage in a protracted campaign to undermine support for an anarchist prisoner, to misuse and misappropriate funds, to ignore mail, to work with the state, to attempt to sabotage a prison protest and then – when challenged to account for their behaviour – to sit back and refuse to answer. Behaviour like that shows complete contempt for everyone else involved.

Because no mechanism of accountability existed within the ABC network, some of the worst possible behaviour was tolerated until eventually a large number of affiliate groups and individuals resigned in disgust. In its final days, the network became little more than the plaything of a small clique of people who thought they were above criticism or censure.

It's ironic that, in terms of prisoner support, more has probably been achieved since the collapse of the ABC than for some time beforehand. In the vacuum which is supposed to have been created by the loss of the network, new support groups have been free to spring up. These have been unfettered by the introspective bickering and stifling incompetence endemic to the ABC, and without the corrosive and malign influence of the self-appointed ruling elite.

The Brighton and Bristol groups are examples. There are others too which, while anarchist-inspired, hold no explicit allegiance to the ABC. Significantly, most of them have a greater connection to the ecological and anti-capitalist movements than to the traditional mainstream anarchist movement. As a result, they've brought with them greater dynamism and imagination, new ideas and a refreshing willingness to learn, often lacking elsewhere.

The willingness to learn is important, because anarchism has become so marginalised from the prison struggle that few comrades even seem to know what's needed. They've forgotten what solidarity means. In Berkman's day, anarchist comrades literally risked their lives to try and free him.

Prisoners need long-term commitment. They aren't best served by support groups that spring up overnight like mushrooms, only to disappear just as quickly. We need real commitment and revolutionary solidarity. Those who genuinely want to engage in supporting prisoners don't need to start by talking to each other, but by talking to us – political prisoners who know only too well what's needed – and by learning from the mistakes of the past.

Mark Barnsley

Editorial on page 7

Still inside: another innocent man

In December 1981, Ray Gilbert was found guilty of murder and sentenced to fifteen years in prison. Twenty-one years later, he's still there (currently in the Close Supervision Centre at HMP Woodhill). He refuses to admit his guilt, and he's fought his conviction – and often enough the prison system itself – ever since the day he was sent down.

Along with John Kamara, Ray was convicted of the murder of Liverpool bookie John Suffield. A mixed race kid from Toxteth, with a history of involvement in petty crime, he was 22 at the time of his conviction. At the time of his arrest, there was no evidence against him. He wasn't picked out on an identity parade, there was no fingerprint evidence and no blood samples linked him to the crime. Until she was threatened with prosecution, he had been given an alibi by his girlfriend.

Ray was held in custody for two days and nights, without any legal representation. Under pressure, he signed a confession. Reviewing this evidence now, renowned psychologist Olive Tunstall says it should be treated as unreliable. She says his admission of guilt is unsafe because of Ray's "personal vulnerability at the time, and his youth, limited education, abnormal personality, stammer ... and a profound fear of being physically assaulted, emanating from early childhood experiences".

In his 'confession', Ray implicated John

Kamara. John served twenty years, until the Court of Appeal overturned his conviction last year. In doing so, the court implied that at least part of Ray's confession must be untrue. Yet he remains inside.

There is also other evidence, ignored at the time, which points to his innocence. John Suffield had bought a pint of milk and a newspaper, and put them on a shelf in his shop. This suggests that the prosecution's claim, of Ray and an accomplice waiting outside before bundling Suffield into the shop as he returned, is wide of the mark. More likely, the killer or killers were already inside when he opened up.

Evidence that the previous day a customer had threatened to return to 'sort Suffield out' wasn't properly pursued. It didn't help that Ray pleaded guilty, or that he made a similar admission in 1982, following his conviction. At that time, he admitted his own guilt and exonerated John Kamara. Speaking now, he explains that he had come under pressure from associates of the real murderer while in local jails, both on remand and after his conviction. He says he was told to stick to his confession or put himself and his family at risk.

From the moment he could escape their influence, he says he began to deny his guilt. He has continued to do so ever since. This refusal has ensured a stay in jail five years longer than the tariff set, as in all lifers' cases, by the Home Secretary. Ray has

consistently refused the easy option, fighting instead for his innocence and refusing to concede an inch to the prison system. He deserves our support.

Nick S.

Write to Ray Gilbert (H10111), HMP Woodhill, Tattenhae Street, Milton Keynes MK4 4DA.

Write to the Home Secretary David Blunkett, raising your concern that the Parole Board

refuses to release Ray Gilbert because he won't admit his 'guilt'. David Blunkett, Home Office, 50 Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1H 9AT

Write to the Criminal Cases Review Commission to raise your concern about the conviction and asking them to look at new evidence that has emerged, including Olive Tunstall's report. Criminal Cases Review Commission, Alpha Tower, Suffolk Street, Queensway, Birmingham B1 1TT.

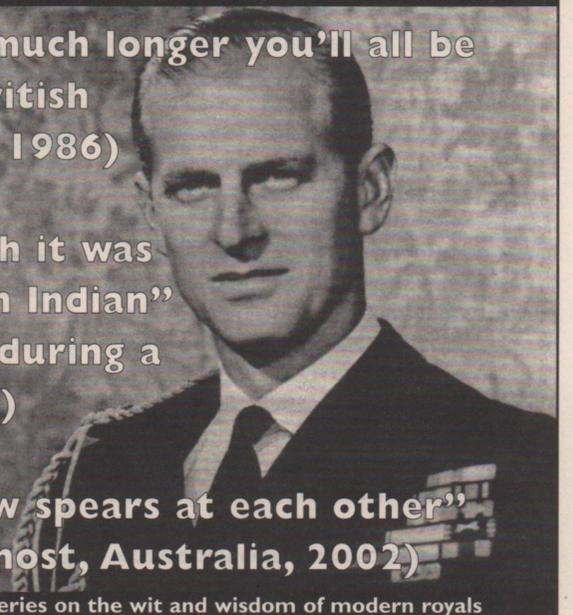
SUCH A LOVELY MAN

"If you stay here much longer you'll all be slitty-eyed" (to British students in China, 1986)

"It looks as though it was put together by an Indian" (about a fusebox, during a factory visit, 1999)

"Do you still throw spears at each other" (to his aboriginal host, Australia, 2002)

Part five in our continuing series on the wit and wisdom of modern royals



Some food for thought

The Raven: number 43 on Food

Freedom Press, 96 pages, £3.00*

Things are inevitably different when you eat somewhere else. The latest issue of *The Raven* (number 43), on food, is no exception. The menu looks exciting, if a touch long for my taste, and it includes many familiar items, always an encouraging sign. There are dishes such as Dave Morris served with Helen Steel, the always flavoursome and nourishing Colin Ward, Edmund McArthur milk pud and the possibly delightful Tuli Kupferberg with lobsters and candy. Let's go inside.

For starters, I went for the Morris and Steel 'McWorld on Trial'. This comes with its own *hors d'oeuvres*, an introduction from the McLibel Support Campaign, outlining the notorious court case. It's good stuff, taking reality with the first bite. "Food is central to our everyday lives, yet ordinary people have virtually no control over its production and distribution", the authors say, and they go on to set the scene of the current campaign, which is nibbling away at part of the problem.

The starter proper gives an expansive overview of the whole McLibel affair, and is served along with the text of 'What's Wrong with McDonalds?', the globally distributed London Greenpeace leaflet that started the whole thing off. Greens are certainly welcome in dissolving the greasy aspects of McDonalds, and the whole thing is very nourishing. The publication is worth buying for this alone.

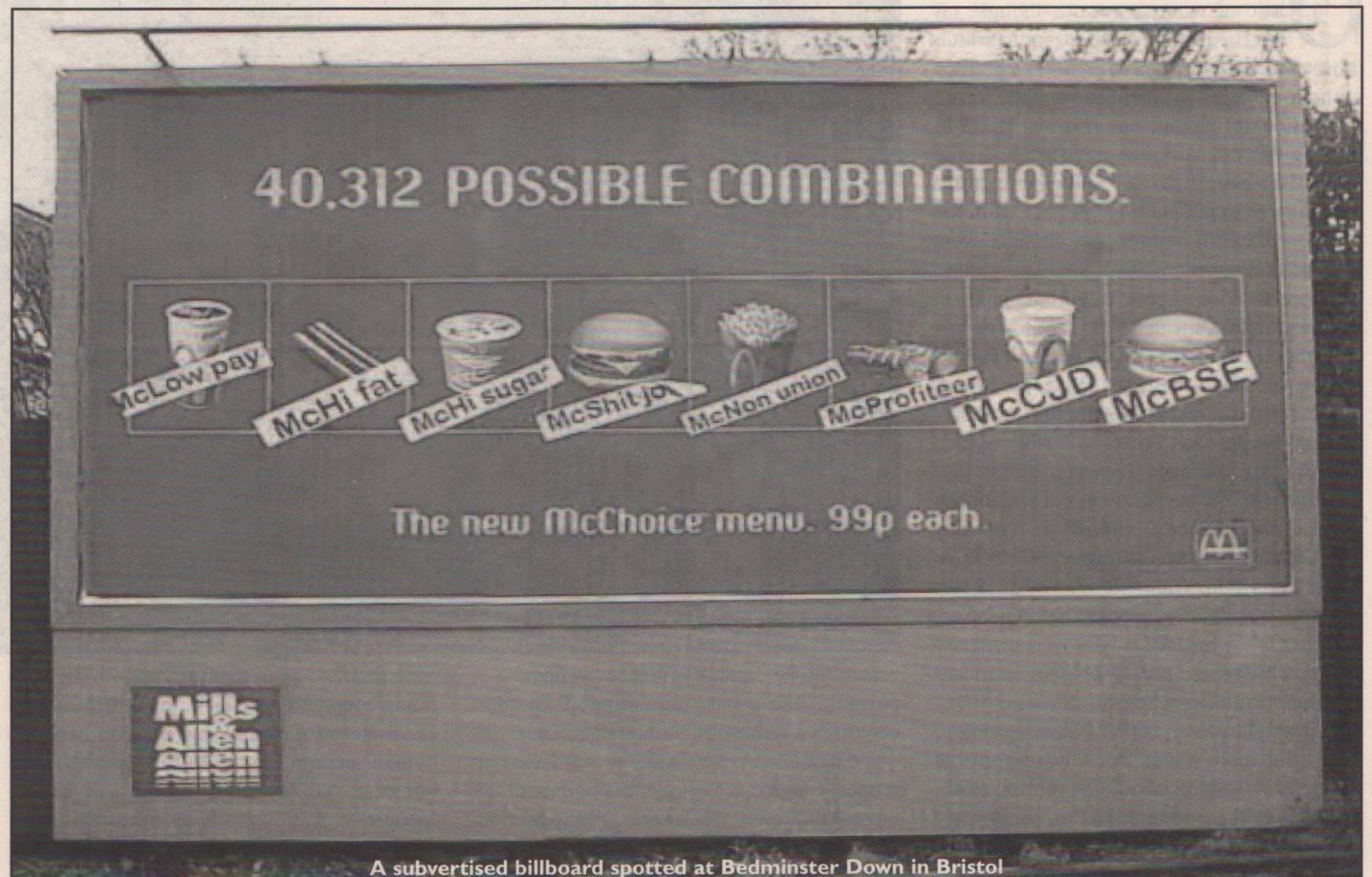
For soup, I tried Peter-Neville. The mix was allegedly anarchism and food with a sociological base, prepared in what practitioners of the trade call a figurational approach. It was new to me and, although many ingredients were familiar by name, they didn't seem to work in this recipe.

For *entrée*, I recommend Colin Ward's piece, 'Food and Green Aspirations', served with an optional Peter Kropotkin sauce. The ingredients are varied, and done to perfection. The dish as a whole brings us to the key point in all matters of food, that of choice – and the problem of confronting the choices we can make about food. Most people regard access to food as a right, and if not a free one then certainly a cheap and labour-free one. The raw realities of food tend to be disliked, but they are served up here.

My main course went further along these lines. It was Graham Burnett's 'Permaculture: ethical design for abundant living'. Many aspects of permaculture are attractive. It involves working with nature, within the natural cycles of life, and so on. It should be very tasty, but when I've tried it in the past, it has been overdone and indigestible. In this piece, the names of the originators receive obligatory mention, but the emphasis on trademarks and limited companies for the world domination of permaculture seems to have faded, making it much more edible. This article gives the global picture, about which we must think, and it comes down to earth, which is where we must act.

Although there was much more on the menu, I decided against dessert and just nibbled some vintage John Hewetson and reliable Donald Room. Both were concerned with aspects of famine, and obviously intended to put the rest of the meal into some sort of perspective. This they did very well.

I understand that my choice from the menu wouldn't suit others, but this issue of *The Raven* does offer a wide range of starters and some solid traditional fare. Everybody who's



A subvertised billboard spotted at Bedminster Down in Bristol

interested in food should find much to their taste. Lasting memories come from Colin Ward's piece, where he rightly says that we have to change our food culture. He also implies that to do this may involve deeply difficult decisions, as any cultural change does. But culture is that which is repeated, and the more our choices reflect the directions in which we wish our culture to move, the more we will change it.

Graham Burnett's permaculture article is also memorable for its opening statement of the problem. He shows starkly that, for present food production, energy input and output equations are unsustainable. Together, these insights raise basic questions for anarchists. Are we willing to act as agents for change in this dimension of culture? And are sustainability and self-sufficiency given the importance they deserve in modern anarchist thought and action?

Colin Johnson

Conspiracy Theories

by Robin Ramsay

Pocket Essentials, 96 pages, £3.99

Robin Ramsey is publisher and editor of *Lobster*, a quarterly paper devoted to the discussion of conspiracies. "In Britain", he writes, "among the many groups in our 'pluralist' society are powerful state agencies – the armed forces, MI5, MI6, Special Branch and GCHQ, for example – whose activities are still not only largely secret, they are intrinsically conspiratorial ... to try to study the activities of organisations like the CIA or MI5 is not remotely similar to belief in mega conspiracies like Jewish bankers or the Illuminati".

The book describes and discusses some real conspiracies, such as Watergate and the Iran-Contra affair in America, and the attempt by elements in MI5 to undermine Harold Wilson's Labour government in Britain. All of these were uncovered by cock-ups on the part of conspirators. It also describes some bizarre conspiracy theories, like the one which features the world drug trade being run by the British royal family, or the one where the world's ruling classes

consist of shape-shifting alien lizards. Then there are traditional bits of daftness, like the Protocols of the Elders of Zion.

Best websites are listed for people who want to find out more about both reasonable and bizarre varieties. There's no index, but subjects can be traced easily through the endnotes to each chapter. An informative and entertaining little book.

DR

Rank and File or Broad Left? a short history of the Building Worker Group

by Brian Higgins

Revolutions Per Minute, 82 pages, £2.00

In eight concise chapters, this pamphlet shows the reader just how effective a group of workers can be when organising independently of the official labour movement. As well as an updated account of the Building Worker Group (BWG), it also offers a much needed view from behind the scenes of the construction industry.

That 120 building workers died in so-called 'site accidents' in 2000 gives the reader an indication of the importance of workers organising themselves, rather than trusting their welfare to the politicians and trade union bureaucrats. Along with insightful critiques of 'New' Labour and the construction unions, this pamphlet also exposes the trickery of the political organisations involved in the Broad Left approach. This serves to neutralise workers' grievances by channelling demands into the trade union/labour bureaucracy.

Since its formation in 1974, the BWG has fought an uphill struggle. From unburdening itself of the influence of the Socialist Workers Party in the early 1980s, through the Laings Lock-out Committee, death threats from bosses and High Court writs (following its campaign against corruption in the construction union UCATT) they have stood their ground and achieved some crucial victories.

While readers may not agree with some of the author's views, his republicanism for example, that shouldn't detract from the achievement of this work. This is a piece of contemporary history from someone active

in the struggle for an independent, revolutionary workers' movement – be inspired.

Sol

Anarhoidni Stripovi Wildcat

by Donald Room

što čit@š, Zagreb, 48 pages, price not stated

A new book of Wildcat cartoons has been published in Zagreb, translated into Croat by our comrade Marko Strpić and others. This features a selection of pages from the five Wildcat books published by Freedom Press. I have asked for a few copies. Anyone prepared to buy one at an exorbitant price (payable to Freedom Press), please write to me. Whoopee! My cap won't fit!

Donald Room

All the books reviewed here are available from the Freedom Press Bookshop. Titles which are distributed by Freedom Press (marked *) are post-free inland (add 15% of book price for postage and packing to overseas orders). For other titles add 10% towards p&p inland, 20% overseas. Please enclose cheques or Postal Orders in sterling made out to 'Freedom Press' with your order.

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Politics with an enemy

One particularly dispiriting characteristic of what passes for thought on the British left is the extent to which it has embraced the idea of creating a politics without enemies. It maintains a pretence of opposition to capital, but restricts itself to making this opposition a purely ethical one. Even the section of the left which didn't explicitly abandon class-based politics in the 1980s, following either the French New Philosophers or the likes of Ernesto Laclau, has now abandoned class in all but name.

For example, consider Hilary Wainwright's editorial in the latest issue of *Red Pepper* (March 2002). Ostensibly concerned with the lessons of a recent meeting of the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil, Wainwright raises questions about the legitimacy of the corporate world and mocks the private sector's claims to superior efficiency. But who is expected to learn from, and act on, Wainwright's critique? Her only answer is ... 'people'. It's 'people', apparently, who form the constituency within which these arguments will be linked to some form of practice.

Wainwright contends that "we are going to hear a lot more about 'socially responsible business'." Talking about the Enron affair, she says the company "ostentatiously supported local hospitals, universities, churches and the arts. But this charity did not constrain a profit drive that led to buying politicians, falsifying its accounts and fiddling its employees". This means that "central to any alternative to corporate power are the issues of public regulation, intervention, the law, taxation and hence the state".

In other words, the 'charity' Wainwright rightly condemns is all that's really on offer – except that regulation will replace largesse, and the medium of distribution will be the state. The capacity of firms like Enron to exploit will remain intact. The only difference from the present, so the messenger from Porto Alegre tells us, lies in 'participatory democracy' – a 'reinvigorated democracy'.

Some readers may think we live in a participatory democracy already. Can't we, if we choose, vote in local, national and European elections? Haven't we got the right to join political organisations, and so on? The basis for any critique of bourgeois democracy ought to be, not its relative vigour, but the fact that its formal equality – equality



Protesters against Plan Colombia at this year's World Social Forum

before the law and the right to participate in political life – is underpinned by and disguises a real, substantial inequality.

The democracy we've got now is based on property and the exploitation of labour by those who own the means of production. Creating more forums, allowing more votes, passing legislation to regulate the manner of exploitation, won't address this at all. In fact, it will only serve to obscure the origins of the inequality Wainwright so obviously abhors, by swathing it in yet another layer of 'reinvigorated' democracy.

Nor is Wainwright alone in this. The Socialist Alliance frames its politics entirely in these terms. The real issue comes down to that word 'people'. It is a word which captures the essence of the useless, liberal humanism paralysing the Socialist Alliance project.

Capital, which the Socialist Alliance and *Red Pepper* both claim to oppose, isn't just a relationship between human beings and human beings, but between human beings, more human beings and things. These things are called property. Capital is a relation (of exploitation) between those who own the means of production and those who are forced to try and sell their labour to these owners.

Coming from a left which has been so keen to embrace the politics of 'difference', the proponents of 'reinvigorated democracy' are

remarkably quiet about the difference fundamental to capital – the difference of class. Because capital is a relation between human beings, more human beings and things, a politics based round a notion of 'people' can only work as a moral call to those who own and exploit. It insists they should somehow mend their ways. In other words, the notion of 'people' serves only to paper over class antagonisms.

To be effective, anti-capitalist politics has to abandon the terrain of humanism and root itself in the antagonism between those who own and those who labour. Instead of trying to build a politics without enemies, it's part of a struggle in which it has to take sides.

Alexander Berkman wrote that "there is a continuous warfare between capital and labour". For the last twenty years, the victories in that war have been all one way. But the number of worker-days lost through strike action have risen from 282,000 in 1998 to 354,000 for the first ten months of 2001. Union membership is up (it now stands at 6.7m).

There were rail strikes last week in Scotland and the north west of England, leading New Labour ministers to talk of 'wreckers' and the Confederation of British Industry to warn of 'seventies-style industrial anarchy'. More action is promised soon on

the London Underground. The Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU) is balloting for industrial action at MG Rover, while postal workers have voted to strike in their pay dispute. Meanwhile, several unions are talking about stopping their funding of the Labour Party. This is the ground on which effective anti-capitalist politics can be built.

Withdrawal of labour is a powerful weapon, as is the sight of large numbers of workers on the streets. Those of us who are active in the trade union movement should argue for strikes over other things besides pay. We should strike (for example) over health and safety, and as a weapon of solidarity. We should also demonstrate in support of strikes, to draw other trade unionists into action alongside us as well as to re-establish (symbolically at least) a militant working class presence in the public space.

The current wave of strikes offers a challenge to the left and anti-capitalist movement. In place of rallying 'people' to an ethical critique, it poses the reality of class struggle as the foundation for an anti-capitalist project. Instead of looking for politics without enemies, we should try to prosecute more effectively the war between classes.

Nick S.

Vernon Richards

Vero left softly, that's what he wanted. We'd met recently, and we'd been chatting on the phone. He often gave the impression of being a sad and pessimistic person, but that's not the way he was. He was just realistic, in the

way old men can be when they distance themselves from everyone and everything because they have no more dreams to fight for.

Maybe this was what made people upset with him and made him unpopular.

Vero was a gentleman, a generous man who gave interpersonal relations the right value, a caring man who loved beauty in all its forms. He was also a great photographer, and an active anarchist who lived by a good human philosophy.

Thank you, dear Vero, for the friendship and the love you gave me.

Fiamma Chessa

Archivio Famiglia Berneri, Italy

I was really sad to learn of the death of Vernon Richards. I love his photographic books. I wish I'd known him, but I felt I knew him from those books and the warm and humanitarian comments he wrote about each picture. The world was left a much impoverished place by his passing.

John Arnison



Fiamma with Vero in July 1998

Viewpoints

WE DON'T LIKE IT

Pollution is the product of capitalism. Capitalist agriculture destroyed our organic relationship with the soil by creating industrial production which can't be tended by human labour, only by machines. Through disease, it created vulnerable monocultures in need of pesticides, weed killers and artificial fertilisers. The capitalists use hormones and chemically treated animals to boost profit. Genetic engineering and modification is their latest catastrophic outrage designed to monopolise production.

Capitalist social organisation encourages private transport, with its concomitant petrol pollution. To boost oil revenues, it destroyed electric trams and trolley-buses in favour of diesel consumption. It created deadly nuclear power for its campaign against the USSR, obtaining plutonium as a by-product. It destroyed state-owned coal mines to break the unions, though coal is a viable alternative to nuclear energy. It searches for profitable

products which need intercontinental transport systems, thus intensifying transport pollution.

It prevents production in rival countries in order to make them reliant on imported capitalist goods and transports live animals – all in the search for profit. All this increases pollution. In capitalism's wake come millions of tons of useless packaging to reinforce the desirability of its commodities.

Scottish Anarchists

TOP COP'S COMMENTS

So Brian Paddick, Commander of the Lambeth division of the Metropolitan Police, says he finds anarchy 'attractive'. Certainly from his published comments (originally posted to an internet discussion forum) he understands roughly what anarchism is about, but he rejects it with a familiar argument – that it's a lovely idea but would never work. But still a news item about a top plod treating anarchists as respectable has to be welcome.

Donald Room

What we say ...

Our struggle too

As the bosses have been forced to make their domination more uncompromising in recent years, they've tried to break the bonds that hold us together. This partly explains their obsession with young people gone out of control. Now we're encouraged to look at other people and see, not ties of background, class or plain self-interest, but the 'other' – a thing alien to us which we can't understand and which can only represent a threat.

Refugees, 'criminals', foreigners, anarchists, hippies, punks, young people – we're supposed to be on our guard against them all. The number of people we can rely on, we're told, gets smaller and smaller. Solidarity gets less and less.

But there's also something more basic going on, the fear of the authoritarian personality towards children and childhood. Younger people are thought to be unpredictable, spontaneous. That's why in authoritarian societies they're controlled and repressed. Sit at that desk! Learn these facts! Hands out of your pockets! Stand up when I enter the room!

There are two tendencies at work. The modern one creates 'difference' as a conscious political strategy, to divide us and rule us more effectively. The older one is a standard feature of power society. Both are knit together in the attempts of the British state to declare children and young people a new criminal class. Both tendencies must be resisted. They're both part of an effort by those in power to stop us from fighting back effectively. The struggle of young people is the struggle of us all.

Women on strike

Surely nobody thinks the demands of the Global Women's Strike will be met. But this argument, frequently put, is wrong-headed. The point isn't whether these demands are achievable within capitalism. The point is that in campaigning for them, capitalism itself is challenged.

Why can't it provide these things? Like we've said over and over, capitalism didn't get where it is today by being 'nice'. That's why the Global Women's Strike was right to make the global market its target.

But just as anti-capitalism was implicit in its list of demands, so was the awareness that opposing capitalism isn't enough. It's possible to be both a revolutionary and an authoritarian. If anarchism is about destroying (unwanted) power relationships, just calling ourselves anarchist isn't sufficient. We don't wait for others to root out our prejudices, we face up to them ourselves. Anything else is mere empty rhetoric.

Lessons for anarchists

Mark Barnsley pulls no punches in his analysis of what went wrong with the ABC. Money was misappropriated for the private use of individuals. There was no accountability. Complaints (and mail) were ignored. A small clique developed, which felt itself above criticism or censure. As Mark says, behaviour like this "shows complete contempt for everyone else involved".

Any organisation which doesn't have the capacity to tackle these trends within itself is doomed to fail. An organisation which claims to be anarchist, if it works in this way, fails twice over, organisationally and politically. It won't be an anarchist organisation, but one where petty fiefdoms flourish. The mistakes of the past must not be allowed to happen again.

Readers' letters

Reply to Paul

Dear *Freedom*,

Individualism elicits some curious responses from your readers. In a criticism which has become the standard for every anarchist vision, Paul Campbell says that an individualistic world is unattainable without a Leninist-style 'episode of absolute authority' to get the ball rolling (letter, 23rd February). Meanwhile, Peter C. tells us that Britain has in fact been individualist and Stirnerite all along – thanks to Thatcher, no less. So he wants us to 'discover the living reality of being and becoming in groups' instead (letter, same issue).

Those favouring the collectivist approach have yet to demonstrate that we don't simply return to square one. However well-meaning an external body or organisation may be in ensuring that life runs smoothly, there is always the danger that – owing to its permanence – it would gradually adopt the character of an authority or state, intended or unintended, and that its desire to benefit all would follow the usual course and end up benefiting no individual in particular except for those running it. An individualistic approach to anarchy can guard against such eventualities by dispensing with external mechanisms, encouraging a mutual respect for each other's freedoms and more fluid ways of organising on an individual basis. What is the point of talking about respect for others, if we all think this ultimately requires enforcement by an external agency? Life then is merely a sham.

Anarchism, it seems to me, is not only best secured by individualism but, more to the point, it is the logical consequence of individualism and of individualism alone. Collectivist approaches will return us to the place we want to leave.

Derek Barrow

Open-minded

Dear *Freedom*,

I'd like to thank Nick Heath for telling me Malatesta wasn't "hostile to the idea of the General Strike" even though he "never believed that a traditional General Strike ... would be effective" ('Malatesta and the General Strike', 9th February). But in my original article ('Seven decades of Vernon Richards', 26th January), I was more concerned with examining Vernon Richards's position than Malatesta's.

In his Bibliographical Postscript to *Lessons of the Spanish Revolution*, Richards was categorical in describing what Nick calls "the polarity between General Strike and insurrection". It may well be a mistake to put forward this polarity, but that's something Nick should take up with Vernon Richards, not with me.

For my part, I'm open-minded on the matter. What interests me, as it did Vernon Richards, is how it happened that the anarchist movement was successful in building up a mass organisation only in Spain. This organisation, largely based on industrial workers with (in Richards's words) "powerful and sustained revolutionary drive" is what deserves our consideration.

Brian Bamford

Spot-on Wildcat

Dear *Freedom*,

I thought the Wildcat strip in your last issue (23rd February) really brought home the realities of the Kosovo Civil War. Milosevic has always maintained that he had no super-state ideas for Serbia – which is more than can be said for the present government there.

Mike V.

Poor police

Dear *Freedom*,

Police opposition to the government's plans for their pay and conditions raises important questions. We have to remember that the police aren't the enemy, just the tools of the enemy. The enemy itself is the political structure we're living in, not the results of it (the police force).

That's why you were wrong to say (front page, 15th December) that government attacks on the police should 'give us a laugh' – Blunkett is using his powers to make people miserable. What's happening is just another sad example of the control our society has over us.

Vee

Remember Tom?

Dear *Freedom*,

I hope you will let me place the following request in the pages of your newspaper. I'm trying to locate information on a Tom Barker, one-time member of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW).

He was well known in New Zealand and Australia during and after the First World War. He returned to London where he was elected Mayor of St Pancras and was known for flying the red flag from the town hall. He also worked with the electricity board. He died in 1970 after living out his last days in Kentish Town with his Polish-born wife.

If any of your readers could add any more information and/or photographs of Tom Barker, I would be delighted to hear from them (and will refund any postage/copying costs).

Brian Forristal

7 Glen Terrace, Waterford City, Ireland

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A new feature in *Freedom* this year will be a regular reviews page, with the latest on books, 'zines, CDs, games and videos.

If you're interested in becoming a *Freedom* reviewer, or if you have a specific publication you want to review or think we should, email us at FreedomCopy@aol.com

We'd also welcome review copies and news from any small anarchist publishers and distributors. In particular, we want to review and publicise small-circulation local papers and freesheets (such as *Porkbolter* and *The Cunningham Amendment*) that are often unknown off their home turf. So get in touch and let's get publishing!

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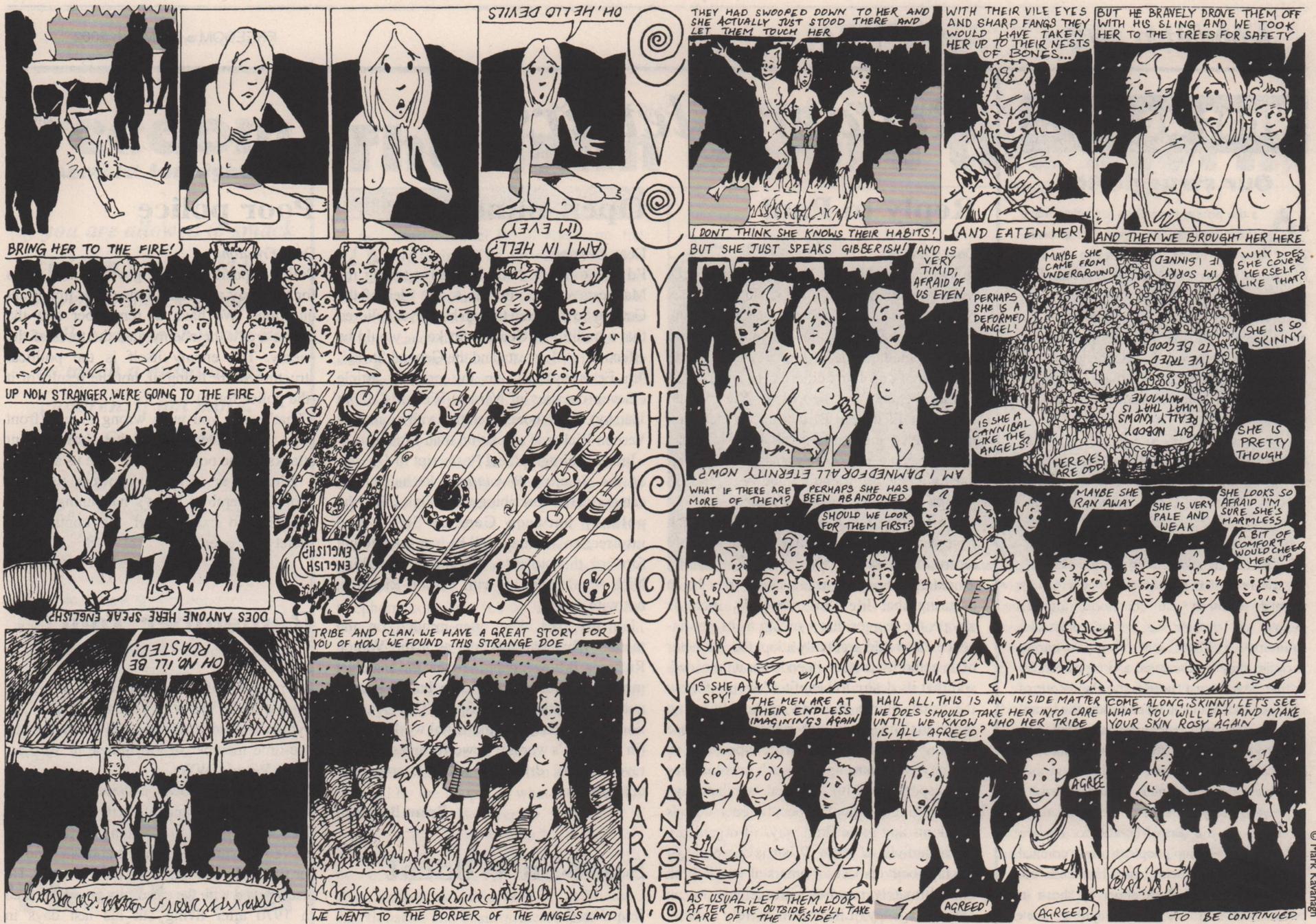
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 Meets at 8pm at the Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1 (nearest tube Holborn). Admission free.
 • Friday 22nd March: Anarchy and the Third World (symposium)
 • Thursday 4th April: Anarchism and Sport
 • Friday 19th April: General discussion (bring food and drink to share)

GLOBAL WOMEN'S STRIKE
 Friday 8th March (International Women's Day)
 Assemble 12 noon at Shell Centre, Waterloo ending at the World Bank
 Coordinated by International Wages for Housework Campaign, Crossroads Women's Centre, 230a Kentish Town Road
 womenstrike8m@server101.com
 http://womenstrike8m.server101.com

WOMEN SPEAK OUT
 A national anarcho-feminist gathering from 8th to 10th March at the Radical Dairy Community Centre 47 Kynaston Road, London N16
 Workshops, discussion, action, films, food, fun, frolics, music
 contact 020 7249 6996 for more info

NORTHERN ANARCHIST NETWORK: SPRING CONFERENCE
 Saturday 9th March from 10.30am to 5.30pm at the News from Nowhere Bookshop, Bold Street, Liverpool
 for details contact Martin on 0161 707 9652

INTERNATIONAL ALTERNATIVE BOOKFAIR IN BELGIUM
 Saturday 9th March • 10am to 8pm Intercultureel Centrum 'De Centrale' Kraankinderstraat 2, 9000 Gent, Belgium
 contact: aboekenbeurs@yahoo.com
 website: http://www.Xs4all.be/~verdan/aboek

INJUSTICE FILM SHOWING
 Sunday 10th March at 4pm at the Duke of York's in Brighton
 Injustice is the film about deaths in police custody
 see www.injusticefilm.co.uk

IWW LONDON MEETING
 Monday 11th March at 7.30pm
 Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1
 contact: IWW, PO Box 4414, Poole, Dorset BH15 3YL
 email info@iww.org.uk • www.iww.org.uk

PRACTICAL TACTICS WORKSHOP
 Wednesday 13th March at 7.30pm
 The Exchange, Sebbon Street, Islington
 This is a monthly tactics workshop which will include various forms of direct action and self-defence.

QUEERUPTION GATHERING
 14th to 18th March
 An international gathering of queer folk of all sexualities. Queeruption, c/o 56a Crampton Street, London SE17
 tel 0207 735 3199 email anarquist2001@yahoo.co.uk
 see www.queeruption.com

NUKE STOP WEEKEND
 March 16th to 17th at Kinning Park, Glasgow
 Two days of information, discussion and practical workshops about nuclear convoys and how to stop them more effectively. contact the peace camp or Scottish CND on 0141 423 1222
 cndscot@dial.pipex.com

IWW GLASGOW MEETING
 Sunday 17th March at 3pm
 Centre for Contemporary Arts (upstairs bar) 350 Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow
 Industrial Workers of the World informal meeting
 see www.iww.org.uk

BUILDING LIBERATION FORUM
 Wednesday 20th March from 7.30pm
 The Exchange, Sebbon Street, Islington
 For those involved/interested in network of social centres

LONG MARCH FOR THE CLIMATE
 Saturday 23rd March
 One year after Bush dumped the Kyoto treaty, march from Exxon-Mobil headquarters near Leatherhead to the US Embassy in Grosvenor Square, London
 tel 020 8855 3327 or 07903 316331
 www.campaignagainstclimatechange.net

DEFEND ASYLUM SEEKERS
 Conference on Saturday 23rd March, 10am to 6pm
 Cross Street Chapel, Cross Street, Manchester M2
 Arming activists with the arguments, building greater coordination across campaigns, working with refugees and migrants' organisations. Speakers and workshops.
 BCM Box 4289, London WC1X 3XX • tel 07905 566183
 email info@defend-asylum.org

WOMBLES CAMPAIGN MEETING
 Wednesday 27th March from 7.30pm
 at The Exchange, Sebbon Street, Islington, London (nearest tube Highbury & Islington)

LONDON UNDERGROUND
 Meeting on Sunday 7th April at 2pm at the London Activist Resource Centre (LARC) corner of Fieldgate and Parfett Street, London E1
 This is a chance for you to network your groups ideas and find out what's else is happening in the capital.

RED RAMBLES 2002
 Red Rambles is a group who meet in Derbyshire and the Peak District. Anyone from a left libertarian background is welcome.
 Sunday 7th April at 11am
 Meet outside the Hurt Arms Public House, Ambergate, Derbyshire, for a five mile circular walk through Shining Cliff Woods in springtime. Walk leader Mike.
 for more information call 07775 977136
 email ain@ziplip.com

NOUGHT FOR CONDUCT FILM CLUB
 Thursday 11th April at 7.30pm at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn
 Mujeres Libres (Free Women)
 Film showing and a discussion on the Spanish anarchist women's organisation
 £2 waged / £1 unwaged
 convened by Anarchist Federation (London)
 AF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX

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