

# FREEDOM

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## THESSALONIKI 4 WALK FREE!

### Political activists win massive victory in court

The appeal trial of the four European political activists, including UK anarchist Simon Chapman, ended with vindication of the defendants, who walked free after a long and fraught eight year battle against prosecution by the Greek state. The six-day trial was the climax to one of the most important solidarity campaigns for a UK anarchist in recent years, who, along with six other comrades, had been fitted up by the Greek state over the riots during the anti-capitalist EU Summit protests in Thessaloniki in 2003.

The four have effectively won their appeal against their convictions, which held sentences ranging from five to eight and a half years. All the initial charges were dropped, apart from 'distinguished defiance of authority' which was then reduced to 'minor defiance of authority' a misdemeanour, carrying a six-month suspended sentence.

According to legal sources in Greece this was the best the juries could ever do, since they had to be charged of something in order to justify the six months they had already spent in prison back in 2003. The final verdict was three judges against, four jurors in favour of the defendants.

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### LENS CAP BOLD AND BRAVEHEARTED



Students and activists, including members of the Anarchist Federation, have re-occupied Glasgow university. Again. The popular Hetherington Research Club, which was closed by university management to sell off, has been re-opened for use by students and staff as part of the campaign against fees and cuts, and the demand for free education.

## NO BRIBING? YOU CAN'T BE SERIOUS!

For the second time in less than a year, the bribery law that was supposed to have been brought in to stop BAE from repeating its 'buy one get one backhand free' approach to commerce has been delayed.

What's notable about this is that even elements of the ruling class are running out of patience with the state's faffing about, with the *Financial Times* noting that "to delay once was unfortunate ... the delay twice looks like recalcitrance."

However there are good reasons why the state might wish to hold out against pressure from US and EU countries which have been losing business – its companies have been making a great deal of money out of the whole thing.

Figures from the defence industry to construction firms have been lining up to call the new rules on graft 'too vague', attacking them in particular

for demanding that companies stop sending buttering people up in exchange for a bit of action.

On the domestic level, it's likely that gratuities (where you treat someone to something they can't afford rather than pay them direct) will be taken off the list of "things which could unduly influence people".

The next set of revisions will now look at the excuse 'but they're all doing it' before coming to a conclusion later in the year.

New laws are unlikely to significantly impact on the amount of bribery practiced by some of the world's biggest companies however. Internationally, an investigation into BAE's large-scale buying off of bureaucrats in their quest to sell arms was successfully quashed by Tony Blair on the grounds their actions were "in the national interest."

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## NEWS

## ANTI-CUTS ROUNDUP

**EDINBURGH:** Forestry Commission staff in Edinburgh held a demonstration over plans to slash up to 150 jobs at the government agency's city HQ. The proposed cuts at Corstorphine, where the demonstration was held, come as 26% of the commission's budget is cut between now and 2015. Between 100 and 150 jobs will go, along with another 300 in England, staff were warned.

**LIVERPOOL:** Hundreds of council workers marched through the streets of Liverpool on Saturday 29th January against the Labour controlled council's plan to cut 1,500 jobs. Council leader and self-styled socialist Joe Anderson joined the march in a show of solidarity with those he will soon be forcing out of work. Several protesters angered by his presence booed the Labour politician as the march progressed through the streets, leading to angry exchanges. "What else can I do?" he asked. "Resign," came the reply.

**OXFORD:** As part of the national day of action against library closures there were read-ins at seven different libraries in the area under the banner 'carnival of resistance to closures'. After a 300-strong meeting the week before as part of the Oxfordshire anti-cuts alliance groups have organised demos against the cuts to essential local services.

**PORTSMOUTH:** The biggest demonstration seen in the area since the 1980s, Havant, near Portsmouth, saw hundreds of people take to the streets to confront the universities minister David Willetts about the education cuts and tuition fees as well as the loss of 1,200 jobs at Hampshire Council.

**SHEFFIELD:** Hundreds of anti-cuts protesters descended on Sheffield Town Hall demanding to know why they were having to pay for a crisis they did not create. The demonstration, organised by the Sheffield Anti Cuts Alliance, saw homemade banners and placards from local schools, student and public sector unions, all under threat in the area from the cuts.

**SOUTHWARK:** Anarchists were encouraged to visit the picket line of the speech and language therapists strike in south London on 3rd February. Later there was a rally in support of the health workers opposite Southwark Town Hall. Southwark Primary Care Trust's speech and language therapists (SaLT) voted by a large majority to take strike action over a dispute which could see the loss of 30% of the staff.

**STROUD:** Gloucester County Council plans to cut its library service budget by 43% – at least ten libraries will face closure, including those in the county's most disadvantaged areas and all mobile library services will be completely cut – affecting elderly and disabled people. As a response Friends of Gloucestershire Libraries held a street protest outside Stroud library with a variety of people reading from both their own and their favourite books.

## LENS CAP READING, WRITING, REBELLING



Around 50 people, including activists and anarchists from Community Action Lewisham, occupied New Cross Library in south east London for 24 hours. Along with music and food there was a 'read in', to highlight the council's plans to close the library because of government cuts. There is already massive local support to keep the essential service open.

## NSSN Officers resign en-bloc

The National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) is on the verge of self-destruction after the recent conference ended in turmoil with the mass resignation of the majority of NSSN officers. Originally conceived by the RMT union the network was designed to be an independent rank-and-file trade union organisation, which included many syndicalists and anarcho-syndicalists. The specially convened conference on Saturday 22th January was attended by some 400 trade union militants and political activists with the purpose of discussing the proposal from the Socialist Party (SP) to form a specific NSSN anti-cuts campaign.

The proposal originally put on the table in December split the NSSN steering committee, with every member of the SP in favour of it and every non-member of the SP (17 in all) against. The 17, who had previously warned of the damaging tactics of the SP, came from diverse political backgrounds – genuine independents and syndicalists, to members of other left wing groups, many having served on the committee for the entire five years of existence of the NSSN. They included the national chair of the NSSN, Dave Chapple, a prominent CWU activist, anarcho-syndicalist and occasional *Freedom* contributor, who had been the chair of the committee since its inception.

Reports from the conference suggest stage-managed sectarian bullying by the SP who had already packed the meeting with their supporters. In the end the room voted 305

in favour of the SP proposal as opposed to 89 for the alternative proposal of working with pre-existing anti-cuts organisations to build and launch a single national anti-cuts organisation early in 2011.

At a meeting immediately following the conference, the majority of NSSN/Shop Stewards Network national officers – all of those not in the Socialist Party – resigned their positions. In a formal statement they made their anger clear: "We have decided that we cannot continue to be activists in an organisation that, following the conference decision on 22nd January, is now controlled by the Socialist Party. The NSSN was established to become a strong independent organisation of trades union activists, with trades council and trades union branch affiliates. Its meetings cannot function as independent voting bodies if all major decisions are to be taken beforehand by the Socialist Party. None of our trades council or trade union branch affiliates can continue to be linked to the NSSN on that basis."

What now then for the future of a militant grassroots workplace organising? The 89 who voted against the SP walked out of the meeting and reconvened in a nearby pub where discussions were held on the next step, deciding unanimously to continue the work of trade union activists' solidarity on an organised national basis, with the syndicalists, rightly, insisting that any new network would never again fall under the leadership of a single political party.



# The cover-up that killed thousands

## Looking at GlaxoSmithKlein's latest medical malpractice: Avandia

When is a medicine not a medicine? When it's a stone cold serial killer with a cabal of senior corporate executives colluding in the murder spree on the grounds it makes a *lot* of money.

Anti-diabetes drug Avandia has been stalking its prey for nearly 20 years now, bringing in around \$3 billion per annum for most of that time. As drugs go it's pretty much the golden goose laying very convincing-looking golden eggs.

But what British company GlaxoSmithKlein (GSK) never told the buyers of those eggs was that they were laced with poison. And by the time this burial of the truth was fully uncovered in June last year by a whistleblower, an estimated 47,000 people had suffered heart failure, stroke or death in the US alone.

Released in 1999, Avandia was the new *wunderkind* for fighting diabetes. By helping people to regulate their own insulin levels, it provided a new lease of life for around six million people, including nearly 100,000 Britons.

As far as can be told, despite its proud claim that it had done 26 separate clinical trials, at this point the company had no idea that the drug raised the risk of a heart attack in an already at-risk group by up to 46%.

Emails found by an investigation into the company show precisely what lengths its chiefs went to in remaining ignorant after all these trials, when two internal studies were unceremoniously blocked from public view via the written note "not a chance" when they highlighted possible trouble with Avandia.

Despite their best efforts however senior managers at GSK (and the main drug monitoring body in the US, the FDA) probably did know something two years later, when a warning was issued that in Canada that possible liver and cardiac problems linked to the drug should be monitored.

But mounting evidence continued to be ignored until 2007, when an independent report explaining the link in full was published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* and slapped on the table of the FDA.

This was met with a stony silence.

The FDA, which relies on drug companies' own reports to make its decisions on drug safety and takes 65% of its funding from industry 'user fees', chose to listen hardest to GSK's own reassessment of Avandia, which argued the report was hokum by comparing it to figures it had concocted for a completely different type of complaint.

It would not be until a court case was brought by 10,000 disgruntled former patients in 2008, netting £407 million (around 13% of GSK's Avandia-related take) that the full story would come to light and the drug banned in the US and EU.

This, incidentally, while another drug already existed, Actos, which was free of such problems while doing the same job.

Rob Ray

## Thessaloniki 4 walk free!

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After three weeks of court dates, adjournments and a lawyers strike – Simon Chapman, Suleiman 'Kastro' Dakdouk and Michalis Triakapis were found not guilty of all but one minor charge, with Fernando Perez Gorraiz being found not guilty of all charges. Despite the outcome Michalis remains behind bars on an unrelated matter.

This has been an amazing outcome to a saga that began on 21st July 2003 with the initial violent arrests during the demonstrations against the European leaders, through to the two months of hunger strikes and international solidarity campaigns that won its first victory with the release from prison of

the original seven detainees in November 2003.

According to the Thessaloniki Solidarity campaign, who worked tirelessly in support of the accused, "this shouldn't be seen as 'justice being seen to be done', as we do not believe that justice is a value known to any court, but it is a victory for the four who stood up in their defiance against the power of the Greek state – as they did during the days of the EU summit in 2003 – and a victory of our collective solidarity when faced with the criminality of power. What limited power we may have in such circumstances was flexed and the limitations of their power laid bare. Ultimately it is with the compliance

of those outside the direct employment of the state that ensures the repressive mechanisms maintain their social legitimacy, it is also by our non-acceptance of this compliance that we can break down and defend ourselves whether in the courts or on the streets.

"We move forward with this victory, with the knowledge that other comrades in Greece continue to face the brutality of repression and the violence of imprisonment – until all are free we continue to fight by any means for them and all of us."

Turn to pages 8 and 9 of this issue of *Freedom* for a report on what happened during the trial.

## ANALYSIS

# Why you should ignore police bail conditions

Many people arrested on the student protests have had conditions imposed by the police when given bail, usually 'not to attend protests' or to 'stay out of Westminster'. There are legal methods of challenging these conditions on the grounds that they breach European Convention of Human Rights in particular Article 10 'Freedom of Expression' and Article 11 'Freedom of Assembly'. However these are expensive and time consuming. So we say – just ignore them. Here's why.

## Why the cops put everybody on bail

In the good old days if the police nicked you they would charge you with the most serious offence they could think of and either take you to court in the morning or let you out with a court date a few days or at most a couple of weeks later. The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) got fed up of this as they were always having to reduce the charges to something more realistic. So now the cops aren't allowed to charge anything except really minor stuff, e.g drunk and disorderly. Instead they prepare a file of evidence which is sent to the CPS who then decide what the appropriate charge is. Aside from laziness, incompetence and inefficiency both cops and CPS have positive reasons to slow the process down. The cops like keeping people on bail because it's a punishment in itself, especially if there are conditions attached, while the CPS get paid however long it takes. This leads to people being on bail for months even years with disruption to their lives and ongoing psychological pressures. We need to resist this individually and collectively.

## Breaching bail conditions is not a criminal offence!

What many people don't know is that breaking bail conditions is not the same as



Above, at the recent student protests many of those arrested have had bail conditions imposed on them; below left, police arrest a photographer and attempt to take his camera from him at the Poll Tax riot on 31st March 1990.

failing to surrender to bail (turning up on the date given on your bail sheet, whether to a court or to return to a police station). Failure to surrender is a crime (Section 6 Bail Act 1976). Although it should be said the courts take failure to surrender to the cops far less seriously than skipping court, and CPS guidelines state that failure to answer police bail should not be prosecuted at all where the substantive case is dropped.

Breaking conditions imposed when you are given bail is not a crime. If you break bail conditions you can be arrested (Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 section 46A [1A]). In theory you can be arrested if the pigs think you're going to break bail conditions (Section 7 Bail Act 1976) *but*,

and here's the good bit, in either case they have to bring you before a court within 24 hours of arrest (not including Sundays, Christmas Day or Good Friday). Now some people may be afraid that the Court will remand them. *But* the Courts can only remand people who've been charged with an offence. And that is what the cops don't want to do because if you're charged you have to be told what you're suspected of doing and what the evidence is against you. This will help your defence by enabling you to gather information and witnesses to the incident and demand disclosure of the police's own misconduct. We suspect that the cops are not planning to arrest anyone for breaching bail just hoping to put people off demonstrating. In any case it's almost unheard of for people to be remanded just for breaking police bail conditions.

## Time to fight back

Being on bail also results in people feeling they cannot comment or campaign about the case. Defence lawyers are, by training, cautious about their clients saying anything that could harm their defence, and given the daft things some folk say you can see why. However, a robust defence campaign that firmly puts the blame on the police (as with the Trafalgar Square Defence Campaign for the Poll Tax demonstration in 1990) is a vital part of everyone's individual cases and defying police attempts to prevent future demonstrations by bail conditions is an important step towards this. Moreover keeping up the pressure with more demonstrations and broadening them to link with other struggles will increase the political and logistical pressure against this police victimisation of protestors.



## NEWS IN BRIEF

**BUSINESS:** Oil giants Shell have confirmed they make £1.6m profit every second. The multi-national fuel producers have just published their latest financial figures revealing global profits from all sides of the business rocketed to \$5.7bn (£3.5bn) in the last three months of 2010 compared with \$1.2bn a year ago. Full year profits reached \$18.6bn, almost double the figure for 2009, making it the world's largest trading business – not just in oil, but also chemicals, natural gas and even carbon dioxide. One protestor was heard remarking “At least they’ll burn well come the revolution.”

**POLICE:** The Keystone Cops antics of the Met police made an unwelcome return to the streets of London as a panicked PC sprayed cs gas into the faces of peaceful protesters. A group of mainly students were protesting outside Boots in central London as part of the anti-cuts initiative when the over-zealous cop walked up to a protester and sprayed him full in the face, spraying others and himself in the process. Several people needed hospital treatment for their injuries. It's unclear why such an action was necessary given the nature of the protest, but many fear this may have been an unsuccessful practice session for a future public order policing tactic.

**EDUCATION:** The New Labour president of the National Union of Students Aaron Porter felt the wrath of his own members as he was chased through the streets of Manchester at the recent anti-cuts national demonstration. Porter, who called the Millbank protesters “despicable” and has distanced himself from the emerging radical student movement, was confronted by angry students who questioned his politics. He had to be escorted inside the university building by police who were heard to comment “it's alright son, I worked with your father”.

**PUBLIC SECTOR:** Cameron's big society just got a little smaller with all the Citizens Advice Bureau in Birmingham being forced to close after the council withdrew its funding. The advice centres, essential for free legal advice of housing and employment issues, especially for those on low incomes, are to go with the loss of 45 staff.

**NHS:** Never let it be said the Tory's don't understand the term ‘we're all in it together’. When it comes to carving up the NHS they're certainly never far apart. Andrew Lansley is the coalition health secretary charged with preparing the health service for privatisation by introducing “competing partners from all sectors”. Step up John Nash, the chairman of Care UK. Mr Nash, a private equity tycoon, who manages several businesses providing services to the NHS and stands to be one of the biggest beneficiaries of Conservative policies to increase the use of private health providers. The same Mr Nash who back in November 2010, gave £21,000 to fund Andrew Lansley's personal office.

# The bookshop

## Third is the series of user groups that operate out of the Freedom Press building

Freedom bookshop is one of only a handful of radical bookshops still in existence in the country\* and, along with Housmans and the socialist outlet Bookmarks, part of the last three surviving political booksellers in London. It remains the only anarchist bookshop in the UK (that is, owned and run by anarchists and featuring predominantly anarchist literature).

Let's put that in some perspective. At its height in the 1980s the Federation of Radical Booksellers could number over sixty radical bookshops throughout the UK, which could easily compete with the mainstream and independent shops.

Fast forward to the present day and, according to the Booksellers Association, in 2009 independent bookshops closed at the rate of two a week, citing the ease of online shopping as the main reason for the depletion in independent retailers. And yet despite the internet, and the dominance of Amazon in particular, where buying books has become a simple mouse-click away, the need for a bricks and mortar building, a concrete physical space has never quite gone away.

We may be a hidden gem stuck down the back streets of East London dwarfed by the Whitechapel Art Gallery, but the bookshop continues to thrive and grow, both as an port of call for those interested in radical political ideas and also as a hub for anarchists and radicals to meet and socialise. Rarely can you go to Freedom bookshop now without bumping into a member of Whitechapel Anarchist Group brewing a

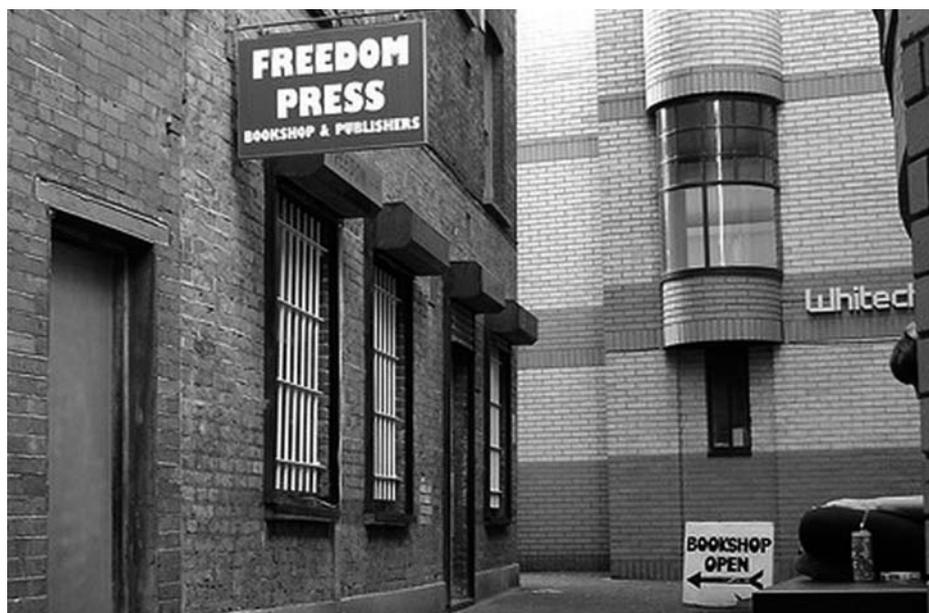
fresh pot of Zapatista coffee or a Solved comrade dropping off the latest copies of *Catalyst* – indeed on certain days you can get an in-depth anarchist history lesson from a member of the Anarchist Federation working behind the (new) counter.

Anarchism shouldn't just be an enclave for the committed, but an open invitation for the curious. And this is where the bookshop comes into its own. The internet may offer instant gratification on all things anarchist, indeed some have built their political careers out of internet anarchism, but it is also isolating and dislocating, all that melts into air remains, well, just melted air.

So what does Freedom bookshop do? At its most basic level it contributes to the discourse. When things are kicking off globally, when mass movements are being re-formed daily in city squares in order to topple leaders, when students rage through the streets of the capital, when local libraries get occupied and town halls get stormed, when the political certainties of the past decade are being discarded and banking systems are visibly decaying from within – it is then when radical ideas become the most natural response.

Yes the bookshop provides a focus, an opportunity to embrace and discover anarchist ideas, but perhaps more importantly there is something concrete and real to embrace, a solid foundation with which those ideas are built on. A local shop for the anarchist community sure, but also a doorway into a world of actually existing political activity. All we ask is that you step in.

\* Only six members of the Booksellers Association fall into the radical/alternative category: Bookmarks, Housmans, News From Nowhere in Liverpool, October Books in Southampton, Radish in Leeds, and Word Power in Edinburgh



## INTERNATIONAL

## IN BRIEF

**AFGHANISTAN:** According to a survey conducted by the UN, the Afghani police force is only slightly more popular than the Taliban. The poll revealed a police force widely viewed by Afghans as corrupt and biased, raising doubts about a planned NATO handover. Half the 5,052 people surveyed across all 34 provinces said they would report crime elsewhere. Nationwide, 60% of Afghans reported a significant level of corruption among police officers, and a quarter reported police favouritism on the basis of personal connections in the investigating of crimes.

**COLOMBIA:** More than 100,000 Colombian truckers have gone on strike, which is now President Juan Manuel Santos's biggest confrontational showdown since he took office six months ago. Officials from the Association of Colombian Truckers, said about two-thirds of their 180,000 members are participating in the stoppage, which threatens to reduce coffee exports, and sparking concerns over crude oil deliveries. The truckers association were compelled to strike after the Santos administration got rid of the policy of setting minimum freight rates that truckers receive for each delivery.

**FRANCE:** The permanent camp in Calais is under threat from the police as they continue to make raids and harass migrants. Recently police have been surrounding the food distribution point attacking and beating migrants. There have also been increased raids on 'Africa House', a squatted building home to around 100 African refugees. Calais Migrant Solidarity are documenting police harassment of migrants in Calais, strengthening resistance to the violence by developing a network of European citizens and refugees.

**MEXICO:** The US's stranglehold on the world's finances took another knock as Mexico declared it has finally eliminated the US dollar from its economy. In just over five months since the law was introduced limiting the purchase of goods in US dollars within its borders, the country is now free of all American money. Ostensibly introduced in an attempt to limit money-laundering by drug traffickers and organised crime, it looks like an astute move by the Mexican authorities to finally detach itself from the sinking and increasingly devalued currency.

**YEMEN:** Tens of thousands of people took to the streets across several cities in Yemen in mass demonstrations calling on the president of 30 years to step down. Police opened fire in the capital Mukalla to break up the anti-government protest, with one protester being critically wounded. Opposition members and youth activists gathered in four parts of the city chanting anti-government slogans and calling for economic reforms and an end to corruption. Yemenis are angry at the mounting poverty among a growing young population and frustrated with a lack of political freedom.

## LENS CAP HANGING ON FOR DEAR LIFE



Two severe Amazon droughts have sparked fears that the rainforest's ability to absorb carbon emissions is being diminished. With a huge number of trees dying as a result of the droughts, it's predicted the Amazon will not be able to absorb as much carbon dioxide from the atmosphere as usual in future removing an important global buffer against pollution.

## Anti-fascist prisoner writes

Jock Palfreeman, a 23 year old Australian, who has spent time in Bristol, is still awaiting the verdict of his appeal, expected in February, against the 20 year sentence and conviction for murder in Bulgaria. In Sofia in December 2007 he intervened when he saw a gang of fifteen neo-Nazi football hooligans attack two Roma boys, and in self-defence killed one neo-Nazi and injured another.

In his latest statement published in January, Jock writes:

"For three years my statement of self defence has not changed. And it doesn't change now. The three years have been difficult, but the fact that the judges, prosecutors, private plaintiffs and myself know that I'm innocent brings some comfort.

"All objective and neutral evidence in my case has supported my statement from the

beginning. With only the statements of the gang conflicting, with not only my statement, but all if the evidence.

"Thank you for all the acts of friendship, support and solidarity, shown by friends, family and those concerned with social justice. Your constant support has not only brought the injustice to public light, but reminded me why I went to the defence of the two boys in the first place. It is human nature to care for each other even in the face of overwhelming odds. To all those who show their disgust of racism and corruption, thank you. We must not lose hope, not only for my case, but in the broader struggle against racism."

Background information and ways to support the Jock's campaign to the can be found at <http://www.freejock.com/>

## Notes from the US

## The economy

In congress lawmakers are being urged to impose far larger cuts in all budgets except the military by the far-right Republican Study Committee – including an immediate cut of US\$100 (£63) billion. If this is acted upon, the funding of most federal departments would be reduced by a third. The same committee is lobbying for a cumulative reduction in spending of US\$2.5 (£1.6) trillion by 2021 – or a 40% reduction. With 165 members, the Study Committee represents over two-thirds of House Republicans. Yet a survey recently conducted by *The New York Times* and CBS News found that a majority

of people favour cutting the military budget over cutting Medicare or Social Security and nearly two-thirds of those asked would choose higher income taxes over reduced benefits in either scheme.

## Crime

Three prisoners on death row at the Ohio State Penitentiary ended their liquid-only hunger strike in mid-January once prison officials acceded to nearly all their demands.

Siddique Abdullah Hasan, Bomani Shakur and Jason Robb began their campaign on 3rd January in protest at their harsh mistreatment

# Arab uprising

## Egypt at the centre of a revolutionary storm

Unemployment, corruption, nepotism, police brutality, rising prices for the most basic commodities and increasing polarisation between the rich and poor – all these seem to make the common denominators for the current uprising in Egypt, Jordan and Yemen.

It was when Tunisian fruit vendor Mohamed Bouazizi poured inflammable liquid over his body outside the local municipal office in an act of public protest that cemented a revolt that would ultimately end President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali's 23-year-rule.

Now it seems it is the days of Egypt's president Hosni Mubarak that are numbered. Aside from the fact that most of the Egyptian population is well aware that Mubarak never planned anyone else to fill his position other than his son when his 30-year old tenure comes to an end in autumn 2011, it is also his regular deployment of plain-clothes forces paid by his ruling party Baltageya that has been a hallmark of his ruthless authoritarian government which regularly entailed police brutality and torture.

Add to that thriving corruption and an unemployment rate of around 30% and it is all too easy to see what we witness now: Egypt's biggest demonstrations since the 1977 Bread riots.

Mubarak's first action was to cut off telephone and internet connections to prevent social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter being used to orchestrate protests. He further called in the army and imposed a curfew after tens of thousands of protesters took to the streets demanding an end to his



rule. What started with a few dozen protesters on 25th January quickly mushroomed as passers-by and ordinary citizens joined in. Large numbers of protesters defied the curfew in Cairo to storm the state television building and the Foreign Ministry. The headquarters of the ruling National Democratic Party was set alight.

Protesters chased riot police away from Cairo's main square. Some police are reported to have removed their uniforms to join the demonstrators.

Tanks and troops were ordered to re-take the square where several groups were involved in fist fights, some using clubs and guns.

The opposition also said many among the pro-Mubarak crowd were policemen in plain

clothes as they managed to seize police identification cards. Despite the clashes, anti-government protesters seeking Mubarak's immediate resignation said they would not give up until Mubarak steps down.

The first of what seems to be concessions are Mubarak's recent announcement that he will not stand for election in autumn 2011 when the next presidential elections are due and Prime Minister Ahmed Shafiq's apology on state television for deadly clashes overnight and his promise for an investigation. However, if these concessions will be enough to pacify the demonstrators seem currently very doubtful.

In the next issue of *Freedom*, an interview with Black Flag Egyptian anarchist group about the uprising.

## Notes from the US

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in solitary confinement. They have been held in lockdown for 23 hours each day for 17 years. This is for no anti-social crime, but for their participation in the prison uprising in Lucasville, Ohio in 1993.

The prisoners can now have 'semi-contact' visits with family members, more time for recreation, access to digital legal research, phone calls, and the chance to buy additional goods such as food and clothing.

In another case of abuse, the lawyer of alleged army whistleblower Bradley Manning has accused the military of intensifying its harsh treatment of the prisoner – also in solitary confinement over an extended period of time and yet even to be tried.

David Coombs says that Manning was placed on a stricter suicide watch in mid-January despite psychiatric reviews showing he is no such risk and should even be taken off the less restrictive 'prevention of injury watch'.

What's more, the military revoked Manning's last one-hour of exercise and deprived him of all his clothing except underwear. Amnesty International has written to the Pentagon in protest at Manning's 'inhumane' treatment.

At the beginning of this month legislators committed what future generations are surely likely to see as a crime. Much of the country is experiencing cold weather of apparently unprecedented severity, which meteorologists attribute to global warming. So on Capitol Hill House Republicans introduced a bill which would ban the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) from regulating greenhouse gases under the Clean Air Act. In the Senate a group of Democrats led by Jay Rockefeller of West Virginia suggested a moratorium for two years on EPA attempts to regulate greenhouse gases.

Louis Further

## Berlin squat mass resistance

The famous Berlin former squat put up a massive resistance to prevent its eviction and closure by police. It took 2,500 police over five hours to repossess the building after the 25 residents refused to leave in what has become a focus point for the anti-gentrification movement in Berlin and other German cities.

Liebig 14 was one of Berlin's longest running autonomous housing projects, serving as a radical space for community and political organising for over 20 years. After a four year legal battle the owners finally managed to secure repossession.

Over a thousand protesters gathered outside the building to confront riot police who had blocked all access routes to the building.

After the eviction protesters rioted through the streets attacking commercial premises and fighting with police.

## FEATURE

# Victory for the Thessaloniki 4 —

Thessaloniki is Greece's second largest city situated on the coast to the north. An important economic and industrial centre, it is also a massive university town with an active and militant anarchist scene.

The small courtroom in Thessaloniki was packed daily in what was expected to be a show trial to reinforce the credibility of beleaguered state prosecutors and ambitious politicians. Instead it turned into something very different indeed, with police witness after police witness falling over their own testimony, exposing lies, deception and incompetence along with self-incriminating video footage and photos and a robust political defence from the accused. With its twists and tensions it was court room drama in every sense of the word.

We give you firsthand notes written over the course of the trial, primarily from Simon Chapman's perspective, although full accounts on all the defendants can be found on the *Freedom* website.

## Day one: Friday 14th January

The defendants legal team succeeded in its application to change one of the panel of three judges (a former state prosecutor) for another, less-biased one. Jury selection: there will be four jurors, sitting with the judges. The defence legal team consists of at least six lawyers.

The first prosecution witness was Police Officer Stamatis, the arresting officer of Simon Chapman. Simon's lawyer, Christos Bakellas, set about demolishing his testimony. Stamatis "could not remember" or "didn't know" in response to a large number of questions. He was challenged about the injuries to Simon, where he explained that maybe a stone or brick had hit him during the confrontation, or Simon had fallen over. When presented with documentary evidence from the hospital that treated Simon that his injuries were caused by police batons, Stamatis had no functional response.

He could not explain how he had identified Simon clearly as having blond hair in his original statement – this caused a bit of a laugh in the court. Stamatis suggested that Simon might have dyed his hair. More sniggering.

The whole blue bag/black bag argument was pursued, using the Reuters still photographs as evidence. Who searched the blue bag? Don't know. Who carried the black bag after the arrest? Don't know. What did the police team do with Simon after the arrest? Stamatis stated that they continued fighting the demonstrators, having molotovs and bricks thrown at them, even though, in Bakellas's words, Simon was a 'human bomb' as he was soaked in petrol. The rest of the legal team took turns questioning him and he manifestly failed to justify his actions.

The next two police witnesses almost admitted the fact that they planted evidence against the arrested protesters. Neither police

witness could say if forensic examination ever took place.

## Day two: Monday 17th January

Police witness no. 7 was a more challenging witness. He was part of the Athens-based riot squad which arrested Simon. He testified with absolute certainty (as did all other members of the squad) that Simon had thrown a molotov at his squad, that Simon had turned to run and had somehow slipped and fallen on to his back, thereby smashing a number of molotovs in the blue rucksack on his back.

He was certain that no officers had hit Simon – any blood on him must have been come from an injury caused either by falling over, or perhaps by being hit by a stone thrown from other demonstrators, or maybe Simon fell on his face and then fell on his back. The defence lawyer pointed out that none of this information appeared in this witness' testimony until after himself and the arresting riot squad had reviewed the rather embarrassing video tapes in November 2003.

Police witness no. 7 is the cop in the live television footage who walks up to the TV camera and presents the contents of a black rucksack to be filmed. He presents a hammer to the film crew and puts it in the black bag, and then carries it over to where Simon is sitting and places it next to him.

Police witness no. 9 was the last for the day and was also part of the Athens riot squad that arrested Simon. He repeated the same story about how Simon was most definitely not beaten. This was a little strange because this policeman was the one in the Reuters photo putting his boot into Simon's face.

This witness said he did not kick Simon, that he was just holding him still with his foot because his hands were full (of tear gas canisters). He was offended at all the outrageous lies reported in the media about Simon, as police were wholly concerned for his safety. He admitted reviewing the videos with the rest of the team before making his revised statements in November 2003.

One of the last questions for this police witness was one of the most interesting. Witness no. 9 said that there was a strong odour of petrol coming from the blue bag. He was asked if he took his gas mask off at any point during the day. He had not. So the question was pursued. If police witness no. 9 had his gas mask on at the time, how could he have detected the odour of petrol, given that a gas mask should filter out gases such as petrol fumes? No satisfactory answer was given.

## Day three: Tuesday 18th January

Officer no. 12 was the commander of the riot squad which arrested Simon. Again, he only gave evidence after the video and photographic evidence (in Simon's favour) had been widely published. He said that his squad had gathered up abandoned rucksacks



On 21st July 2003, Simon Chapman was violently a

of broken and unbroken molotovs from the street and had placed them around Simon as this was the safest place for them. The lawyer asked him to confirm that the safest place for bags of leaking petrol bombs was next to a man soaked in petrol surrounded police who, by their own testimony, were still on the receiving end of molotovs and stones being thrown at them. Some eyebrows were raised.

Officer no. 12 confirmed that his riot squad had taken Simon with them into further confrontations with molotov-throwing demonstrators, that Simon was handcuffed and that he had been made to carry the black bag of molotovs for at least two and maybe three hours. He was asked why it was too dangerous to take the blue rucksack (allegedly full of broken molotov bottles) with them as evidence, but it was safe to take a man soaked in petrol, handcuffed and carrying a bag full of unbroken molotovs. All police officer no. 12 could say was that the blue bag was too dangerous to transport.

The trial was suspended at the end of the

# their day in court



arrested during an anti-capitalist EU Summit protest in Thessaloniki, Greece.

day as the Thessaloniki lawyers' union would be on strike Wednesday, Thursday and Friday.

#### Day four: Monday 24th January

Several trolleys of large cardboard boxes containing a variety of rucksacks were wheeled into court. Police officer no. 6 had stated that the bags being delivered to the police station had been labelled with the arrestee's names. None of the bags had any form of label or identification on them.

#### Day five: Tuesday 25th January

There was a two hour sequence where documents supporting each defendant were presented to the judges, such as work and character references, letters of solidarity and concern from various social, political and human rights organisations. One interesting document was a newspaper report from Spain on how some demonstrators had successfully sued the Barcelona police for planting bags of molotovs on them at the

earlier EU summit demonstrations in 2002.

Also, the reasoning for dropping the charges against each defendant – originally made in February 2004 – were read to the court.

After the charges were reinstated and brought to trial in 2008, dissenting minority reports were made (i.e. by those on the panel of three judges and four jurors who believed the defendants to be innocent but who had been out-voted in the deliberations) and were read out for each defendant. These minority reports outlined many of the recurring features that would arise in appeal trial – contradictions between officers, doubts about identification, lack of evidence, lack of detail, problems with initial arrest statements, etc.

The last three witnesses called were for Simon. The first knew Simon for many years from London, and testified that the demonstration culture in the UK did not include either tear gas or the use of molotovs, and that it was not in Simon's character to act in such a way as alleged by the police. The last two had been with Simon on the

demonstration up until only minutes before his arrest, and both stated that Simon had only one rucksack, a blue one with some clothes and some water. They knew this as they had all checked they had enough water before heading off. They both testified to feeling trapped in clouds of gas as the demonstration was cut up into smaller parts by charging police on all sides. Again, these witnesses were dealt with very quickly.

Then it was finally the turn of the defendants to give their evidence. Michalis's lawyer spoke on his behalf (Michalis is on remand for another offence) against the criminalisation of those who identify themselves as anarchists. All three defendants in court rejected the charges against them. It was near the end of the day and the judges and jury were clearly wilting in the afternoon sunshine pouring through the windows. After a few questions from the prosecutor and the senior judge, the defendants testimony was completed and court closed for the day. It all seemed to have ended too quickly, almost as if the defendants' evidence was irrelevant.

#### Day six: Wednesday 26th January

With the prosecution having been completed and the defence witnesses rather hastily examined, it was now the job of the prosecutor to outline the reasoning of the laws being used to charge the defendants.

The charges were: causing explosions with the intent to endanger human life, possession of materials or devices designed to cause explosions. Combining the act of possession and causation created the offence of 'distinguished riot'.

He outlined what had happened in Genoa in 2001, and the expectation of trouble at the June 2003 EU summit in Thessaloniki. For Simon, he was satisfied that he had caused one single explosion with intent to endanger life (in the first trial it had been continuous explosions), that the possession of seven molotovs was proven by nine witnesses against him, and he could not believe that nine cops would all be lying. He concluded that he may well have been beaten, but these two charges combined created the third charge of distinguished riot.

After a break, five of the lawyers made their closing speeches in favour of their clients and as part of the broader picture that united all the cases.

#### Day seven: Monday 31st January

All four of the defendants are free. All the initial charges were dropped apart from 'distinguished defiance of authority', which was then reduced to 'minor defiance of authority'. It is a misdemeanour, carrying a six month suspended sentence. This was the best the juries could ever do, since they had to be charged of something, in order to justify the six months they had spent in prison back in 2003.

## COMMENT

## ABOUT FREEDOM

## ANGEL ALLEY

Once again apologies to our long-suffering subscribers as a combination of stationery supplier, lack of coordination and the heightened political activity distracting us has caused delays to the last few issues.

Back in the shop, January has been quite busy with the upsurge of revolutionary fervour off-setting the people's poverty due to the recession. Thanks to a generous comrade, we now have several hundred 'new' second-hand books. So if you haven't been in for a while now's a good time to pop in a pick up such gems as *Jersey Under the Jackboot* or *The Boys Book of Scotland Yard*, all for one pound. For our more discerning readers we now have copies of *Mark Stone: Secret Agent*. Sadly this is not an exposé of the well known undercover rozzler, but a badly written gay porn novel. All proceeds will go to buying a lie detector to identify future infiltrators!

Our latest art launch was on Saturday 5th Feb for the 'The Wine Presses of Luvah' with lots of Blake type activity of both a poetry and refreshment type going on. Keep looking at the website as we will be having some more exciting events soon.

## SUBSCRIPTIONS

This is issue is vol 72 no 03, so if the number above your name on the address label is 7203 or less, then your subscription is now due for renewal. There's a renewal form on page 16 of this issue or you can subscribe online at [freedompress.org.uk/news/subscribe](http://freedompress.org.uk/news/subscribe) or, if you don't want to worry in the future about remembering to renew your *Freedom* sub, ask us to send you a standing order form by emailing [subs@freedompress.org.uk](mailto:subs@freedompress.org.uk) or you can write to us at 'Subscriptions', Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX. Unfortunately our sub rates will be soon be increasing, so renew at the old rate now if you want to avoid paying the higher price.

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## NEXT ISSUE

The next issue will be dated 26th February 2011 and the last day to get copy to us for that issue will be Thursday 17th February. You can send your articles to us by email to [copy@freedompress.org.uk](mailto:copy@freedompress.org.uk) or by post addressed to 'The Editors', Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

## A sideways look

by SVARTFROSK

I recently saw an articulate working class man hold his own against Jeremy Paxman on *Newsnight*. He stated that no political party was prepared to stand up for the white working class and defended the rights of women and gays. This sounds promising, until you realise that the speaker was 'Tommy Robinson', the pseudonym of Stephen Yaxley-Lennon, the leader of the English Defence League.

He paints himself as an ordinary guy from Luton, from an Irish Catholic background, who got involved in politics after a handful of Islamists demonstrated at a homecoming parade of the Anglian Regiment in the town. This isn't the whole story, of course, as he was a 'family member' of the BNP and did time for assaulting a copper who tried to stop a domestic.

The EDL might claim it is not a far-right organisation, but it does look like one. Clearly, there is a gap between what they say they do and what they actually do in certain places, but let's give them the benefit of the doubt – they do after all have Jewish, Sikh and LGBT 'divisions'. There are, however, other reasons for disquiet over the EDL.

Firstly, let's look at what they are so worked up about – militant Islam. Most anarchists would agree that militant Islam is a bad thing. What are its effects, though? Bombing campaigns are one, but can these be reasonably stopped by groups like the EDL? Of course not. Other effects are demonstrations of support for the political programme of Islamism, such as the demonstration against the parading troops and calls for Sharia law. My own instinct as someone opposed to militarism is that protests against troop parades are not necessarily a bad thing, but I would want to make a distinction between the actions of the soldiers and those of the elites that send them off to war. Realistically it is also the case that the armed forces have a higher degree of support than almost every other British institution.

Sharia law, however, seems to be an irrational fear. Muslims made up about 2.7% of the British population at the last census

and by no means would all Muslims support Sharia. It is used in civil cases such as divorce and marital disputes by Muslims in some places in Britain. While I'm sure some cases heard under Sharia disadvantage women, it's not as if the same isn't true under British law. It's not about to be imposed on the rest of us.

EDL supporters talk about how the country is being taken over by Muslims, particularly Luton. How Muslims have so many more babies than whites, etc., etc. The 2001 census puts the Muslim population of Luton, the hotbed of Islamism, at 14.6%. I'm sure it's gone up since then, but it's nowhere near a majority. This approach also assumes that no young Muslim grows up to reject all or some of their parents' beliefs.

The chief problem with the EDL is one that they wouldn't see as a problem: its nationalist character. To us, nationalism is poison and is at the root of so many conflicts. It doesn't matter what nationality someone is, it is what they do. The EDL tacitly recognise this themselves and are happy to accept members from anywhere so long as they agree with the underlying politics. It raises a problem for us anarchists – how do you engage with a notion of Englishness?

Particularly one that thinks it is better than anywhere else. I'm not going to go into detail, but the first thing to say is there is nothing at all wrong with being English (or Welsh, Scottish, Irish etc.). There is something wrong when you think that makes you better than someone else; and there's certainly a problem for us if it means you are happy to side with the few remaining British bosses over your fellow workers. The EDL have done this several times, for example condemning the British Airways strike.

But there's also a problem for the left and the anarchist movement. We want to articulate ideas across the working class, yet find it difficult to engage with workers from unskilled backgrounds. We can reject the EDL's politics easily enough, but must recognise that their ideas need to be contested in the places they are found.



## Manchester march

On 29th January, Manchester saw a march organised by the Trades Union Congress (TUC) protesting about the services cuts and hikes in student fees. Too often the relationship between TUC chiefs and its rank and file has been like that of a prostitute and her pimp. She keeps handing over money but just gets more abused: the more concessions rank and file make, the less help comes from union bosses.

About 3,500 of us set off, leaving behind a huge stack of TUC placards with moderate slogans, suggesting that either the turn-out was disappointing or the demonstrators wanted more radical messages. Many young people were present, giving old hands cause for optimism. Compared with their counterparts in the 1960s and '70s, this new generation are much more broadly focused and better organised.

Speeches from the platform did nothing to meet my need for an inspiration transplant. Far more interesting were a group from Leeds, dressed as 'Poo-lice Insecurity', who welcomed participation in their miming and clowning.

Other 'officials' gave cause for concern. A fair number of men in pink fluorescent jackets were present. One of them told me they were working for a private security firm "to help the stewards" (paid for by the TUC). At one time trade unionists would have had more than enough volunteer stewards to escort a march from A to B. Today there is a national shortage of volunteers, yet the government wants lots of us to work for nothing as they proceed with the cuts.

Various free Trot-sheets were on offer with their false promises of revolution, reflecting the confusion between protest and resistance. The former is only a starting point. Small groups who know and trust each other will be discussing their next steps.

Martin G.

## Going through the courts

Being put through the Criminal Justice System is a annoying and frustrating process. The system is creaking with inefficiency overwhelmed by both volume of cases and procedural bureaucracy not to mention the general indifference to any members of the public caught up in the process. Here's a time frame based on a compilation of cases of people we know who have been charged with violent disorder, the most serious of the offences for which people have been arrested during last years demonstrations. While we've crammed in a lot of possible things that can happen, time wise it's typical, *not* a worst case example. We've left in lots of legal jargon because you will need to know it and it gives a flavour of what it feels like being left in the dark by the legal system.

**Day 1:** You are arrested. Taken to the cop shop. Held for 12 hours. Released on police

bail to come back in two months time.

**Two months later:** You've booked a ticket, arranged for somewhere to stay so you can answer bail in the morning when you get a letter from the cops saying they changed the date.

**Three months later:** This time the cops phoned your lawyer to say they've extended bail. However your solicitor has your old mobile and the letter to you is delayed in the post so you go to the police station for no reason.

**Five months later:** This time you are interviewed. Because of a hold up getting the investigating officer from another interview you are kept for nine hours. There are now only three hours left for the police to hold you without a superintendent's authorisation.

**Seven months later:** You get to the police station on time, wait two hours while the cops say they won't book you in cos they're awaiting guidance from the CPS (Crown Prosecution Service). You're told to come back next month.

**Eight months later:** You are charged with section two of the Public Order Act and given a date to appear at a magistrates court.

**Nine months later:** You turn up at court, hang around for two hours while another case over-runs. Eventually you get into court and the only you do is thing confirm your name. The District Judge declines jurisdiction. Your lawyer tells you they will ask for an 'old style committal hearing'.

**Ten months later:** Committal hearing at the Magistrates Court. You are now given a date to attend the Crown Court.

**Eleven months later:** First appearance at the Crown Court. Again all you have to do is confirm your name. A date is set for a case management hearing.

**Twelve months later:** Further disclosure arrives from the CPS. You now have two boxes of evidence containing 352 witness

statements and 4810 exhibits.

**Thirteen months later:** At the case management hearing. The CPS suggests that defendants in the case ask for a Goodyear indication as to what sentence they would get from the trial judge. You discuss the pros and cons with your brief and decide not to.

**Fourteen months later:** Your legal team make an application to dismiss on grounds on insufficient evidence of identity. The judge rules against you.

**Fifteen months later:** You submit your defence case statement and ask for secondary disclosure on covert police operations on the day of the demo. The CPS object and the Judge grants Public Interest Immunity.

**Sixteen months later:** Your solicitor asks the High Court for a Judicial Review of the Trial Judge's ruling on secondary disclosure. The application is refused as "on even the most robust view of the alleged article 8 breach could a competent tribunal find the Judge's ruling Wendsbury unreasonable."

**Seventeen months later:** Your warned date arrives but two barristers in the case are unavailable. Keep waiting 18 Months. You are told on Friday that there is room for your case next week.

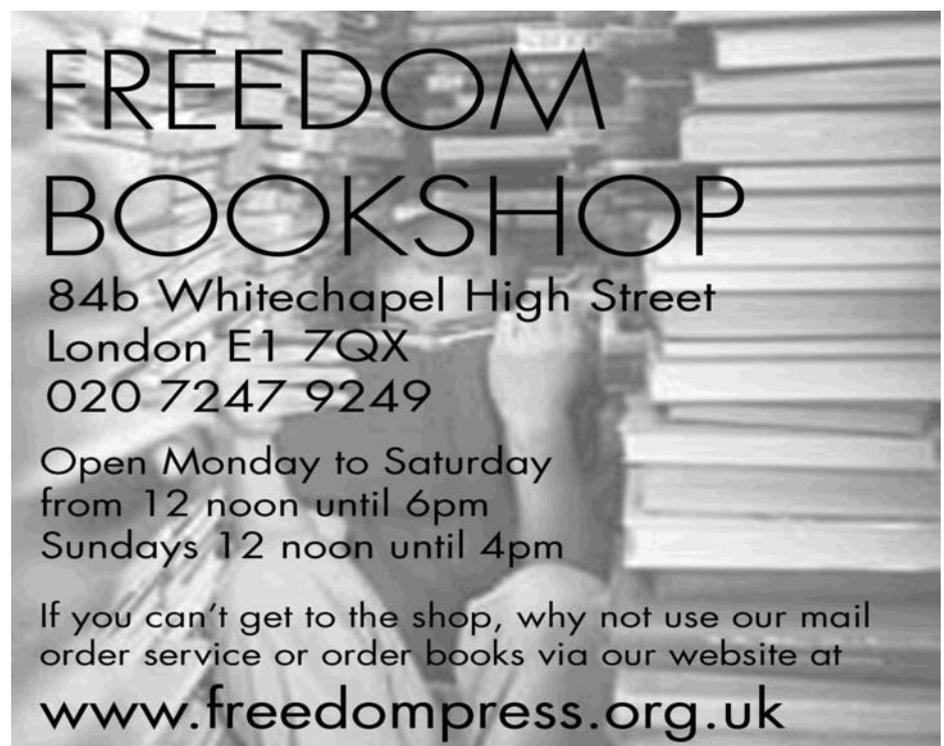
**Trial starts:** Monday, three of you end up on trial together because you're in the same location on the day of the demo. The trial takes two weeks.

**Guilty:** You get two years six months. You spend 13 months inside before being released on a tag for two months.

**Not Guilty:** You get back the cost of your fares to and from court. You sue the cops for assault, false imprisonment and malicious prosecution. Two years later you get £15,000 in an out of court settlement from the Met.

**Hung Jury:** Prosecution apply for a retrial in which is provisionally listed for next year.

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## GETTING ACTIVE

### PRISON NEWS

Whilst the spotlight of the world's media has been trained on the events on the streets of Egypt's major cities, very little attention had been paid to what has been taking place in the country's overcrowded prisons. True, the odd passing reference to prison escapes has surfaced, but only as part of the prevailing media narrative surrounding the appearance of vigilantes in the middle class districts, supposedly armed to prevent the looting their ill-gotten gains by these newly liberated criminals, rather than against the unemployed masses amongst the anti-Mubarak protests already on the streets seeking retribution against their better-off neighbours who have done very nicely out of Mubarak, thank you.

Another piece of received wisdom that the media is currently peddling is the claim that most of those killed by the security forces have been the unruly protestors out on the streets, shot by the notorious black-clad interior ministry Central Security Forces rather than by the army, who, it is stated, have been standing passively on the sidelines. Yet, many of those who have been killed in the protests in and around Egypt's numerous prisons have died at the hands of the army in support of prison guards trying to prevent mass breakouts.

The latest figures from the Interior Ministry state that more than 17,000 Egyptian prisoners escaped in the first week of the protests. Most these escapes were triggered on the night of Friday 28th when Mubarak, apparently behind the back of the Minister of Interior Habib al-Adly, gave the order for the army to deploy on the streets as al-Adly's troops were not getting the job of suppressing the crowds done. According to the Wall Street Journal, an angry al-Adly in response called all Interior Ministry police off the streets and told the country's prison guards to go home. Prisoners' families and protesters took the opportunity to raid prisons across the country, setting free prisoners and looting the jails for food and arms.

That night saw breakouts from Alexandria and Aswan prisons. Five thousand prisoners fled El Fayoum prison, south west of Cairo, killing the prison governor, and at Wadi Natroun, north west of Cairo several thousand prisoners were released by locals. Police and soldiers held off rioters trying to break into Toura prison in Cairo, killing dozens of prisoners and protestors alike and leaving the road outside littered with corpses.

The following day gangs of armed men, in an apparently co-ordinated series of attacks, raided at least four jails, freeing dozens of Muslim Brotherhood prisoners arrested in a mass round-up just days before. And at Abu Za'abal jail there was a six-hour gun battle as guards tried to fight off a crowd who used a bulldozer to free their imprisoned relatives. They left the prison a looted, burnt-out hulk.



### Report on the first national student assembly

If the National Assembly on Education, organised by the Education Activist Network, at London School of Economics, on 30th January is anything to go by, then the escalation of the 'movement' that everybody is hoping for might still be a way off. There were only about a hundred people, including student occupiers from Kent, Cambridge, Brighton, Sheffield, Manchester and London, not the 800 expected.

Having said that, I was glad at the way it was conducted, and by its content. It began with a feedback from different university occupations. We learnt, for example, that the Kent occupiers have been slapped with a charge of £3,000 for 'damages'. There was serious talk about launching a second wave of occupations even as they recognised that some were totally futile and ended in fiascos. People agreed that other, similar methods of protest such as sit-ins should be adopted and encouraged. Students spoke of targeting Vice Chancellors in a sustained and organised way.

A new idea was of a 'student strike' (I'm not sure how exactly that's different from a walk-out) in conjunction with a lecturers' strike. UCU will be balloting for strike this month and it was agreed that different unions like UNISON should team up for a synchronised strike. From what students were saying it was clear that there was general dissatisfaction with mere marches, and the best thing to do was to hold junctions and move in civic swarms (or more simply, flash mobs). People made a distinction between mere protest and resistance, and asserted that what we need now is resistance. There was more talk of promoting civil disobedience.

March 26th was, predictably, a hot topic and motion was passed to organise an 'education block' on the TUC march. There

was much lively debate on whether general strikes are effective, but the majority agreed that all means need to be exhausted before we aim higher. The plan is still to get the TUC to call a strike on the 26th. Proposals were made and accepted that local student-worker committees should be established, with university spaces used to hold open meetings.

The atmosphere was doubly invigorated by the presence of a Tunisian and an Egyptian activist, who spoke of their experiences in their respective countries. After the Tunisian activist spoke the applause were massive and went on for a whole minute or two. An Italian student declared solidarity and said that on the 29th there was an Italian students' contingent on the march, drawing warm cheers once again. He also proposed that the week around 29th should be a European day of action, which was enthusiastically received.

What does bother me, though, is that too narrow a focus on 'practical tactics and actions' might allow a certain ideology (leftist) to dominate 'the movement' subconsciously and/or unquestioningly – which is what I think is happening right now with EAN's Assemblies. As far as I can observe, anarchist and anti-authoritarian voices within are the only ones who can raise the issue of where the whole thing is headed, and that bringing Labour back to power after defeating the Tories isn't revolution but regression. What we need now is to prepare people not for emergency elections but to reject Parliament altogether, and to see if alternative grassroots structures can be built to counter whatever happens at the top. The only way to do that is to take a step back and spare some time to debate what our politics are and should be. But I'm afraid that the increasingly aggressive Left within EAN will not let that happen. Either we need an alternative to EAN or more anti-authoritarians and autonomists need to participate with EAN to neutralise the left.

London student

# Gypsy life, gypsy tears

## A movement of persecution and survival

In the UK, gypsies so-called are recognised as coming from two separate and distinct ethnic origins, the Irish travellers (known as either Pavee or Minceir) and the Romani whose beginnings are traced back from North India around a thousand years ago, migrating predominantly across Eastern Europe. Each have their own unique histories, ancestry, culture, languages and customs, the common feature being their traditional nomadic lifestyle. Gypsy is the term most commonly used to describe nomadic peoples regardless of their backgrounds.

The origins of the Irish traveller community remains open to debate. Certainly there is evidence that points to the existence of nomadic groups in Ireland as early as the fifth century AD and by the twelfth century the name Tynkler or Tynker is said to have been given to a group of nomads who had maintained a separate identity, social organisation and dialect. Parish records from 1505 show that Irish travellers were already living in Scotland, with many more documents showing their presence in England after 1514. By 1530 gypsies were forbidden to enter the country under Henry VIII, and subject to expulsion, and by 1554 being an immigrant gypsy was punishable by death, as was being found in the company of, or associating with, gypsies. This is thought to be the only time that fraternising with an ethnic community has been punishable by death.

The history of gypsy communities one of constant exclusion and persecution, being useful scapegoats for state-ordered societies. Groups of travellers began arriving in Europe as far back as the 1400s, claiming to be from 'Little Egypt' (gypsy being a corruption of Egyptian, hence the name). Similar groups arrived throughout the century in most of the countries of Central and Western Europe. They are recorded in Italy, France, Germany and Hungary, roaming the continent, living the nomadic life, carrying on their trades as horse dealers, musicians and metal workers. In parts of Central Europe they were forced into bondage, and in Romania made to live as chattel slaves – a situation which did not change until they gained their freedom in 1856.

A second wave of Roma spread across Europe after slavery was abolished in the second half of the nineteenth century. And a third followed the collapse of Eastern Europe's 'communist' industry and welfare system.

In the 1930s, the Nazis had begun shunting gypsies into concentration camps, the prelude to 'the Devouring', the mass extermination of European Roma and Sinti by Hitler's regime. How many died is still argued over (anywhere between 200,000 and 500,000)



Horse-drawn travellers in Highworth, Wiltshire.

but historic memories of what happened has never made life any easier.

In the UK, being a traveller remains a precarious and marginalised state of being. As far back as 1885 attempts were made, unsuccessfully, to introduce several Moveable Dwellings bills in Parliament to regulate gypsy life and restrict their movement. In 1936 we saw the first of the scrap metals laws, attacking travellers' main source of economic independence.

In 1959, specifically 'gypsy' (i.e. Roma and Irish travellers) park-ups were made illegal with the introduction of Highway and Byways Act, effectively criminalising the travelling life overnight as families were not allowed to stop on the side of the road. A year later Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act displaced many more travellers since farmers could no longer allow them to stay on their land, being eligible for fines if they ran a site without a valid licence. By 1968 Councils were obliged to provide sites, with the introduction of the Caravan Sites Act, but many authorities flouted the law and did not build the sites that were needed. But both strategies were aimed at forcing travellers off the road.

In the early 1990s, Council obligation was abolished, and travellers were told to buy their own sites. Many initially welcomed this, but 90% of planning permission applications were turned down – though buying land continues to be their main survival strategy. Refusing to assimilate into mainstream society is often used by authorities to actively and legally discriminate against travellers.

The Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 swept the Caravan Sites Act away, criminalising further the travellers way of life. The legalisation was explicitly aimed at suppressing the activities of 'alternative' lifestyles including squatting, political protest, football fan culture, hunt sabbing and the free party and rave scene, and there was much crossover with travellers such as increased police powers for evictions from land and the right to impound vehicles if there were more than six. The anti-Criminal Justice campaign was a mass social movement.

Councils continue to fork out huge sums to carry out evictions, at times seizing the land "to pay for said eviction". Officially £100m million of public money spent on anti-traveller action in the past decade. The result of these evictions is that the population at Dale Farm, now the biggest traveller site in Europe, has been growing with refugees coming from trashed sites at Meadowlands (Chelmsford), Bulkington (Nuneaton) and many smaller park-ups.

Dale Farm, under siege for the past ten years, is calling for help to prevent their imminent final eviction. Join the mailing list, and prepare groups to come down to Dale Farm, to spend a night at Camp Constant when the long eviction operation, expected to last three weeks, kicks off in March or April (Basildon council has vowed to have cleared all 'illegals' by the 8th May local elections).

Dale Farm Solidarity Traveller Support Network  
<http://dalefarm.wordpress.com/>  
 Contact: [dale.farm@btinternet.com](mailto:dale.farm@btinternet.com)

## REVIEWS

## WHAT'S ON

## FEBRUARY

■ **12th** The Story of the Leytonstone Arts Trail with speaker Frances Bowman, a News From Nowhere Club event at The Epicentre, West Street, Leytonstone, London E11 4LJ, 7.30pm buffet (bring something if you can), 8pm talk and discussion, for details call 020 8555 5248 or see [newsfromnowhereclub.org](http://newsfromnowhereclub.org).

■ **19th** Clive Bloom will be discussing attempts to overthrow the government and the monarchy from the 1790s to the present day, as told in his new book *Restless Revolutionaries*, at Housmans Bookshop, 5 Caledonian Road, London N1 9DX at 7pm, admission £3 (redeemable against any purchase), contact 020 7837 4473, [nik@housmans.com](mailto:nik@housmans.com) or see [housmans.com](http://housmans.com) for details.

## MARCH

■ **12th** Countercultural Connections with speaker/performer Michael Horovitz, a News From Nowhere Club event at The Epicentre, West Street, Leytonstone, London E11 4LJ, 7.30pm buffet (bring something if you can), 8pm talk and discussion, for details call 020 8555 5248 or see [newsfromnowhereclub.org](http://newsfromnowhereclub.org).

■ **12th** Mothers march for everyone's survival and welfare: end cuts, poverty and discrimination, organised by Global Women's Strike, assemble Trafalgar Square (north side) London at 12 noon, women and men, young and old – bring your demands to the march, for details email [gws@globalwomenstrike.net](mailto:gws@globalwomenstrike.net), call 020 7482 2496, join GWS on Facebook and on [www.twitter.com/WomenStrike](http://www.twitter.com/WomenStrike) or see [www.globalwomenstrike.net](http://www.globalwomenstrike.net).

## APRIL

■ **1st to 3rd** Zagreb's Seventh Anarchist Bookfair at Galerija Nova, Teslina 7, Zagreb, for more information or to book a stall see [www.ask-zagreb.org](http://www.ask-zagreb.org) or e-mail [anarhisticki.sajam.knjiga@gmail.com](mailto:anarhisticki.sajam.knjiga@gmail.com)

■ **9th** Guerrilla Gardening with speaker Richard Reynolds (the founder of [guerrillagardening.org](http://guerrillagardening.org)), a News From Nowhere Club event at The Epicentre, West Street, Leytonstone, London E11 4LJ, 7.30pm buffet, 8pm talk and discussion, for details call 020 8555 5248 or see [newsfromnowhereclub.org](http://newsfromnowhereclub.org).

## MAY

■ **7th** Bristol anarchist bookfair 2011 – in the tradition of May Day, resistance and alternatives to cuts, an anarchist antidote to a week of royal weddings, local elections and dodgy referendums, and more cuts, offering all things anarchist with stalls, meetings, films, vegan café, kids space and more, plus an after party nearby as well, at Hamilton House, 80 Stokes Croft, Bristol BS1 3QY from 10.30am to 6.30pm, see <http://www.bristolanarchistbookfair.org> for details.

## TELEVISION

## Accused

by Jimmy McGovern

Returning to tortured Catholic roots, Jimmy McGovern's new television tragedies – on primetime BBC1 at the end of last year – tackle moral dilemmas and the wages of sin from the perspectives of six defendants awaiting criminal trial verdicts. As is this writer's wont, emphasis rests on the restricted room to manoeuvre available to those lacking any kind of fortune, magnifying the consequences of mistakes, impulsive responses and personal weaknesses complicated by collusion, denial and efforts to maintain face and respectability against a backdrop of official hostility and disinclination to understand, let alone forgive, trespasses against complacencies of law and order. Nevertheless *Accused's* paradigm refreshingly refuses clichés of police procedurals and courtroom dramas, dissecting – in the time it typically takes to travel from cell to dock – the circumstances leading to the protagonists' appearances there.

A-list casts deliver predictably sharp scripts in five lean mean narratives describing everyday domestic dysfunctions exacerbated by cruel happenstance, unwise choices and desperate or hysterical overreactions – with realistically unsympathetic central characters creditably eschewing the lazy milking of sentimentality. The second episode, in contrast, courted broader resonance – with a squaddie in Afghanistan honourably killing the psychopathic officer who persecuted his mate to suicide – thus preventing himself and others suffering the same fate. A media kerfuffle followed when a former army chief complained that such behaviour could never conceivably occur in 'our' professional military (proving yet again to the rank and file what clueless plonkers their brass are). Meanwhile the opening plot had already set an unfortunate tone thanks to a preponderance of outrageous melodramatic contrivances mortally wounding credibility, and such a thorough asshole of an antihero that it was difficult to imagine 'there but for the grace of god go I'.

## The Criminal Injustice System

With separate stories polished by McGovern as in *The Street* (BBC1, 2006–9; reviewed in *Freedom*, 15th March 2008 and 12th September 2009), *Accused* recalls his *Cracker* (ITV, 1993–5) in twisting crime fiction

## QUIZ ANSWERS

1. Because journalist Toby Young and his pet West London Free School project want it. The Tories rattle on about fairness, but in reality the sharp-elbowed chattering classes always get what they want, especially if it is for one of their flagship projects.
2. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds was formed after the egret was effectively wiped out in Britain by demand



conventions. There, rather than merely mapping brushes with the law, the unequivocal villains were nailed by the writer's omnisciently humble alter ego – Robbie Coltrane's flawed genius police psychologist empathising with gamuts of damaged, inadequate, and usually downright awful proletarian masculinity. But, not being seriously evil racist murderers, misogynist serial killers or the like, the present bunch simply appear depressingly unlucky, surprisingly naïve, mundanely stupid, and often so infuriatingly self-righteous as to invite condemnation on those grounds alone. Real-world parallels seem scarcely more fascinating than deficits of commonsense, social support, and competent briefs – the latter with some currency as legal aid disappears under the Tories, but hardly doing justice to working-class collective savvy about police and judicial 'fairness'. Equally, the two (female) defendants who get off – thanks to perverse jury and Keystone Cops stitch-up respectively – may please the crowds, but contradict generally higher conviction rates and heavier sentences for lesser offences committed by women. Otherwise, that viewers almost seem encouraged – presumably inadvertently – to approximate conservative 'flog 'em, hang 'em' attitudes implies that the road to representational hell may be paved with good social-realist intentions.

[www.tomjennings.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk](http://www.tomjennings.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk)  
<http://libcom.org/blog/4271>

*Accused* will be released on DVD in October.

- for plumes for hats.
3. McCartney's owners, the Gucci Group, threatened the intern with legal action, and the site it was hosted on; and anyone who had tweeted about it. Working fourteen hours a day for no pay and abuse from management – don't do it kids!
4. Bouverie Street, just off Fleet Street.

# Shelter for all

Tom Jennings reports on the eventful life and death of an outstanding work of anonymous, autonomous public art

*Shelter's* initial manifestation was at Sandham on the remote northern shore of Lindisfarne, a Northumberland tidal island, in the foot-and-mouth summer of 2001 with coastal clean-up operations suspended by the authorities. Enter artist Sally Madge\* who, in her weekend leisure persona merely messing around on the beach, fashioned an excess of driftwood, plastic, rope and rubbish into an impressive little shack delighting passersby and reinstating the relatively pristine aspect of the vista. Sadly, the National Nature Reserve manager ordered its demolition, citing complaints of an 'eyesore' – ironic, since wardens admitted that the public's responses were infinitely more complimentary than those in the official wildlife hide round the corner. Doubtless concerned about tacitly legitimising a precedent, that such transparent dishonesty was deemed expedient speaks volumes about official morality, discourses of conservation, and bureaucratic anxieties about control and participation.

Thereafter begun in autumn 2002 – similarly whimsically, with no planning or permission – *Shelter* proper was a small drystone hut on the rocks even further from the village and tourist zones. Without legal impediment (despite murmuring about health and safety), it withstood eight years of batterings from winter storms, spring tides, malevolent godbotherers, and exuberant celebrants of all ages before being systematically destroyed by person or persons unknown last October. Having become increasingly elaborate and substantial, with roof, window and wooden benches plus all manner of weird and wonderful internal décor, it remained discreetly merged into the surroundings. Great renown, respect, love and affection accrued from near, far and worldwide, by word-of-mouth but also on the internet – demonstrated concretely by "the care, attention and appreciation lavished upon it by locals and visitors, with various additions, modifications and ornamentations ... [and] several comments books filled with notes, poems and sketches. A sense of community, creativity and mutuality seems to have developed completely outside of the usual artificial frameworks of ownership, egos and institutions" (in 2007 reply from hutstory.co.uk to those emailing their own photographs).

Built purely for personal pleasure, without pretensions to status or seriousness, the artist retrospectively designated the shelter a "public artwork, site specific installation, museum", a:



Sally Madge, *Shelter*, 2002–2010

"space for reverie, play, pilgrimage, parties, sleeping and birdwatching. Over time the interior filled with a bricolage of flotsam, found objects, handmade artefacts and personal mementos ... Originally an anonymous, playful, unofficial artwork, the hut gradually became a collaborative venture with all those taking part assuming an integral role in its development. The boundaries between artist/maker and visitor/spectator became not only blurred but interchangeable. I regularly tidied, edited and rearranged the contents – and so did others, often not to my liking. The shelter became a locus for ongoing symbolic engagement between strangers (sometimes humorous, frequently poignant, occasionally unpleasant), and I found myself disoriented as well as intrigued by the fact that ownership and provenance had become such a moveable feast ... [marked by] informal, spontaneous and unmediated exchanges of ideas and practices" (Sally Madge, 'Serious Play', *Garageland* magazine, No. 11, 2011, page 67).

Clearly, while some might balk at recuperation into Fine Art language of their contributions, rather more was involved here than idle, inconsequential, seaside playtime.

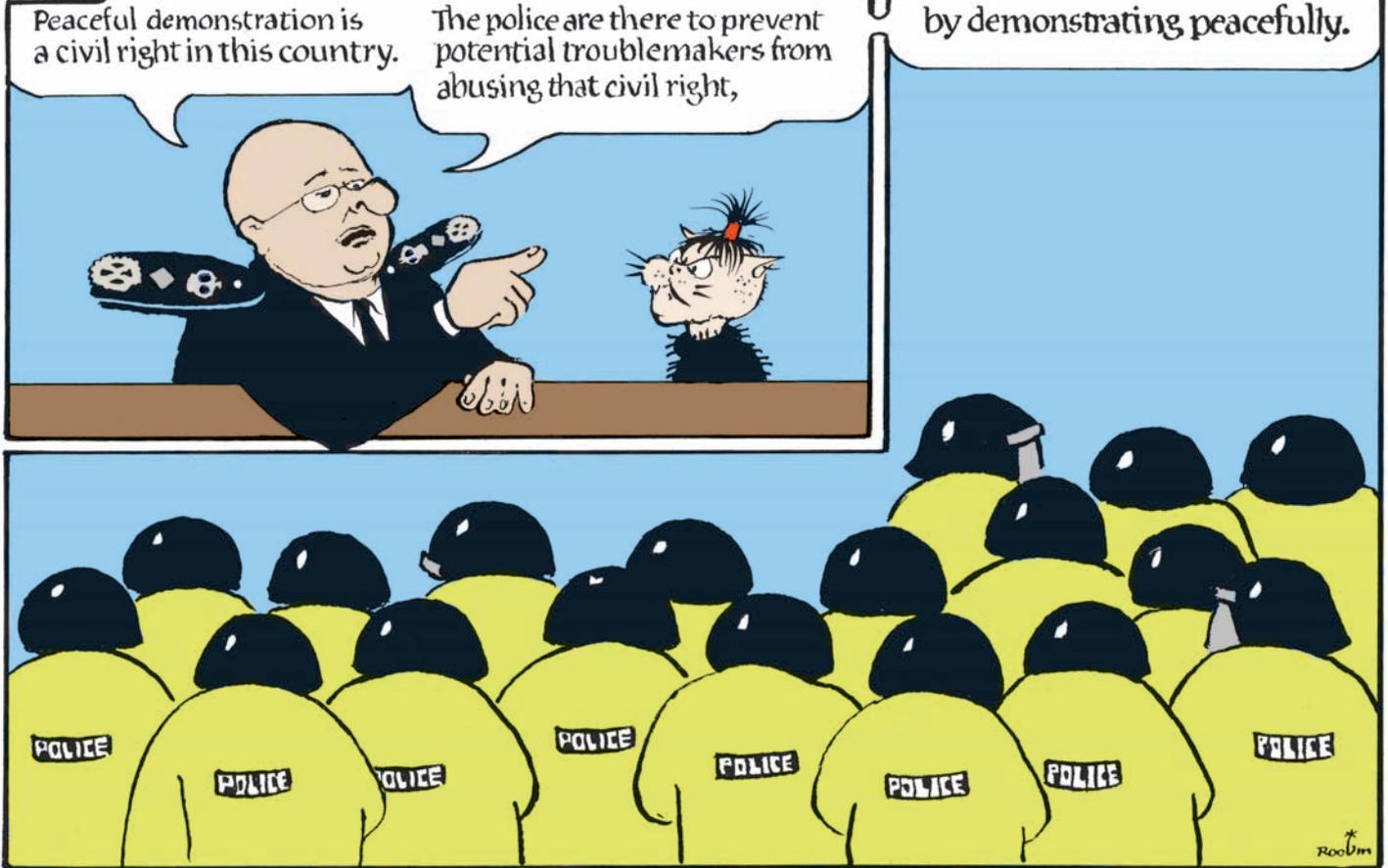
## Art in ruins

Plausible references for *Shelter's* high cultural credentials include landscape art, characteristically flattering grandiose ownership and mastery of geography, or reinforcing pastoral nostalgia or regional or national identity; and modern environmental art's ecological sensibilities privileging formal purity while acknowledging human agency. The sublime and picturesque, likewise, readily assimilate into heritage and tourist consumerism; in this case evoking hermit dwellings and caves as well as the 'Holy Island' Christian history portfolio – whereas, despite episodic evangelical colonisations, the hut remained resolutely secular. Comparable aesthetic

domination appears in state-sanctioned Public Art, suffered resignedly by citizens after imperial imposition by national or local government (see 'our' *Angel of the North*, rejected by half of Europe before being dumped in Gateshead). But again, hierarchical organisation is refused here – as are the patronising pitfalls of 'community art' and contemporary PC incarnations like 'socially-engaged practice' or 'relational' art, where professional moralisers purge creative deficits from ignorant masses.

Conversely, avant garde aspirations merge artistic activity with everyday life – as opposed to artificial segregation when supplicants consume spectacles of marketised genius, recapitulating capitalism's constitutive alienations. Whereas from Dada, surrealism, situationism and Fluxus onwards, radical artists honour sensuality's subversive potential, emphasising mundane human origins in children's play, unconscious and bodily experience, and collective resistance to oppression. Sally Madge's practice certainly qualifies as normal routine, evidenced in many small works following engagement with Lindisfarne. Some have been exhibited – multiples *Holy Shit* (necklaces of baked rabbit shit) and *Holy Smoke* (finger pots made of clay from the cliffs, fired on the beach); short animation *Flotsam Fandango* (featuring wood and bone puppets) – and countless others furnished the hut: drawings and paintings on pebbles and driftwood, sculptures of organic detritus like feathers and burrs, coloured plastic melted and welded together, fishing line and broken lobsterpots, abandoned toys and sundry interestingly deployable jetsam. A lowbrow archaeology of the island, natural and effluent, sacred and profane, thus coalesced in magical juxtaposition – which, crucially, was unconditionally available for anyone to shape.

And authorial integrity comprehensively eroded, since so many partook of equal



## Review

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opportunities to reconfigure the topography. Furthermore, twentieth century conceits posit the artist imagining a 'concept' and pronouncing it 'art' – but here there was no originary revelation, just habitual creation. Only subsequent intrusion into public discourse prompts questions of artistic privilege; otherwise, perhaps, we have a glorified sandcastle. Even then, the history of ordinary folk's workaday passage and holiday enjoyment associated with beaches cross-fertilises with traditions of workers' self-build housing, rural craftiness, and the flouting of restrictions on the use of space. So action against enclosures of the commons throughout the centuries, not to mention ramblers' campaigns

for access and contemporary guerilla and graffiti art, also come to mind. The performative elements of *Shelter* therefore seem key, along with its communal ethos and the kinds and sources of value felt and ascribed. Indeed, Sally Madge's intention now is to present visual archives of the project, so that a fullest possible account of this constellation of passionate effort properly enters posterity – and in a final humble gesture, overcoming sadness at its gratuitous destruction, she rescued what remained of the contents, rendered the site safe, and left the foundations standing for further intervention.

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<http://libcom.org/blog/4271>

\* See the libcom website for other reviews of this artist's work.

## THE QUIZ

1. Why can't Tory Hammersmith & Fulham Council let a local special school use the Bryony Centre, a building it had been promised?
2. What organisation with over a million members can trace its origins to disquiet at the effects of the hat trade?
3. What happened when an unpaid intern posted a blog saying that "I had a horrible experience working for Stella McCartney"?
4. On which London street would you have addressed a letter to the editor of *Freedom* in 1888 and the *News of the World* up until 1985?

Answers on page 14

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