

BRISTOL BURNING

Stokes Croft 2, Police 0, as the West Country hots up

Rioting in the Stokes Croft area of Bristol erupted for a second time as radicals and locals came out onto the streets to confront police as tensions once again reached boiling point in the area. If the first riot on 21st April was a spontaneous response to police over-reaction to an attempted eviction and intimidation then the second the following week was the product of an increasing build up of anger and resentment running through the community as a whole.

According to Bristol Anarchist Federation, on the evening of Thursday 21st April after a small demonstration was forcibly moved from outside the Tesco superstore the police attempted to raid the long running squat Telepathic Heights acting on 'intelligence' that the occupants of were making petrol bombs to attack Tesco. Hundreds of people came out to defend the building, which stands directly opposite the site of the new Tesco Express and forms part of the local opposition to the supermarket chain. What followed was a night of intense confrontations with the police, streets were barricaded, wheelie bins being set on fire, police vehicles attacked, and the Tesco branch itself was all but destroyed.

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LENS CAP NEWCASTLE MAYDAY



The Anarchist Bloc was headed up by a massive 'Reclaim May Day – Solidarity is Strength' banner held by members of the newly-formed Northeast Anarchist Group, and there were also many black and red & black flags and a variety of other banners and placards. Northeast Anarchist Group also distributed leaflets to shoppers and passers-by along the march route.

NOT THE ROYAL WEDDING PARTY

The squatted Social Centre Plus in Deptford South London celebrated its successful resistance to an attempted eviction by having an anti-monarchy street party the day of the royal wedding. Some 500 people turned up to the roof party which was held throughout the day with music, food and dancing followed by an evening of riotous stand up comedy.

The social centre was set up by members of South London Solidarity Federation amongst others and defines itself as 'public space for members of the local community to share' as well as acting as a hub for local opposition to the anti-cuts programme.

Having heard about the police raids on other squatted social centres in London (see page 4 of this issue), they issued a statement in support of those arrested, calling the raids

“a wave of repression against the rapidly growing anti-cuts movement in the city” and offering solidarity, particularly to the Ratsar with whom they have close links. They go on to state, “We consider the British state’s actions – from charging Alfie Meadows (who received brain injuries from a police baton at a student demonstration), to using the military to silence dissenters at Friday’s ceremony – to be a sign of how quickly its ‘democratic’ facade can fall when faced with a mass movement against the cuts.”

Social Centre Plus is part a growing network of actively political bases, which also include including student groups, campaign groups and anarchist groups, coalescing around the militant opposition to the government’s imposed ‘austerity measures’.

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NEWS

NEWS IN BRIEF

DUNDEE: More than 300 council workers in Dundee staged a wildcat strike in support of fellow workers on temporary contracts. The decision to down tools was taken at a mass meeting as workers walked out in protest at changes to the way trades staff, including joiners and plumbers, are employed. Hundreds of workers walked out of the Contract Services main depot in Clepington Road sparked after the council refused to take on a roofer and a blacksmith on a permanent contract after working on a temporary basis for more than two years.

EDUCATION: Not a single university will have its fees re-evaluated by the government body charged with approving them. Under the rules, the Office for Fair Access (Offa) can ban universities from charging more than £6,000 if they do not outline a plan to increase the number of poorer students. It has also emerged that Offa has never punished a university for failing to meet its access targets since it was established in 2004. For the year 2008–09, the most recent figures available, 26 institutions did not meet the aims of their access agreements.

SALFORD: The Working Class Movement Library, the only one of its kind in the country, is facing massive cuts by Salford City Council. The unique institution documents the history of working class life with a collection of over 35,000 books and pamphlets, plus flags, banners, photos, records of the political, industrial, social and cultural institutions of the working class covering such diverse themes as the Spanish Civil War, Salford gangs, the Chartist movement and the miners strikes and the industry's local history.

SOCIAL MEDIA: Facebook, the popular social networking site, has deleted many political groups from its website without warning or permission. Pages hosted by Bristol Anarchist Bookfair, North London Solidarity Federation, York Anarchists as well as many anti-cuts and student occupation pages have all disappeared. Overall some 50 political sites were wiped from Facebook leaving those unable to access their accounts or post messages. The fact it was done over the period of the royal wedding suggests there someone somewhere making very big political decisions at Facebook.

TRADE UNIONS: Yunus Bakhsh, the high profile nurse and activist who was unlawfully sacked for trade union activities, has finally won his case at an employment tribunal who ordered his former employers to reinstate him compensate him for lost earnings, and pay an undisclosed penalty for discriminating against him. Bosses at Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Trust originally suspended and then dismissed Mr Bakhsh after they claim to have received anonymous complaints against him.

LENS CAP LET'S GET READY TO RUMBLE



Bristol's very own Kebele social centre, the bedrock of political activity in the city for the last five years, isn't afraid to show its politics off to the world. It houses such groups as Bristol ABC, No Borders, Rising Tide and the Anarchist Bookfair collective. The Kebele sound crew are hosting the bookfair after party on 7th May, so should be a good 'un.

What's it all about, Alfie?

As predicted in this organ (issue 7207, dated 9th April, page 4) the rozzers are rounding up all and sundry (you can catch up with the latest on our website). Meanwhile, they are still on the case of people who protested last year. On 9th December Alfie Meadows got a bop on the head from the cops and woke up with not just the birds and stars flying round his head but in need of life-saving brain surgery (pictured below). However, he may have had an even bigger shock last week when he found out he was being charged with violent disorder. Traditionally it's better to get a kicking than a nicking, but to come within an ace of death and still be facing a stiff jail term takes the biscuit. Lucky for Ian Tomlinson that the cops killed him or he'd be up for GBH.

In total, on 26th and 27th April, 20 people answered police bail for the 9th December demo. Fourteen have been charged with violent disorder, one with affray, one with criminal damage, while four teenagers got 'final warnings' for violent disorder. By the time you read this it is certain many more will have been added. The 26th March investigation



has identified 74 suspects beyond the total of 201 arrested on the day.

The four student demonstrations in London have resulted in 366 arrests so far, 153 of these were for breach of the peace and there are now lots of cases coming to court. Sneakily the CPS are sending the crown court cases to Kingston in the hope of getting middle class juries more likely to convict 'scruffy lefties'. As to the Royal wedding, the cops arrested 55 people (including the usual drunks and pickpockets). However 37 were released without charge. Again 23 were for breach of the peace (which isn't even a criminal offence). After Stokes Croft, Avon & Somerset Police have issued pictures of 50 people they want. So far there have been 30 arrests, including one for attempted murder of a police officer. Obviously what the cops arrest for and what the CPS will charge are not the same thing, but it looks like a tough time ahead for activists all over.

These comrades need our support. While ensuring they get good solicitors with expertise in protest law is important, we also need to have people to go to court cases, meet people and show solidarity. You don't need great knowledge of the law to do this, but being able to explain what happens in court is very useful. If you would like to get involved in court support contact the Legal Defence and Monitoring Group.

For more information about the Legal Defence and Monitoring Group see www.ldmg.org.uk or contact LDMG at BM Box HAVEN, London, WC1N 3XX, email ldmgmail@yahoo.co.uk



Edinburgh Coalition Against Poverty protest at A4e's Edinburgh offices at Earl Grey Street.

Claimants win against bullying A4e

Campaigners intervene to stop work scheme giants from punishing claimant

Edinburgh Coalition Against Poverty (ECAP), the grassroots organisation set up by people on benefits and low incomes, have just won a significant victory against the New Deal giants, after they intervened to support a claimant who, despite threats and benefit suspension, stood up against A4e bullying tactics for over a year.

A4e is multinational company that makes millions from the taxpayer by running back-to-work schemes for benefit claimants on behalf of the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) and has a notorious reputation for bullying and intimidating those it is paid to help. One of their tactics is to deny unemployed people the right to be accompanied by the representative of their choice when they attend the company's compulsory workfare schemes.

This has been successfully challenged and the DWP has now ruled against A4e in four cases where the company sought to sanction a claimant because they took a rep from Edinburgh Claimants, affiliated to ECAP, to a meeting.

Previously unemployed ex-miner Peter had been accompanied by Edinburgh Claimants reps to interviews at A4e as a precaution after A4e falsely accused him of photocopying material not related to his job search and threatened to have his benefits stopped. On three separate occasions A4e managers phoned the police to evict Peter and his rep from their Earl Grey Street office. Managers then applied to the DWP to get Peter's Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) suspended as punishment. At one stage he lost six weeks benefits and was told he would be without benefits for an additional six months.

ECAP took the case to DWP and demanded that claimants should have the same rights when attending A4e as he would at the Jobcentre – where the right to be accompanied by the rep of their choice is now recognised

by the DWP Chief Executive's office. To reinforce their demands they regularly demonstrated inside and outside A4e's premises, distributing leaflets highlighting the situation and encouraging other claimants to stand up for their rights.

Eventually, in March 2011, the DWP ruled in favour of Peter who must now be repaid all the JSA he has lost, apart from the original two weeks sanction, which is going to an appeal hearing. Further they have ruled against A4e's applications for sanctions in the three cases they submitted in 2011. All four cases involved appointments which A4e refused to hold in the presence of Edinburgh Claimants reps.

ECAP commented after their victory "We should all take great heart from the courageous stand taken by Peter. Work-for-your-benefits schemes were developed enthusiastically by the last Labour Government and are now being pushed forward and refined by the ConDems. We need solidarity between waged and unwaged to fight the vicious attacks the state is making on us all."

Bristol burning

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Telepathic Heights, a squatted three-storey building covered in graffiti murals and stands on the Cheltenham Road, has become the frontline of community activism in the area. The squat was due for eviction which many believe came about due to the pressure exerted on the local authorities by Tesco to make Cheltenham Road 'safe' for the Tesco brand. The riot lasted most of the night with road blocks and continuous running battles as hundreds of police attempted to control the angry protesters.

There has been a massive community campaign to prevent Tesco opening yet another store in Bristol, where there are already 17 in

the city, with strong local opposition against the one in Stokes Croft. Amid heavy criticism the council gave permission for the store to open.

On 28th April police returned to Stokes Croft to break up a demonstration and party against the previous week's police brutality. Running battle once again broke out as masses of police tried to break up the crowds and attack anyone in the area but were met with massive resistance from the locals. The police finally raided the squat and evicted the occupants in the morning but only after mounting a massive operation involving hundreds of officers from several

forces. There were just four occupants barricaded in the building at the time.

Stokes Croft has become a hub for political activists and a radical centre home to many squats and community projects promoting autonomy and anti-capitalist initiatives. It is understood after a prolonged court battle Classics Freeshop, with its distinctive red and black flag facade, is set to be evicted any time soon.

The police are said to be rounding up as many people as they can find for the disturbances issuing over 80 'wanted for riot' photos and so far arrest have been put at 15, with one person arrested for "attempted murder".

ANALYSIS

Wedding day fallout

The real cost of political policing for the royal wedding

It was never going to be convenient for the cops to admit that all their intelligence was pointing towards the fact most anarchists couldn't care less about a couple of toffs getting married. Having endured not only the humiliation of a large mobile black bloc on 26th March, but also the earlier debacle of escorting Charles and Camilla's car straight into a public order situation, the Met were in desperate need of restoring some credibility.

The police would have known there was no threat. All those undercover cops who have replaced/were already working alongside Mark, Marco and Lynn would have known the mood of the anarchist community as much as we did. Over 100 people were bailed out of central London for the day, many of whom had no intention of going anywhere near the wedding in the first place. There was never a danger – it was a useful fairy tale fed to gullible journalists who were happy to feed the frenzy.

Civil liberties were cracked down upon, squats were raided, several people were subject to preventative arrest the day before, and like the Jubilee, people who braved the streets were rounded up, including one group of zombies who were arrested for the offence of having a coffee in Starbucks. The Met were able to use a day of “joy” and bunting not only to have a show of force, but also to attempt to prove that force worked.

Assistant Chief Commissioner Lynne Owens has claimed the operation was a “success” and the day “should prove that the Met is able to handle next year's Diamond Jubilee and Olympic Games.” However this simply isn't true. The cops didn't prevent anything. There would not have been any more of a breach of the peace if Chris Knight et al had been allowed to parade through the streets, and it certainly hasn't proved they have the capability to deal with a determined bloc.

However, the cops will undoubtedly claim this model of preventative detention and raids was a success and seek to use it in the future. A dangerous precedent has been set



Above, the police raid Grow Heathrow; below, the front door at Offmarket was smashed, but the space has now re-opened.

and this blatant state intimidation must be resisted both in the courts and on the streets.

Timeline of events

Wednesday 27th April saw the London Met police raiding squats in Brighton and Hove and making an arrest in connection with the 26th March TUC demo in London on suspicion of conspiracy to commit violent disorder. This person was held in Harrow Road police station near to Kensal Rise in London until around midnight before being released.

On Thursday 28th April, the Met raided Offmarket, a squatted shop in Hackney east London, the Transition Heathrow Project, west London, and Ratstar Social Centre in Camberwell, South London as well as Petrosiege squat down the road. Offmarket was raided on a warrant to search for evidence and info re the 26th March demo – front door smashed up and one arrest made, but the woman released later. The action was all over by around 9am and the space remains open! Grow Heathrow – no arrests made during arrest, though one person was handcuffed and others “forcibly detained”.

Ratstar and Petrosiege: At around 7.15am, cops arrived at Ratstar and a specialist climbing team gained entry to the space through the roof. Upon trying to talk to the police, one resident was immediately arrested. The police had a warrant to search for stolen property, but once inside decided to make arrests for abstraction of electricity (despite the space having an account). After smashing the window of the bike workshop and gaining entry to Ratrest – a space used for activities such as yoga, meditation and martial arts – they got a warrant to enter the houses joined to Ratstar and make arrests there also. This took until around 11am. Petrosiege had

been raided and several arrests made before many supporters had been able to get to Camberwell.

During the search, police were seen to be using ‘spotter cards’ and attempting to identify anyone who may have been involved in the TUC demo on 26th March. One arrest was made of a person who had come to support the Ratstar residents. This person was taken to the local Walworth Road police station while the other arrestees were all being taken up to Harrow Road.

There seemed to be a lot of support for the space from locals who stopped to ask what was happening. The press were also interested in what was going on and were asking questions to supporters, non-arrested residents and the police – one report states that a journalist was told by one officer that the raid was “of course to do with the royal wedding” and a minute later was told adamantly by another officer that it had absolutely nothing to do with it. No surprise there.

It was obvious that the police could not reasonably impose bail conditions on the arrestees just for abstraction of electricity and, when they were later released just after 9pm, we learned that they had been further arrests on suspicion of conspiracy to breach the peace. On what evidence? A handful of Chris Knight's Zombie Wedding leaflets had been found in the café space inside Ratstar. They have been bailed away from Westminster until 10th June.

Green & Black Cross reported that an arrest was made in Cambridge and one in Edinburgh after groups and individuals were raided in Scotland in relation to 26th March.

Many thanks to our comrades at Fitwatch for the report <http://www.fitwatch.org.uk/>



NEWS IN BRIEF

The wrong side of the law

The police have never really had a problem protecting their own against accusations of wrong doing. Every death in custody, every false confession gained through threats and coercion, every act of intimidation on the beat or unparalleled violence on a demonstration, the police have over the years managed to get away with, literally, murder. Sometimes though they do get caught out and it's these acts of wrong-doing that are becoming much more commonplace amongst our finest boys and girls in blue.

- Two Scottish PCs have been suspended and charged with assault after it was claimed they tortured a bail hostel worker in Dundee. PCs Shirley Tindal and George Stewart are accused of handcuffing Arlene Pattie to a window then wrapping sticky tape around her head, restricting her breathing.
- PC Marcus Ballard of the Territorial Support Group was convicted of common assault after he pushed a young 16 year old boy through a plate glass window during a stop and search. Despite having his hands in his pockets the boy was lifted off the floor and smashed against the shop window, which was all captured on CCTV.
- At the beginning of the year a crooked anti-terror detective was jailed for cheating the Metropolitan Police out of nearly £12,000 while investigating the 7/7 bombings. Det Sgt Andrew Bramwell, is the second officer from the investigating team to be imprisoned for scamming the force in the course of the operation.
- A Northumbria constable PC Stephen Mitchell was convicted of two rapes, three indecent assaults and six counts of misconduct in a public office and given two life sentences. What came out in trial was that the police knew about his history of serious sexual charges while he was serving in the army prior to joining the police, and had previously been disciplined by the force for having sex with a woman he had met as part of his duties.
- Officers currently under investigated for criminal offences including: drug smuggling, drug dealing, sexual assault while on duty, making and possessing indecent images, perverting the course of justice, causing death by dangerous driving, money laundering, theft, rape and actual bodily harm.

Just in case you think it's just a lot of bad apples, figures obtained under the Freedom of Information Act show more than four in ten police officers convicted of serious crimes between 2005 and 2008 have been allowed to keep their jobs. Of the 432 officers convicted, in 21 out of the 39 forces in England and Wales, 185 (or 43%) were allowed to remain in their posts. In Scotland there 43 officers who have been convicted of a criminal since 2009, most are still serving.

Happy birthday to us

125 years is a long time in politics

The eagle-eyed amongst you will have noticed that this year is the 125th anniversary of Freedom Press. Founded in the same year as the Haymarket tragedy, we remain as committed to the expression and dissemination of anarchist ideas as when the paper was originally published in October 1886.

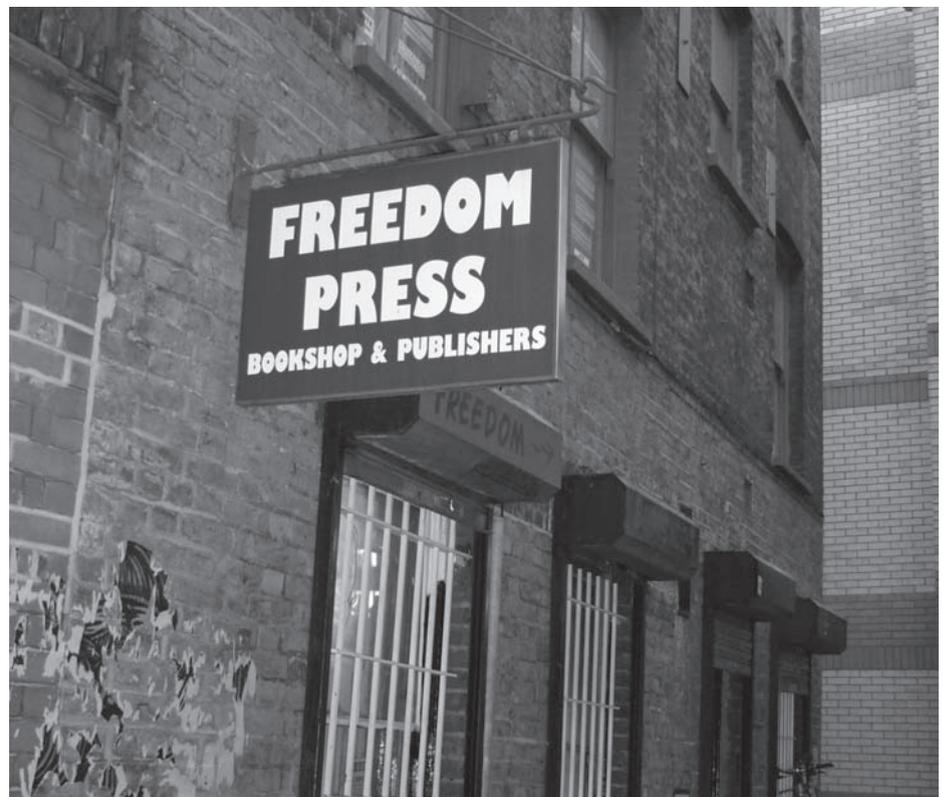
The first issue came out under the banner “a journal of anarchist socialism” and, with the help of Kropotkin, Charlotte Wilson and others, it emerged defiant and unapologetic at a time of intense political upheaval, where anarchists were never far away from being blamed for all the ills in the world. The UK had been through a bitter general election the year before; there was a global economic slump and with frequent riots and uprisings across the continents. In February a rally in Trafalgar Square, organised the Social Democratic Federation (a socialist political party), passed off peacefully until people marched off down Pall Mall to Hyde Park and on the way “club windows were smashed, shop windows were broken and shops looted.” As always when we examine history, the more things change the more they stay the same.

What has changed in recent years though, and something that's hitting printed media hard, is the rise and dominance of the internet. What should have been a liberating advancement in terms of communication is

becoming a repository for instantaneous gossip – as if to prove the point Twitter, the most popular of the social networking sites, only allows you 140 characters to say what needs to be said at any one time. The universal availability of information and the ease in which it can be accessed is always going to be a challenge to those groups who produce concrete propaganda material (and not just *Freedom*, but all organised anarchist groups, radical campaign groups, event organisers, etc.). Not only this but Freedom Press has also been hit by the Amazon online book buying phenomenon which increasingly looks like it will make independent bookshops obsolete. Freedom remains one of the very few independent bookshops left in existence in the UK.

That said, we are determined to fight to remain a voice of anarchist intent in the real world. The shop, despite the current economic downturn, continues to provide an essential service in terms of propaganda material, a space for meetings and events and simply a physical environment for anarchist to come together. To us that is priceless. And the fact that an anarchist newspaper could have lasted this long, remaining a permanent fixture on the political scene for over a century, and indeed expand to become a fully fledged anarchist publishers and thriving book sellers, is something we think is worth celebrating.

We are at the moment discussing how we want to mark our 125 years in the business of politics and are more than happy for people to give us ideas what we should do.



INTERNATIONAL

MAYDAY AROUND THE WORLD

FRANCE: The five major labour unions planned around 200 marches across France, including a march in eastern Paris, to call for measures to tackle the rising cost of living, while also condemning racism. The five said in a statement their marches were a gesture “in international solidarity” with the protest movements in several Arab countries and opposed “exclusion and racism” against immigrants in France.

GERMANY: Approximately 423,000 people demonstrated, according to the Confederation of German Trade Unions. There were protests against far-right demonstrations with 5,000 gathering in Heilbronn against a march held by neo-Nazis. Thousands protested in Greifswald and Bremen against rallies by the rightwing National Democratic Party. Germany has seen an escalation in violence in recent May Days where conflicts continue to arise between the country’s far-right groups, anti-fascists and police.

HONG KONG: At least 4,000 people marched in a noisy procession through the downtown area of the densely populated city, banging drums in protest against fast-rising rents and food prices. Some carried giant images of the tycoons who dominate the city’s economy, with bloodstained vampire fangs drawn on.

PHILIPPINES: Thousands of workers and activists protested against the government demanding higher wages amid rising prices for basic commodities, the largest parades taking place in the capital, Manila. Workers burned an effigy of President Aquino and an effigy of his Porsche as they demanded across-the-board wage increases.

RUSSIA: Hundreds of thousands took to the streets in May Day rallies, most showing support for the government amid a handful of opposition protests. Anti-Kremlin rallies were far outnumbered by pro-government demonstrations organised by party organisations and trade unions. In Moscow, Left Front activists urged Russians to follow the example of the Arab world and turn against their leaders. The activists chanted, “Whether Cairo or Moscow, only through fighting will you obtain rights!”

SOUTH KOREA: At least 50,000 workers joined a rally in Seoul demanding government measures against inflation and rising food prices. Chanting slogans, they called for higher pay and better job security, criticising labour laws that had made job cuts easier.

TURKEY: An estimated 200,000 people marched in Istanbul to demand better rights and wages for workers. It was the largest workers’ rally to be held in the central Taksim Square since 34 people died in a stampede in 1977. Trade unions were barred from holding May Day rallies in the square until last year.

LENS CAP WASHED UP



A sea turtle is left stranded on the coast of Mississippi on April 20th marking the one-year anniversary of BP oil spill, the worst environmental disaster in U.S. history. Endangered sea turtles and dolphins are still dying in high numbers in Mississippi, which continues to be impacted by tar balls and weathered oil due to the massive oil spill.

Diaz G8: Supreme Court of Appeal

One of the most important court cases in Italian history is the legal process for the raid on the Diaz school during the G8 in 2001. So far 25 Diaz police commanders and enlisted men have been convicted after the appeal verdict was announced on 18th May 2010.

Despite most of the original charges being spent, two charges of false arrest and false statement have statute of limitations of 12½ years so they still carry a prison sentence. Most of the 25 are convicted of these two offences and have received sentences of three to four years.

However, the Diaz trial has one final hurdle to clear – the Supreme Court of Appeal in Rome. Both defendants and victims have appealed to this court. For the defendants, it is an automatic right, but this court only studies whether there has been any breach of

process or law broken. The Court of Appeal cannot question the evidence in any way. The victims have appealed to the court over the question of statute of limitations law which was changed by Berlusconi and the constitutional court a few years ago so he could avoid being convicted for tax and fraud charges.

If the statute of limitations law is not changed back to 15 years and the Supreme Court of Appeal takes too long to pass the final verdict in the Diaz case, all is lost for the victims.

If the Diaz raid is not settled, the backlash could be another Genoa somewhere else. In 2011, almost ten years to the day since the original event happened, it is certainly not forgotten by many people and the youth in Italy have already lost trust and confidence in the police.

Notes from the US

Although, as anarchists, we don’t set any store by ‘elected representatives’ and ‘democracy’ in a capitalist context, it’s striking when they’re actively subverted by those who seem to. This is just what’s happening at various places throughout the United States.

In early April the emergency ‘financial manager’ appointed by Michigan governor Rick Snyder issued an order which took away all the powers of the elected officials in the town of Benton Harbor. Similarly, the financial manager for Detroit’s state school system by-

passed those elected to oversee the ‘education’ system in that city and sent redundancy notices to all its teachers; that’s more than 5,000 people. In the middle of the month, though, two of his state’s pensions boards sued Snyder over his actions, which by then had spread to Pontiac and Ecorse.

Freedom has reported on Wisconsin governor, Scott Walker’s, anti-Union activity before. In April he too drafted legislation which will allow for a takeover of local

Solidarity for Belarus anarchists

Anarchist Black Cross in Belarus has called for solidarity actions on behalf of seven anarchists who remain in prison and under charges known as the 'case of arson'. So far seven people targeted in the investigation of the anarchists' case remain in jail.

Initially the seven detained were only charged with hooliganism, which has a maximum of six years in prison, but in the course of investigation more offences were added for each of the accused and the charges have now been changed to intentional destruction of property with the sentence of 12 years imprisonment. Moreover, all the evidence against the accused is based on the testimonies of two 'witnesses' who had actually taken part in the actions themselves but never got accused of the crime.

During the investigation more than 50 people were interrogated, 14 people spent between three and nine days in detention facilities. All these people claimed harsh psychological treatment and in some cases even physical coercion in the course of the investigation.

At the moment most of the accused are on the final stage of familiarising themselves with materials of case. It is highly probable that the court hearings are to start at the end of April or beginning of May.

That's why Belarus Anarchist Black Cross call all concerned people to make protest actions on 12th to 15th May against unfair accusations and solidarity actions with the Belarusian anarchists. They welcome solidarity actions of any kind as well as other actions aimed at spreading information about the situation with political repression in Belarus and involving local human rights advocates in bringing up the problem about prosecutions in Belarus.



Fire bombs were thrown at the Russian embassy in the capital of Belarus, Minsk, damaging a car parked there in 2010.

Mikalai Dziadok is charged with the organisation of an illegal anti-militarist demonstration against a mutual Russian-Belarusian war exercise, as well as attacks on a Minsk casino and the Headquarters of the Trade Union Federation. Mikalai is facing ten years of imprisonment.

Ihar Alinevich is charged with the attack on the Russian embassy in 2010, the organisation of the illegal anti-militarist demonstration, the attack on a Minsk casino, as well as attacks on a branch of Belarus bank on Mayday and the attack on the detention centre in September 2010. Ihar is facing 12 years imprisonment.

Aliaksandr Frantskevich is incriminated

with the participation in the illegal anti-militarist demonstration, the attack on a police station in Soligorsk during the days of common action against the police and the hacker attack on the Novopolotsk municipal web-page. Aliaksandr is threatened with ten years imprisonment.

As for the case of the attack on the KGB headquarters in Bobruisk in October 2010 as a solidarity action with the arrested in September, now Jauhen Vas'kovich, Artsiom Prakapenka and Pavel Syramolatau are targeted in the investigation. All of them can be sentenced to 12 years imprisonment.

Contact: belarus_abc@riseup.net

Notes from the US

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municipalities if they 'fail a financial stress test'. Walker could then do as has happened in Michigan and appoint 'emergency managers' who are empowered to cancel union contracts, dismiss elected officials and school board members (the equivalent of school governors and managers); in fact he will be able to take control of entire cities and towns. As if that isn't enough, the governor (Walker) will also have unchecked authority to cancel government services, which would well include assistance on which the needy rely exclusively.

It's a Wisconsin law firm that's said to be drafting the plan mirroring the way it's already working in Michigan. Much of this activity is believed to be backed by the right-wing Tea Party, funded by environmental wreckers the Koch brothers and being tried out as a test case for wider application as time goes on. They have the courts on their side, of course: a judge in Wisconsin has dismissed

one of three lawsuits brought to challenge Walker's anti-union law. Meanwhile organisers in Ohio have won approval to begin a struggle to bring the state's new anti-labour law to a referendum. The group, We Are Ohio, has got certification to begin collecting the 231,000 signatures necessary for repeal of the law to be placed on the November ballot.

Walker was recently on Capitol Hill before the House Oversight Committee. When questioned by Dennis Kucinich of Ohio, Walker admitted that a principle provision in his plans that limit union rights carries no monetary benefit, despite public claims to the contrary.

Kucinich: "Can you please explain to me and members of this committee how much money this provision saves for your state budget?"
Walker: "That particular part doesn't save any."

Louis Further

A unified Palestine

The two main political parties vying for control of the Palestinian territories have brokered a deal together to create an interim unity government and hold elections within a year, which, if that happens, will dramatically change the landscape of the region.

Hamas, the Islamic Resistance Movement that governs the Gaza Strip, and Fatah who control the West Bank and are the largest faction of the Palestine Liberation Organisation.

Previously an attempt to bring the parties together in 2007, resulted in the establishment of a Palestinian authority national unity government, but ended soon after as hostilities between the two factions climaxed in the Battle of Gaza, resulting in Hamas taking control of the Gaza Strip and removing of Fatah officials. Animosity between the two has remained ever since.

FEATURE

MUTUALISM: FAK

Iain McKay takes a look at a traditional concept currently being misused

A vision of a co-operative commonwealth has always been at the heart of socialism. The earliest socialists suggested co-operative villages, workplaces and consumer societies. This was echoed by libertarian socialists.

Bakunin was “convinced that the co-operative will be the preponderant form of social organisation in the future” and could “hardly oppose” their creation under capitalism. Proudhon called his vision of a co-operative economy mutualism, arguing workers’ associations were “a new principle and model of production that must replace present-day corporations.” This was seen as part of the transcendence of capitalism: “the abolition of the State... consists of an incessant diminution, by political and administrative simplification the number of public functionaries and to put into the care of responsible workers societies the works and services confided to the state.”

As such, it comes as a surprise to hear the Con-Dem Cabinet Office minister Francis Maude stating that “one of our ideas is to promote the establishment of mutuals and co-operatives among public sector workers.” Have the Conservatives finally realised that socialism is correct? That economic liberty, as anarchists have stressed from the start, means associated labour, not wage-slavery?

Don’t be daft! Mutuals and co-operatives are just the latest in a long line of words being abused by the Tories – progressive (to describe viciously regressive cuts), fairness (to rationalise levelling down), and so on.

In this they can depend on public ignorance. Thus public sector (and union official) “fat cats” for denounced in the Tory media while

just one per cent of the public knows that the average boss of a FTSE 100 company is paid £4.9 million (according to Income Data Services). Showing the typical sensitivity of the capitalist class, the Head of executive reward for the Hay Group UK bemoaned that *The Guardian’s* coverage that FTSE100 executive directors have received 55% pay rise over the last year as a misrepresentation. This was the average, he complained, which “overstates the situation” as the median was a mere 23%. (Letters, *The Guardian*, 30th October 2010). The average weekly earnings of all other UK employees went up by 1.3%.

So this “mutualism” is part of a sadly successful “sleight of hand” by the Tories that has turned a debate about a crisis caused by the private sector into one about the public sector. It is all above privatisation and making labour pay for a crisis caused by capital. As can be seen when Maude blissfully stated that staff wishing to mutualise would need prove they could provide services “significantly cheaper” than present and “deliver value for money”: so the Tories expect *workers* to make *themselves* work harder, longer and for less!

Significantly, the vision is that public sector workers should set up John Lewis-style co-operatives. A genuine co-operative, to quote Proudhon, is based on workers having “an undivided share in the property of the company” and “all positions are elective, and the by-laws subject to the approval of the members.” In contrast, John Lewis is a company is owned by a trust on behalf of all its employees who receive a share of annual profits in addition to their salary and can influence the business through branch forums, the divisional Councils. Above these is the Partnership Council to which employees elect (for three year terms) at least 80% of members while the chairman appoints the remaining. This also elects five of the directors on the partnership board while the chairman appoints another five. In 2008, the managing director was paid £500,000, plus the 20% bonus of £100,000.

So the notion that John Lewis is a co-operative or a mutualist association is wrong. All levels of management are not elected, although it has higher levels of staff involvement than a typical company as well as a profit sharing scheme. Sharing profits and electing a council is not the same as the workers’ associations argued for by Proudhon and Bakunin.

It should be noted that in 1999, in response to a fall in profits, some employees in John Lewis called for the business to be demutualised and floated on the stock market. Though this was rejected, the demutualising of the building societies under Thatcher should be a warning of where this can go (particularly as it eventually contributed to the current crisis). Significantly, Proudhon stressed that while



Should workers set up John Lewis-style co-operatives?

workers’ companies would *run* workplaces, *ownership* would remain common:

“Under the law of association, transmission of wealth does not apply to the instruments of labour, so cannot become a cause of inequality ... We are socialists ... under universal association, ownership of the land and of the instruments of labour is *social* ownership ... We want the mines, canals, railways handed over to democratically organised workers’ associations ... We want these associations to be models for agriculture, industry and trade, the pioneering core of that vast federation of companies and societies, joined together in the common bond of the democratic and social Republic.”

It is doubtful that the Tories will insist that any mutuals will be ‘asset-locked’ to ensure that they remain public. This can be seen from Lord Young who is looking at how to turn public bodies which charge fees into ‘mutuals’. This would be based on staff being allocated shares which could be sold or handed back when they leave. That is, these are *not* mutuals as these are owned by those who actually work in them and *not* by shareholders. It is easy to see that, over time,



E AND REAL



...ves? Pictured below left, Bakunin; below right, Proudhon.

these “co-operatives” would turn into ordinary companies in which most shares are held by non-workers.

The aim is (to quote Maude) that they “get paid by the state on a proper contract” and he acknowledged that if public sector staff bid to run a service then they might also find themselves subject to EU law requiring a competitive tendering process.

So this is simply a means of *privatising* more public services, not socialising them as *real* mutualism demands. But there is a problem with even discussing mutuals – it raises subversive ideas.

For, if, as Maude suggests “successful employee owned businesses further demonstrates the viability” of public sector mutuals and that “we have to assume that this is applicable across the public sector” then let us raise the obvious: If co-operatives are so beneficial in the public sector, then why not also abolish wage-slavery in the private sector? Co-operatives can “challenge traditional public service structures and unleash the pent-up ideas and innovation that has been stifled by bureaucracy.” The same can be said of hierarchy in the *capitalist* firm, a structure that has proven itself only

efficient at funnelling what we produce into the hands of the few.

Co-operatives demonstrate that we don’t need a class of economic masters anywhere. Proudhon *never* restricted co-operatives to the public sector:

“There is mutuality... when... all the workers, instead of working for an owner who pays them and keeps their product, work for one another... extend the principle of mutuality...to all the Workers’ Associations as a unit, and you will have created a form of civilisation that, from all points of view – political, economic, aesthetic – differs completely from previous civilisations.”

Discussing co-operatives raises the spectre of alternatives to capitalism, of the co-operative commonwealth, of *real* mutual aid, of workers’ self-management and, ultimately, of anarchism as an alternative to both private and state capitalism – “a solution based upon equality, – in other words, the organisation of labour, which involves the negation of political economy and the end of property” (Proudhon).

There is a substantial difference between the idea of co-operatives suggested, pursued and permitted *from above* by politicians and

those being demanded and created *from below* by workers. Anarchists need to encourage the latter while resisting the former as creeping privatisation. We doubt the Tories will, like Proudhon, urge that public works, like railways, no longer serve to “fatten certain contractors” but be handed over “to responsible companies, not of capitalists, but of *workers*”! Similarly, if workers were seizing their workplaces and mutualising them by direct action we can be sure that they would be ConDemned in no uncertain terms and Cameron’s ‘Big Society’ nonsense quickly replaced by the ‘Big Stick’.

So there *are* areas of opportunity for libertarians in these discussions. While the Tories are raising mutuals as part of a wider attack on the working class, it also raises issues about the current system and alternatives to it.

Unlike the debasement of “socialism” by the left (equating it with nationalisation), the debasement of “mutualism” is by the right (including New Labour who first raised mutuals before the election). This may give make the resistance to this attempt easier but it would be a mistake to simply ignore or dismiss this debasement. This is because they can be used as a means of raising genuine libertarian ideas and demands, to be a means of pushing struggles from mere resistance to social revolution.

There will be a book launch for *Property is Theft!* with Iain McKay at Freedom Bookshop on Saturday 21st May 2011 from 2pm until 4pm.

Join Iain McKay, the editor of *Property is Theft! A Pierre-Joseph Proudhon Anthology* and author of *An Anarchist FAQ*, to discuss Proudhon’s ideas and why they are still important today. *Property is Theft!* is the new comprehensive anthology of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon’s writings published by AK Press. Proudhon was the first person to call themselves an anarchist and his ideas on property, state, exploitation, workers self-management, federalism and anarchy defined anarchism as a socio-economic theory.



COMMENT

ABOUT FREEDOM

ANGEL ALLEY

Our next exciting shop event will be Iain McKay giving a talk on the Proudhon anthology he has edited, *Property is Theft*. This is a must have for all anarchists and we are having a special offer of £5 off up to and including the talk on Saturday 21st May at 2pm. If you can't make the event you can order it online post free on our website.

Once again our devoted subscribers have been put through the mill as yet another production disaster delayed the posting of the previous two issues. So in case you thought we been shut down by the state, here's the true story. Our printer broke. Easily fixed you may think, but no! Although a new printer was rapidly ordered, it proved incompatible with the Windows 98 of the old computer whereupon all the top secret data about *Freedom* subscribers is held. While it is good news for those not wanting their details leaked, not having web access to the mailing list has resulted in a labyrinthine nightmare as we have had to buy new software and painstakingly transfer the data to a format that the shiny new printer approves of.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

This is issue is vol 72 no 09, so if the number above your name on the address label is 7209 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 or, if you don't want to worry in the future about remembering to renew, ask us to send you a standing order form by emailing subs@freedompress.org.uk or write to us at 'Subscriptions', Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX. Unfortunately our subscription rates have to increase, so any subscribers paying by Standing Order are asked to contact their bank to update the amount payable.

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NEXT ISSUE

The next issue will be dated 21st May 2011 and the last day to get copy to us for that issue will be Thursday 12th May. You can send your articles to us by email to copy@freedompress.org.uk or by post addressed to 'The Editors', Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

A sideways look

by SVARTFROSK

In the immediate aftermath of the riot in Stokes Croft, Bristol, it was said that it was sparked by the eviction of a squat involved in opposing the opening of a Tesco Express store. Thanks to information put out by almost all parties involved, we now know that it was provoked, as is so often the case, by heavy-handed policing and the opposition to Tesco was incidental. The store still had its windows smashed and some wag painted 'closing down sale' on its smashed façade.

The locals didn't want Tesco there. In Cameron's Big Society, local residents are meant to get a say when the council decide on something they don't like. The pressure from the council to accept the store, and the role Tesco may have played in pushing for neighbouring squats to be evicted, give the lie to this. The fact that it is to be a Tesco Express, the higher-priced even poorer service version of the big stores may have had something to do with it.

Some argue that there is no innate difference between shops and what matters is the prices that we, as working class people, pay for our food and other necessities. I have some sympathy with this point of view, as someone more at the Tesco end of the retail spectrum than the M&S. But I still think it's ultimately wrong.

I read blogs afterwards decrying Tesco as the thin end of gentrification. Hmm, wait till you've got a Waitrose or an organic deli opening up in your neighbourhood before you claim that!

Tescos are not the thin end of gentrification, they're the thin end of corporatisation.

Tesco Express are the shock troops of this, popping up in terraces where previously it would have been a convenience store, and offering a safe alternative to those people who find street markets too intimidating. Corporate stores are often better employers than the small shops, not that that is saying much. They will more than likely have central HR departments and policies which the small trader will flout if he can get away with it.

But there is still something soul-less about them. I enjoy planning meals and getting the food for my family. But I never look forward to going to a supermarket. They may do cheap food, and we may need cheap food, but it doesn't make either right.

Before the Iron Curtain fell, the Eastern Bloc was derided for the monotony of its shops, how everywhere looked the same because it had all been cut from the same cloth. Some on the left counter-posed the basics available to everyone as a price worth paying for the lack of political and economic freedom. I think this misses the point that all humans need some sort of aesthetic side to their lives. Crude Marxists might reduce everything to economics, but it is no reason we should. I don't wish to see chain-store towns whose only difference is the arrangement of letters on their street signs.

Anarchists have always fought against alienated wage labour and the drudgery of work, but we don't limit ourselves to that, all the dismal alienation of everyday life should be challenged, and shopping is a big chunk of that.



Changes to the letters page

Due to the fast moving nature of modern social media with email, Facebook and now Twitter, and the internet generation's ease of communication no-one seems to be putting pen to paper anymore, and the art of letter writing has ceased to be an art. So, after several months' consideration, we have decided to dispense with the letters page in its current format. We still want people to write to us, but rather than a letter (of complaint, criticism or correction) we encourage people to write a counter article that will generate debate and open discussion. Below each of the articles published on the *Freedom* website there is now a comment section where people can leave their thoughts and opinions. We will continue to publish any worthwhile communication, but from now on page 11 will be given over to 'the movement' where we take the best of current political writings to give a snapshot of what is being said and done by anarchist and radical groups and individuals across the political spectrum.

The fact that there's three anarchist bookfairs during May is a clear signal of how anarchism is developing and opening itself up to new audiences. So below we let the groups involved in organising them tell you about what's happening.

A Day out of the Ordinary! The Dublin Anarchist Bookfair, Saturday 14th May 2011 at Liberty Hall, Eden Quay, Dublin 1. It's the time of year again that the Workers' Solidarity Movement is busy finalising the last minute details for our annual Anarchist Bookfair. Much has changed since we first began the venture back in 2006, not least the scale of the event, but also the implosion of the Celtic Tiger and its catastrophic effect on Irish society.

The Bookfair has grown in size each year, starting out with numbers in the hundreds at the first event in the St Nicholas of Myra Hall in the Liberties, the moving on to the Teachers Club for a couple of years, where numbers attending swelled so much we were forced to switch to Liberty Hall. In our first year there (2009), we brought you ex-Black Panther turned anarchist Ashanti Alson and author of *Free Women of Spain* Martha Ecklesberg. The following year we heard from the authors of *The Lost Revolution*, Scott Millar and Brian Hanley, along with an exclusive screening of *Meeting Room*, a documentary about the Concerned Parents Against Drugs movement of the 1980s in Dublin, introduced by one of its producers, Brian Gray.

This year, for the most part, the meetings reflect the current state of world affairs. In a meeting entitled 'Peripheral Visions', a range of speakers from the countries of the EU that are being targeted for IMF/ECB intervention speak out on direct rule from the those institutions and the struggle against austerity. Confirmed at the time of writing are anarchists from Portugal (Manuel

Baptista) and Spain (Manu Garcia) as well as anarchist speakers from Greece and Ireland.

Wayne Price (of the North Eastern Federation of Anarcho-Communists) from New York will speak on 'Anarchism and Socialism: Reformism or Revolution?' and Gariel Kuhn (author of *Soccer vs. The State*) speaks on the subversive side of sport, while Conor McCabe of Dublin Opinion and Irish Left Review looks at matters closer to home, with a session based around his new book (out in June) called *Sins of the Father: Tracing the Decisions That Shaped the Irish Economy*. There will also be a meeting on the current events unfolding across North Africa and the Middle East entitled 'Arab Spring', with speakers to be announced, other sessions by Irish based Revolutionary Anarcha-Feminist Group (RAG), Choice Ireland and Shell to Sea.

Alongside all of the above will be the Bookfair itself, with a host of stalls from home and abroad; AK Press, Rebel County Books, the Irish Labour History Society, the Anarchist Federation, Shell to Sea, RAG, the IPSC, the WSM book service stall and many more.

A WSM leaflet for the Bookfair a couple of years ago stated that it "is really a day out of the ordinary; a day away from the mundane, where the best thing to leave with is not the book, or pamphlet, or badge you've just spent your hard earned money on, but the experience of the day itself." The Dublin Anarchist Bookfair is a great opportunity to mingle, meet, and talk to not only anarchists, but activists from all walks of life, as well as

the large contingent of passers-by and interested onlookers that it always attracts. Come along, drop by the WSM stall and say hello!

<http://www.wsm.ie/bookfair>

Sheffield Anarchist Bookfair, Saturday 21st May at Bank Street Arts, Bank Street, Sheffield S1 2DS

We live in a time of crisis. An economic crisis, an environmental crisis and, if the government gets its way, an impending social crisis. When the only thing that is on the political agenda is cuts, cuts and more cuts it is all the more important to explore the alternatives. And there is an alternative – anarchism.

Anarchists argue we need a society ruled not by profit and greed but organised on the basis of social solidarity and human dignity. If you're a hardened political activist or just a bit 'anarcho-curious' we welcome you to our second annual anarchist book fair. Events like this have run for years in cities from San Francisco to Zagreb. They're a great starting point into the ideas, activism, ethics, creativity and history of the contemporary anarchist movement, with publishers comix, zines, film, art, food and fun stuff.

Stalls include: Active Distribution, Anarchist Federation, Anarchist Studies, The Commune, Dave Douglass, Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), Leeds Surrealist Group, Mutual Aid Sheffield (MASH), News From Nowhere, Now or Never!, Sheffield Social Centre and Solidarity Federation.
<http://www.bookfair.org.uk/>



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GETTING ACTIVE

PRISON NEWS

On the prisons front Britain has been relatively quiet since last year's spate of prison riots, especially when compared to recent events across North Africa and the Middle East. However, one thing that has been quietly simmering in the background has been a potential Prison Officers Association's strike over the outcome of the 'market-testing' of five 'failing' prisons: HMPs Birmingham, Buckley Hall, Doncaster, Wellingborough and a new-build prison, Featherstone 2. The outcome of this tendering process saw the Ministry of Justice plumping for ridding itself of a long-established thorn in its side by awarding the contract to run HMP Birmingham (better known as Winson Green) to G4S (along with the contract for Featherstone 2); HMP Doncaster continuing to be run by Serco, but as a pilot for the Coalition's pet new 'payments by results' method, and HMP Buckley Hall remaining within the public sector.¹

The Winson Green privatisation is significant for a number of reasons. Firstly, there is the POA's long-standing policy of opposition to prison privatisation itself; plus the fact that the prison itself is home to one of the union's strongest and most militant branches, which is precisely why Jack Straw chose it amongst his privatisation targets in revenge for the union's refusal to accept his initial Workforce Modernisation plans back in 2009. Simultaneously there is the fact that the POA has already announced their opposition to Coalition cuts-related mass job losses, via planned work to rule actions over health and safety issues; so is it any wonder that Ken Clarke's announcement of the first ever privatisation of a public sector prison can be seen as a direct challenge to the union's power? Add to that the less than secret training of three thousand military personnel as potential strike-breakers, then things might appear to be hotting up.

Unfortunately, the POA's strike ballot is only indicative, and whilst the union hierarchy has been trying to whip up potential support via regular 'spontaneous'² lunch-time walkouts to hold branch meetings, alongside the odd branch deciding to work-to-rule over the issue, it now appears that the vote could go against taking any industrial action. Such is the picture emerging from the various on-line forums used by screws, with many citing the futility of the last attempted strike in 2009 ("Two weeks to ballot for strike, two weeks to talk about it, four hours for Clarke to get an injunction"), that this supposed last bastion of working class trades union power could be forced into an humiliating backdown.

1 Wellingborough was withdrawn early on in the process as being too dysfunctional to privatise.
2 It is an offence for a prison officer to withhold his/her services or to induce a prison officer to do so, i.e. for the union to call them out on strike [Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994].



Solidarity Federation's initial picket at the Office Angels branch in Wimbledon, south west London, on 18th March 2011.

● Since March, **Solidarity Federation** has been involved in a campaign of action against Office Angels, a recruitment agency specialising in short-term temporary office placements, after an ex-employee asked for their assistance over a pay dispute. The person in question was assured by the company that the lack of a time-sheet would 'not be a problem' when confirming his work record. However, they refused to pay him the wages he was owed – falsely claiming he only worked for one day, despite evidence to the contrary.

Initially, South London Solfed organised a unannounced picket outside the branch in Wimbledon where the person had been working, confronting management and demanding immediate payment of the unpaid wages. The following week they issued a call for a 'communication blockade' by asking people to send messages of protest along with emails and phoning Office Angels to complain. The response was impressive as numerous International Workers Association sections and other direct action-oriented workers groups in the UK and around the world took part. They also called another picket outside the Oxford Street branch, which was well attended and highly visible. There were also pickets outside Office Angels in Leeds by members of the West Yorkshire Solidarity Federation / Leeds Anarchist Federation who handed out over two hundred leaflets, and Northampton Solidarity Federation.

In a partial success Office Angels have said they will look into getting the wages paid,

although this has yet to develop into any concrete result. It is however a positive step forward which wouldn't have happened without the campaign of direct action by Solfed and supporters.

Until the worker *does* get paid Solfed are committed to increasing the pressure on the company. They also want to hear from any current or previous Office Angels employees that have come into conflict with this company and its culture of disrespect. They know that this is not an isolated incident and the more people get involved, the more pressure they can put on the company to start treating its workers properly.
Contact: southlondonsof@solfed.org.uk

● **The Black Fish**, the European based conservation organisation that takes action on the issues of whaling, industrial fishing and marine animals in captivity, is looking for crew members. They need a crew for the initial overhaul of the ship that's preparing for its first campaign and have launched an application page where people can apply for voluntary crew positions. They are currently looking for people to join their growing marine conservation organisation and specifically The Black Fish direct action team and future ship's crew. If you are committed to taking action for the protection of marine life in European seas and are able to dedicate time to work with them, then get in touch. Anybody interested should contact them as soon as they can: crew@theblackfish.org or visit the website: <http://www.theblackfish.org/>

Lessons of the Mayday martyrs

Chicago anarchists still have something to teach us about political expression

The origins of Mayday as international workers day are embedded in anarchist tradition, not least because of the ‘martyrdom’ of the eight Chicago anarchists who were tried for murder for their supposed role at Haymarket in May 1886. The subsequent execution of four of them was seen amongst radicals worldwide as the US state exacting revenge on the agitators for their political beliefs rather than the crime they committed, a crime they were to be absolved of years later.

The bomb throwing at Haymarket, agitating for an eight-hour working day, the police violence and state repression connected to workers organising all form part of the history of why Mayday is still celebrated amongst anarchists, radical workers and leftists of all descriptions. What perhaps is less well known, and certainly less documented, is the Chicago anarchists’ practical activities which provided a backdrop to their political ideas, activities that wouldn’t be out of place, indeed seem all too familiar, to today’s anarchist.

The [Chicago] anarchists sought not only an end to capitalism and government but a total revolution in human relations, cultural as well as political and economic. Their object, in an age of growing centralisation and standardisation, was to create an alternative society, based on freedom, brotherhood, and equality, as opposed to the authority and privilege of the established order. Anarchism, as they conceived it, was not something to dream of for the future. It was a guide to everyday life, a doctrine to be applied, so far as possible, within the interstices of American capitalism. And the extent to which they succeeded in doing so was quite remarkable. Between 1883 and 1886 they developed a rich libertarian counterculture, deeply rooted in the working classes and totally at odds with the values of the prevailing system.

During the three years prior to Haymarket, the International¹ published no fewer than fourteen journals, daily, weekly, fortnightly, which acquainted a growing number of workers with socialist and anarchist ideas. By far the most important were Most’s *Freiheit*, Spies’s *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, and Parson’s *Alarm*. All these journals, in whatever language they were published, trumpeted revolutionary methods and goals. All, moreover, used the term ‘anarchist’ to characterise their political beliefs. Initially, as Parsons relates, the anarchist label had been fastened upon the Internationalists by their opponents, who had sought to stigmatise them as enemies of



An unknown person throws a dynamite bomb at police, Haymarket Square, Chicago, 1886.

‘law and order’. Before long, however, the Internationalists defiantly adopted it as a badge of esteem. “We began to allude to ourselves as anarchists” writes Parsons, “and that name, which was at first imputed to us as a dishonour, we came to cherish and to defend with pride.” While many Internationalists continued to call themselves socialists as well as anarchists, the latter term soon to precedence over the former. As Fielden later recalled, “In regard to whether the term anarchist is the proper one or socialist, I wish to say that [we] were all anarchists at that time.”

Beyond their publishing ventures, the anarchists engaged in a broad range of cultural and social activities, which enhanced their feeling of solidarity and greatly enriched their lives. They organised lectures, concerts, picnics, dances, plays and recitations. Saloons and beer gardens became bustling centres of radical life.

For all the enthusiasm of these celebrations, the International attained its greatest degree of public visibility through street demonstrations and processions, often mounted jointly with the Central Labor Union. Such demonstrations frequently combined a parade through downtown Chicago with a picnic at Ogden’s Grove. As many as three or four thousand demonstrators participated, many of them decorated with red ribbons or rosettes and carrying red or black flags inscribed with mottoes setting forth “the grievances and hopes of the proletariat”.

The International staged yet another mass procession, and one that, because of the impact, warrants detailed description. Billed specifically as a “counter demonstration” it was planned to coincide with the opening of an elaborate new building by the Chicago Board of Trade. On the night of 28th April 1885 gathered “a motley crowd of radicals,

tramps and curiosity seekers” under the IWPA banner. From the North Side arrived bearing aloft red and black flags and marched to the speakers stand amid shouts from the assembled crowd. Fielden pointing to the flags said that the red flag represented “the red blood of humanity which flowed alike through the veins of all”. The other the black flag was “the emblem of starvation and misery” or “the fearful symbol of hunger, misery and death” as the *Alarm* described it. To the music of the band, the procession moved off forming a line about two blocks in length. At the head of the line marched Lucy Parsons and Lizzie Holmes each bearing a flag one black, the other red.

Demonstrations like these were a peculiar feature of the agitation in Chicago in the years before the Haymarket explosion. They were designed, above all, to display the strength of the movement to its opponents and at the same time to encourage its supporters with a sense of collective power. Yet, combining entertainment with social protest, they had a festive air which belied their seriousness of purpose. With their flags and banners, their placards and posters, their mottoes and slogans, their speeches and music, they brought all the devices of the counterculture into play and provided a vivid example of how traditional social activities might be used for revolutionary purposes.

¹ International Working People’s Association (IWPA), sometimes known as the ‘Black International’, was a worldwide political organisation established in 1881 at a convention held in London. The Chicago anarchists were part of the American federation of groups affiliated to the IWPA, often known as the Internationalists.

REVIEWS

WHAT'S ON

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.

■ **8th** Fundraising Fair from 2pm until 6pm at Homerton Grove Adventure Playground, Wardle Street, Hackney, London E9 5QG to raise money for a community project – come along and find out more.

■ **9th** The Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture (speaker to be confirmed), a News From Nowhere Club event at The Epicentre, West Street, Leytonstone, London E11 4LJ, 7.30pm buffet, 8pm talk and discussion, for details see newsfromnowhereclub.org or call 020 8555 5248.

■ **11th** 'Workers Of The World, Embrace!' Homophobia in the French Extreme Left (Daniel Guerin, his synthesis of Anarchism and Marxism and his revolutionary defence of free love and homosexuality), a book talk by David Berry (author of *The History of the French Anarchist Movement 1917–1945*) 7pm, Cowley Books, 12 London Road, Brighton BN1 4JA, email cowleybooks@gmail.com or see www.cowleyclub.org.uk.

■ **16th** An evening with Danny Chivers, author/activist/slam poet who was one of six people charged with planning to invade Ratcliffe-on-Soar coal power station, but his case collapsed at the last minute due to revelations about undercover police officer Mark Kennedy, 7.30pm at Pogo Café, 76 Clarence Road, London, E5 8HB, see www.pogocafe.co.uk/ for details.

■ **18th** Montreal International Anarchist Theatre Festival, a night of provocative, socially engaged theatre in French and English, at the Sala Rossa, 4848 boul St-Laurent at 7:30pm, for further details see www.anarchisthetrefestival.com

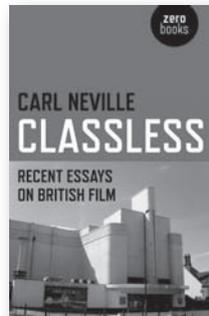
■ **21st** Book launch for *Property is Theft!* with Iain McKay at Freedom Bookshop, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX from 2pm until 4pm.

■ **25th** SchMOVIES presents *Reclaim the Streets – the movie*, free/donation, 8pm at the Cowley Club, 12 London Road, Brighton BN1 4JA, call 01273 696104 or email cowleyclub@riseup.net for details.

JUNE

■ **4th and 5th** Anarchist Bookfair at the Farelssaal, Oberer Quai 12, 2502 Biel-Bienne, Switzerland, with many publishers and anti-authoritarian organisations from Switzerland, France, Germany, Italy, etc., along with public readings and presentations, see <http://buechermesse.ch/2011> for details.

BOOK

**Classless: Recent Essays on British Film**

Carl Neville, Zero Books, £9.99

In another of Zero's valuable polemical pamphlets, Carl Neville (The Impostume blogger) analyses with considerable panache commercial UK cinema over the past twenty years, proposing its ideological intertwining with neoliberal orthodoxy, media saturation, lowbrow fashion and reality TV in furthering fantasies of social cohesion and the overcoming of adversity. The embarkation point is Danny Boyle's *Trainspotting* (1995) which, employing the unlikely theme of Edinburgh sink-estate junkiedom, supposedly reinvented British film for trendy youth consumption for the first time since the 1960s. Its blithe erasure of both suffering and the characters' stubbornly conflictual resistance (scrupulously woven into Irvine Welsh's source novel) is deconstructed here with reference to Peter Mullan's magic-realist *Orphans* and Lenny Abramson's mordant *Adam & Paul* – comparably imaginative visualisations not subtracting the proximity of misery. Boyle's previous *Shallow Grave* is then backhandedly complimented for honestly appraising yuppie psychopathy, leading awkwardly to an examination of alternate antisociality in fictional football hooligans. Subsequent surprising lurches see Stephen Frears' *The Queen* as a genuine fable of elite-populist assimilation, whereupon the climax reads *Slumdog Millionaire* and *Mamma Mia* as Bollywood-inflected *Oliver Twist* and bad karaoke respectively – but without the wit, humility, or hidden critiques of high-brow imperialism embedded in such classic cultural formations.

A certain lack of class

The book's substantive comparison works least well – between Boyle's films, righteously

lambasted as Blairite pap, and the contemporaneous, far less successful 'New Lad gone bad' cycle which to Neville gives more useful portrayals of proletarian transition. But the latter steadfastly focus on middle-class protagonism too, and surely resonate similarly. Like the Guy Ritchie school of sub-Tarantino mockney gangsterism, they reek of tabloid-whore rugby-club alumni slumming it – common denominators being hysterical masculinity, and only tangentially 'Englishness'. So dishonest feelgood palliatives in *Billy Elliott*, *Full Monty* and *Brassed Off* would be more pertinent even if native kitchen-sink traditions remain beyond the pale. Nevertheless it's perfectly true that marketing imperatives negotiate soporific official policy and media hype – rather than any underlying real social transformations coalescing around such 'issues' – especially given New Labour's Cool Britannia dream machine that Boyle faithfully propagandises.

Arguments elsewhere are equally skeletal. Mainstream lower-middle-class aspirational are contrasted in passing with backward-looking petit-bourgeois costume drama, *Four Weddings and Bridget Jones*, and more sophisticated pastorals by such as Frears. But recent British social-realist innovations militating against naturalistic victimhood scarcely figure – whose suggestive blends of expressionistic enchantment, surreal ambivalence and profane humour complicate clichéd trapdoors of poverty porn. Neville justifiably lauds two examples closer to flashy MTV aesthetics – Jonathan Glazer's *Sexy Beast* and Lynne Ramsay's *Morvern Callar* – but ignores important directors like Carine Adler, Shane Meadows, Penny Woolcock and Andrea Arnold, not to mention television like *Shameless*. Despite its provocative insights, refreshingly unabashed focus on class and culture, and necessary correctives to celebrity brown-nosing, *Classless* ultimately mimics the blinkered middle-class bias otherwise accurately skewered – not least, in utterly failing to ponder how viewers in and from working-class positions and backgrounds may respond to the materials described.

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

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QUIZ ANSWERS

1. It comes from the Vulgar Latin, *tripalire*, to torture with a tripalium, which was a three-pronged instrument.
2. Only in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. In England, there will only be free health care as long as you are registered with a GP.
3. He wrote the lyrics to the Confederación Nacional del Trabajo (CNT) anthem *A Las Barricadas* (To the Barricades).
4. A derogatory term for an alternate history that lacks plausibility and therefore needs a *deus ex machina* to allow the story to happen.

The Green Movement in Iran

Joe Maguire considers a new book offering insights into the problems facing Iran

The inception of Iran's Green Movement kick-started in June 2009. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, seen as the lame duck Presidential appointment of the Iranian ruling elite, won a heavily disputed re-election. The principle opposition leader, Mir Hossein Mousavi, referred to the result the morning after its announcement as a charade and on the same day demonstrations rallied around chants of 'Where is my vote?' When the state tried to confront this with its own orchestrated counter-demos and repression, it further polarised the conflict. The Green Movement's legitimacy earned it support from parts of Iran's existing ruling class and, in the course of a few months, it had mobilised some three million Iranians against a regime which was using systematic violence and torture against protesters.

When I picked up Hamid Dabashi's book, I had an expectation it would address a number of questions I had about the Green Movement. Had the movement broken with Mir Hossein Mousavi and co? What was the class nature of the Green Movement? What, if any, were the strategic and tactical considerations of the movement? When faced with opposition movements these are good criteria for judging their potential as movements for liberation. Discussions around what constituted the progressive elements of the Iraqi Resistance in recent years should be a good benchmark for those of us looking at any potential hope in the Middle East that doesn't involve supporting a group who are cheer-leading world hegemony à la America and its allies or simply bolstering some future or existing



despotic regime under the auspices of 'fighting imperialism'.

Having finished the book, I think the initial answers I was hoping to attain have not materialised, but the book has given me a deeper understanding of the strategic malaise and possibilities that Iran holds the key to in the context of the Middle East. It also thrashes out the cultural baggage that needs to be restored to any movement which wants to dispose of the Ayatollahs in Iran.

The creation of the Islamic Republic of Iran, after the eviction of the US-backed Shah in the Islamic Revolution 1977-9, put a hostile regime on the American map with the threat of exporting its own brand into the surrounding area. The US under Bush Snr. sought to contain the radical Shia regime by utilising Saddam in the Iran-Iraq war (1980-8) and also the Mujahideen and

Taliban (both Sunnis) in Afghanistan. This meant that, within a number of years of its inception, Iran was surrounded by hostile states which was fundamental to American intentions in that period.

This was not to remain for the course though. Fast forward to the present and roles have revised. America is dealing with a regressive geopolitical landscape which implicates it directly in hostilities in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan's border territories and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. On top of this, the rivalries America sought to play on through Sunni and Shia sectarianism have been eclipsed by their shared hatred for the Western imperialism. So Hezbollah, Hamas and the Iraqi insurgent Mahdi Army now have favourable links with the Iranian regime.

Dabashi stresses that the current context of the Middle East is one that is trapped in a "false binary" with the rest of the world, polarising a singular and hostile form of Islamisms which is an offspring of the parochialism of a Christian Empire and Zionism. We are witnessing an Iran locked down and in "combat mode" which is infusing an area already suffering the contradictions of imperialism. Dabashi singles out the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as the only moral ground which can be ascertained by the crony clerical regime by accounts of its own domestic dealings, but it has clear resonance in the Islamic world.

Dabashi seems to weave together a very good analysis of the area, pitching together recent history with current affairs, but seems to get bogged down in places on the issue of pre-emptive nuclear strikes, sanctions and the potential failings of Obama's foreign policy. Whole pages are wasted on what he thinks the potential good can be if American





Review

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foreign policy was not so short-sighted. Western rhetoric aside, it makes me wonder what he thinks the motivations behind the invasion of Iraq were, if they were not market driven. In this matter I think it's more sensible to draw from the Green Movement, as an oppressed agent, in the hope it addresses the multi-faceted problems it's inflicted with rather than hoping imperialism does a good turn in the region.

In a stacked and loaded area like the Middle East, Dabashi rightfully points out the possibilities of the Green Movement becoming an undercurrent which disarms and contradicts the rhetoric of Iran and the *Clash of Civilisations* style "false binary" it's

feeding into. And he paints at length a view set against an orientalist outlook of western commentators, a context whereby the Green Movement is required and is undertaking the reclaiming of the old cosmopolitan character of Iran.

Some of the arguments need bending into shape a little and its scope might not be immediately warming, but its insight into the problems facing Iran and its neighbours are put forward in a very sound and accessible manner. Dabashi claims cosmopolitanism is already being emeshed into a vibrant public and underground counter-culture which can reshape the body-politic of the Middle East. Let's hope he's right.

Iran, The Green Movement and the USA by Hamid Dabashi, Zed Books, £14.99.

THE QUIZ

1. What is the root of the French word, *travailler*, meaning to work hard, which gave us the word travail?
2. Will there be an NHS after the Tories reforms?
3. Which anarcho-syndicalist anthem did Valeriano Orobón Fernández write?
4. What are Alien Space Bats?

Answers on page 14

The Anarchist Quiz Book compiled by Martin Howard, with illustrations by Paul Petard, £5 (post free) from freedompress.org.uk.

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