

FREEDOM

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HAPPY BOOKFAIR!

'Anarchist Xmas' is here again... woop woop!

The 2013 London Anarchist Bookfair will take place at London's Queen Mary University on Saturday 19th October, from 10am to 7pm. This is your chance to take part in discussions, watch film screenings, listen to talks and, most importantly, meet the gorgeous folk from the Freedom Press collective on the Freedom stall (we're epically beautiful, seriously – wear sunglasses). Be a bit careful though, cos last year some **** brought along tonnes of those weird unhygienic papery things people used before Kindles. Ew.

This will be the 32nd bookfair – it's only been going since 1983 but anarchists are a bit thick and some years they were all too high on dodgy hippy drugs paid for out of your hard-earned taxes (YOUR HARD-EARNED TAXES! YES!) to remember that they'd already had a fair that year. Apparently nobody turned up to the first fair, but over the years people have had chance to save up so now people actually come along and buy stuff. Probably in big piles of 2ps, but still.

So here's a few specifics to whet your appetite for this year's do... If, like many anarchists, you are a lazy layabout who

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A VERY NAUGHTY BOY...

A laughable attempt at gagging the ex-madam poised to tell kinky tales on George Osborne (yes, we've got a little bit of sick in the backs of our throats too – sorry) in her memoirs has failed to intimidate her into silence.

Cops raided the house of Natalie Rowe under the pretext of looking for drugs (which they didn't find).

Twelve Drugs Squad officers searched the house just days after it was reported in the press that Rowe was going to publish a frank collection of memoirs dishing dirt on the top Tory.

The cops allegedly asked her repeatedly about the memoirs while they were at her house, warning her that she should not "open a can of worms" by going ahead with the publication of the book.

LENS CAP MANCHESTER



Fifty thousand people joined Manchester's anti-cuts march and rally on 29th September in defence of public services 'under attack' from David Cameron's government.

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Charlotte Dingle

NEWS

FREEDOM STOCKISTS

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- **56A Infoshop**, 56 Crampton Street, London SE17 3AE, email info@56a.org.uk <http://www.56a.org.uk/>
- **Housmans Bookshop**, 5 Caledonian Road, London N1 9DX, tel 020 7837 4473 email shop@housmans.com <http://www.housmans.com/>
- **London Action Resource Centre (LARC)**, 62 Fieldgate Street, London E1 1ES tel 020 7377 9088, <http://www.londonarc.org/>
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BRISTOL

- **Hydra Books**, 34 Old Market, Bristol BS2 0EZ tel: 0117 3297401, email info@hydrabooks.org <http://www.hydrabooks.org/>
- **Kebele Social Centre**, 14 Robertson Road, Bristol BS5 6JY, tel 0117 9513086 email kebelesocialcentre@riseup.net <http://www.kebelecoop.org>

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LENS CAP BATH



Bristol Solidarity Federation and Anarchist Federation picket of Santander Bank in Bath on 5th October in solidarity with sacked CNT-AIT delegate at ISBAN, Madrid, Spain.

Happy Bookfair!

◀ page 1

can't read, there will be a whole bunch of tasty films to zone out in front of. These include *Riot from Wrong*, which looks at the 2011 summer riots; *Reel News: Fracking* which tackles, er, fracking; *Epiphany*, centred around the fascinating topic of the mystics and anarchists of the English Revolution; and *Into the Fire*, documenting the stories of migrants and refugees in Athens. In the mood for a good ol' dose of lefty infighting? Take your pick from a range of slanging matches – I mean, debates. Sexual consent, Chomsky, squatting, workers' co-ops, welfare cuts, education, direct action, the relative merits of tofu and Cheezly... Even the most laid back comrade will find something to speak a bit loudly about.

It's all over, what now? Waaaah!! Nil desperandum, comrade. There are a number of after-parties to keep you off the streets when the fair is over. Most of these offer the

chance to dabble in traditional anarchist evening entertainments such as drinking tea, wearing deerstalker hats, playing bridge, being exceptionally sober and repeating everything you read in the *Daily Mail* (your sparkling eyes filled with barely concealed glee, etc., etc.). Or you can be a bit more original and drink lots of beer and eat curry while wearing black and listening to songs that only have three chords and were recorded in your mate's bath.

All the other info you need is located here: <http://anarchistbookfair.org.uk/>. Obviously not everyone lives in London – and only people in London can read anyway – but just in case any of you country bumpkins learned something from your alphabetti spaghetti, the good news is that there are fairs all over the country. Just keep your eyes peeled and read your *Freedom* like a good little girl.

Charlotte Dingle



Tommy quits EDL

Co-founders Tommy Robinson and Kevin Carroll have ditched the English Defence League

The two say “they can no longer keep extremist elements at bay” within the organisation and have instead joined the Quilliam Foundation, an anti-extremist think tank founded by ex-members of Islamist group Hizb-ut Tahrir.

When this Damascene conversion from racist thugs to peace-loving liberals took place is unclear. Robinson says he has been in talks with Quilliam for nine months, yet in May proclaimed “Islam is the enemy”.

In September he attempted to march on a mosque in East London and to use Altab Ali Park, named after a young muslim man murdered by racists, as the EDL rallying point. Just before resigning, he stalked an anti-EDL website owner, tweeting photos of his (incorrectly identified) home. Robinson hasn't recanted his views, simply saying street protests are “no longer productive” for achieving his aims, because “10% of our lads are dick heads” i.e neo-Nazis, a fact we're supposed to believe he has just discovered. And after resigning, he gave his



support to an EDL demo in Bradford. He still claims to be ‘misrepresented’.

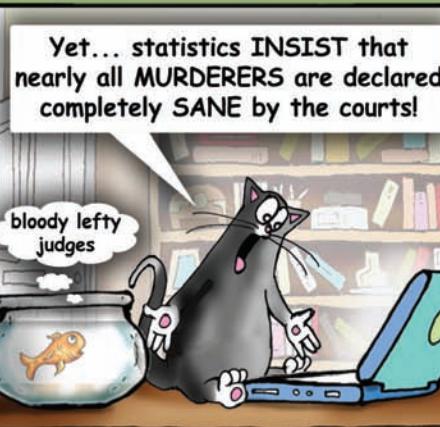
Life has got a little harder for Robinson recently, after being very publicly refused service in Selfridges and a casino, regularly arrested and serving a prison spell for using a false passport. Recent arrests of Golden Dawn leaders in Greece could also have marred his long view of far-right street movements. And so, after the brief surge in support due to the killing of Lee Rigby ebbed, Robinson has grasped a chance to climb from his leaking dinghy to a much grander ship, on course for the mainstream. What next? A chair on *Question Time*, a tell-all in the *Daily Mail*, a platform at the next UKIP conference – all possible. A new anti-Muslim organisation, with less beer and boots, and more dinners and suits? He certainly displays the cunning self-importance

and lack of scruples required for success in the political system. There are rumours Robinson may team up with US Islamophobic bloggers Pam Geller and Robert Spence, though how Quilliam could let their newest recruit do so and retain a shred of credibility amongst Muslims is unclear.

Robinson's new role takes him off the streets, and leaves the EDL lacking a high-profile spokesperson. His replacement, Tim Ablitt, is one of six EDL members arrested for plotting to bomb a mosque in Bournemouth in July 2010. The first demo since Robinson resigned, billed as the ‘big one’ in Bradford, drew fewer than 250 supporters. While the futures of Robinson and the EDL are as yet unknown, the far right has undoubtedly changed, and antifascists' analysis and response must adapt accordingly.

Louise Reynolds

CAT'S on the INTERNET by Marc Roberts



THE BIG PICTURE



Afghan migrants struggling against the Belgian state's asylum policies demonstrated in Brussels after shelters were closed and they found themselves on the streets. During the protest many were injured, including children, and around 50 people were arrested. Many have been living in Belgium for years, but were denied refugee status. Without papers, they cannot work or live properly and face forced deportation to a country torn by war.

Storms in the Deep Web

Dani Ellis looks at the fall of the Silk Road black market website

As pioneers of an online black market – and arguably the first to gain both notoriety and popularity beyond its own users – those responsible for establishing and running the Silk Road marketplace had few predecessors or competitors from whose experience and mistakes they could learn.

The capitulation of the site to an apparently successful FBI operation at the beginning of October was therefore hardly a surprise to those who'd been observing its virtually unbounded expansion. While no one uninvolved with the investigation could have predicted the exact timing of its demise, a near-unregulated exchange for primarily illegal substances and material was unlikely to avoid the attention or efforts of law enforcement agencies for much longer, and the likelihood of its staff making a fatal mistake grew with every passing day.

The court complaint against Ross William Ulbricht, the site's alleged mastermind and apparently singular owner of the Dread Pirate Roberts moniker (despite the obvious connotations), wouldn't look out of place in a Vernor Vinge collection. If he's to believed, Ulbricht, a self-proclaimed follower of the classical liberal Austrian School, had established the site both as an experiment in anarcho-capitalism and as a personal attack on authoritarianism, rather than for his own financial gain. The less cynical would argue that the \$80 million in sales commission he made remaining unspent after two years supports this.

Whatever your opinion on the usage and trade of narcotics and other psychoactive drugs, the Silk Road had undeniable utility in reducing their three associated harms: harm to communities (by taking vendors and buyers off the street and disassociating them with other forms of crime), medical harm to users (by providing high purity and accurately measured amounts and disseminating medical advice) and harm to users as a result of law enforcement action (by anonymising both parties involved in a deal), particularly in the United States, where non-violent drugs-related

felonies carry disproportionately high minimum sentences.

The site's large and active community produced volumes of reports on the quality and characteristics of substances being sold, encouraged in-depth discussion about harm reduction and even organised community action against vendors deemed to be selling unsafe, contaminated or otherwise undesirable products; neither firearms nor child pornography were tolerated.

While not without its serious flaws, occasionally exhibiting mob mentality and associated vigilantism, the Silk Road's community looked – and in fact, still looks, having been left online by US investigators – much more like a craft beer forum than the dark and violent underworld usually associated with drug distribution and represented a small but important step in the right direction of reducing the problems that often accompany drug use.

Scratching just below the surface of the court complaint reveals a much more sinister



situation than if taken at face value, with many parts of the official story appearing particularly convenient for the agencies involved. The document is understandably light on details where they're not required for proceedings – government agents don't make a habit of revealing their tactics – and within hours of its publication, users, security professionals and enthusiasts alike flooded online discussions with questions about both its authenticity and ethics.

A major part of the complaint describes the interception of messages purportedly recording Ulbricht's ordering of a hit on a blackmailer and the subsequent payment on the delivery to him of proof by the would-be assassin. At first glance, and as described by the FBI's agent, his ruthless and disturbing requests don't seem out of place for the proprietor of a \$1.2bn black market, but in context they more closely resemble the character assassination of a man whom authorities could not entrust a jury to find

Category	Link
Drugs(1225)	View
Cannabis(391)	View
Ecstasy(111)	View
Dissociatives(44)	View
Psychedelics(41)	View
Opioids(92)	View
Slimming(119)	View
Other(140)	View
Benzos(95)	View
LSD(82)	View
Services(109)	View
Money(73)	View
Weapons(4)	View
Home & Garden(4)	View
Food(1)	View
Books(12)	View
Drug paraphernalia(46)	View
Xbox(3)	View
Medical(3)	View

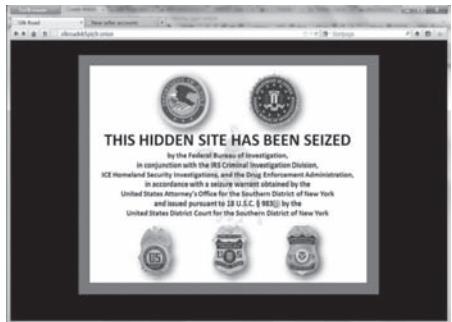
guilty, given the otherwise non-violent nature of the site, its role in harm reduction and its undermining of the traditional (and major) source of income of serious organised crime.

The FBI reveal precious little information about the other parties involved and, given the lack of any actual murder being recorded, there is widespread suspicion that one or both are either agents or coerced informants which, if true, shows that the authorities resorted to what amounts to entrapment and other underhand strategies to get their mark.

But despite the worrying implications of the Silk Road's demise, it is, on balance, an optimistic story. Not for the details specific to the site, but for the technology, systems and culture surrounding it which had yet to be seriously tested. Governments have long been suspected of attempting to control and surveil the encrypted Tor network – the anonymising routing system (somewhat ironically originating from a US Navy project) by which the Silk Road was accessed and its users' identities protected – but this case shows that it remained effective against their attacks and forced them to resort to traditional policing methods. Of course, there is still the possibility of authorities engaging in information laundering, having chosen not to reveal a successful (and possibly illegal) compromise at this time, but for those who rely on Tor and similar darknets to evade oppression and state control, such as in China and Iran, this still delivers a little dose of confidence.

It also proves the practicality of bitcoin (the crypto-currency used by the site for transactions) in allowing free and anonymous trade between individuals on a huge scale, albeit with the addition of the site's tumbler laundering system, as bitcoin is effectively a public ledger. It introduced a whole new generation of users to practical encryption and it provides a textbook case to millions on the importance of privacy and anonymity.

For many it would feel perverse to mourn the loss of what was, in essence, a classical liberal's playground and a major source of dangerous and unsavoury material, but its ashes will undoubtedly fertilise legitimate online communities more resilient to the authoritarian measures being introduced by governments every day and in every corner of the globe.



ANALYSIS

War of words

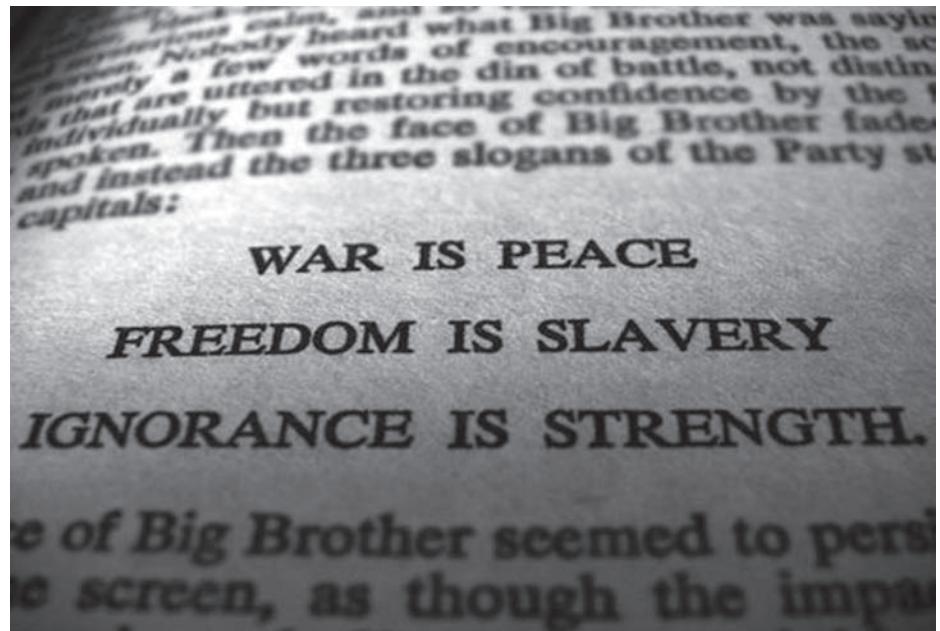
Pacifism, anti-militarism... and the grey area in between

In 2011, former cabinet minister Jack Straw said that "pacifists were critical of NATO ..." during the cold war.¹ The assumption being that there is no valid position where we might be anti nukes and other mammoth expenditure projects but at times see the need for armies and be aware of their misuse but not be pacifists. But one can be anti-militarist without being pacifist.

Pacifists reject violence in its many forms although views can vary on self-defence. So often, methods used to do something will determine the end result. For example authoritarian, hierarchical methods will ensure that changes are only cosmetic and the *status quo* remains untouched. Violent confrontations between individuals, groups, and nations colour their outcomes. Using armed conflict can rule out hopes of back-tracking and negotiation through surrendering to militarism. It can make a bad situation worse. But Gandhi suggested that if faced with certain death pacifism might be abandoned. Burma's democracy champion Aung San Suu Kyi suggested that she would not support armed conflict "unless for a short time for limited use if it could prevent many deaths". She added Nelson Mandela's opinion that non violence has to be abandoned for practical reasons when it fails.²

Examples of militarism are in the dealings between states through 'balances of power' and negotiating with 'armed strength' that only help arms manufacturers and their shareholders. Support for such thinking underpins excuses for standing armies and 'nuclear deterrence'. Anti-militarists oppose such ideas without necessarily being pacifists. The courage and self-sacrifice of those in the front line is widely acknowledged but those qualities are seldom recognised in conscientious objectors. Militarism can be so deeply ingrained in a culture that its effects are not noticed. It is very adaptable with the best PR so that it can advance military solutions in place of alternatives. It reacts against struggles that oppose injustice, oppression or competition for resources. We see how the armed forces are more honoured than other professions and expenditure on them exceeding social needs. Anarchists and some close to us recognise how the state, weapons manufacturers and armies all need to justify themselves to extend their power.

At times those who previously had been pacifists may see the need for limited military action. Here is the grey area between anti-militarists and pacifists because such people retain their critical thinking but want clear objectives. The Second World War saw some who had signed The Peace Pledge set aside their principles to fight Hitler.



A myth about the Home Guard 'Dad's Army' was that they only had broom handles. Truth was that the State had plenty of rifles but did not trust a popular militia. Anti-Nazi resistance at that time and later the Viet Cong showed how an armed non-military population is a practical solution.³ After 1945, in spite of the National Health Service and other post-war benefits, much oppression remained in place. Subsequently, Peace Pledges were remembered as ex-service people sick of the Cold War helped to rebuild the peace movement.

Anti-militarists and pacifists have combined to destroy weaponry using physical force but without hurting anyone. Saboteurs for peace have a long and distinguished track record.

The right-wing press report anti-militarists as being pacifists when objecting to our demonstrations. Even some class war anarchists have made the same confusion, being critical of activists who avoid punch-ups with cops.⁴ During the Vietnam war protests arguments raged about support for the North Vietnam army. The authoritarian left reported 'pacifist betrayal' on those of us who would not support that Stalinist regime on peace marches. That was also an example of how the described positions are lumped together, denying that there are steps and stages in our arguments, not only extremes.

Pacifism can at times be seen as an extreme seeking a perfect society even though we all have imperfections. Expecting quick democratic results from the Arab Spring is another counsel of perfection. Struggles against apartheid in South Africa and for civil rights in the USA were mainly non-violent. Both movements had elements rejecting non-violence due to self-defence needs. Neither cause could have had some good results without both contributions, those who were committed to non-violence and those who were not. It is a

'chicken and egg' question to ask which was more relevant.

Aspects of anti-militarism are seen in the Zapatistas who at times control the Chiapas area of Mexico. Avoiding personality cults their leaders are masked and they encourage peasants to defend their land. But they do not attempt to take political control. It seems that Zapatistas only engage with government forces when necessary and cease fire as soon as possible. But theirs is far from being a perfect society. Also in Central America is Costa Rica which does not have a standing army. Surely some degree of anti-militarism is also present in that country. The same might be said of Switzerland where militias are trained to replace a standing army. An argument against such an arrangement is that it is dangerous to have guns lying around in peoples homes. But such responses are from the American situation, which has a different culture to Switzerland where gun related accidents are very rare. Having a trained militia to replace a standing army would make military decisions harder and slower to take – no bad thing.

In Britain, with all its faults, compared to various situations and places mentioned above we have some freedom to influence life and death decisions, even when the effects of such choices involve far away people. Other peoples at different times have had no such opportunities to oppose oppression. But such freedoms are only like footpaths: we either use them or lose them. They cannot be defended with dogma.

martin s. gilbert

References

- 1 Radio 4, 2011.
- 2 Reith Lecture, Radio 4, 5th July 2011.
- 3 <http://takingnote.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/06/07/the-amo-conspiracy/>?
- 4 Ian Bone, *Bash The Rich*, Tangent Books 2006.

THE KEBELE SOCIAL CENTRE

What started as a squatted empty building in the autumn of 1995, has turned into an 18-year (and counting) experimental project putting anarchist ideas and practices into action on a daily basis.

No doubt when a small group of young punks and idealists occupied what they hoped would be a temporary home back in '95, they wouldn't have expected it to still be there 18 years later. Amazingly one of the original occupiers remains involved, and there are regular visits from old-timers harking back to the good old days of the late '90s Reclaim The Streets parties.

In fact, the retail space with living accommodation above, on the corner of 14 Robertson Road and Foster Street, in Easton, Bristol, has evolved continually over the years. From defended squatted space, to fundraising for a housing co-op to buy the premises (off a bank) with a Kultural Projekt downstairs, to its present incarnation as a Community Co-op. A few things have remained constant of course: the donations-based weekly bike workshop (overrun by local kids seeking to keep their bikes on the move); the weekly Sunday evening vegan cafe and social, which raises funds to help keep Kebele running; an emphasis on creative fun, with DIY art and the regular DJ parties, street events and many benefit gigs; and its role as a political hub, providing info, literature, contacts, space to meet and organise and discuss.

Thousands have passed through Kebele's doors – committed anarchists and radicals, interested locals, and visitors from faraway. Many have enjoyed crash space on its well-worn floors, whilst countless others have debated furiously the ideas of anarchism and discussed the finer points with speakers local and international. Quite a few have gone away inspired, to set up or work with similar and related projects across Bristol and the south west, and further afield.

Of course Kebele doesn't always get it right, as is to be expected of an evolving project, but it's never given up and repeated waves of new people inspired by ideas and getting involved has kept it going. Eighteen years on Kebele is what it is. Some of you will get involved and change it, some will be turned off by it, and some will go away inspired and informed by it. Let's hope Kebele continues to provoke a response – get involved and ensure it does!

- Kebele social centre & community co-op,
14 Robertson Road, Bristol BS5 6JY
- kebelesocialcentre@riseup.net
- <http://www.kebelecoop.org>

Meat to live

Brian Morris responds to the idea that anti-capitalists should give up animal products

Kevin Watkinson's thoughtful little note on 'Veganism vs Capitalism' (*Freedom*, July 2013) sets up a rather facile and misleading dichotomy, implying that this is the only choice we have. It is about as misleading as the choice we are often given between industrial capitalism and primitivism, or again, between Cartesian mechanistic science (and anthropocentrism) and religion (animism). As if there were no alternatives! Like those anarchists who advocate a religious metaphysic, the proponents of vegetarianism (veganism) seem to lack any historical or ecological sensibility. Some thoughts below.

1. Vegetarians seem oblivious of the fact that plants are living, sentient beings, concerned with their own integrity, protecting themselves from damage, and resent being eaten. We thus need to recognise that all living beings, humans included, are species-centric, and that sustaining life itself, for all organisms, involves an act of killing, whether by predation or absorption. Is the eating of plants then also an expression of 'hierarchy', 'exploitation' and 'domination'? Plants have a right to exist, and we should avoid not only anthropocentrism, but also zoocentrism, the tendency to consider humans and mammals as somehow more alive and more valuable than other living organisms.

2. Advocates of vegetarianism seem to downplay the fact that while the production of meat under capitalism takes place under the most deplorable conditions, so does the production of cereals, fruits and vegetables. For they too involve industrial forms of production, which have an extremely detrimental impact on both plants and the wider ecology. Soya, beloved by my vegan daughter as a milk substitute, is mainly produced by agribusiness. The problem is

less what is produced, but rather how it is produced, whether under industrial capitalism as a commodity, or under organic forms of agriculture, one that embraces in a sustainable way animals, plants, fungi and bacteria in the production of food as a common good to meet human needs. It hardly needs saying that herbivores (such as sheep) are a means of converting grass into human food, and should be an intrinsic part of any sustainable agriculture or human life-world. Given the current human population on the earth 'primitivism' (the advocacy of a pre-agricultural lifestyle) is simply not an option, nor is industrial capitalism.

3. Throughout human history, long before the emergence of capitalism, humans, whether hunter-gatherers or subsistence agriculturalists, have essentially been omnivores with organic links to nature. They thus had a varied diet combining both animal and plant foods – unlike the urban extremists, the McDonalds and the vegans. They actually showed respect for the animals they hunted and domesticated as food. The notion that vegetarianism is associated with working-class solidarity is quite misleading. Throughout history industrial workers, like hunter-gatherers and peasants, have been omnivores. This is surely reflected in the various 'delicacies' of the British working-class, namely sausages, tripe and onions, fish and chips, haggis, bacon sandwiches, pork pies (and other pasties), black pudding, as well as various stews!

4. There is no intrinsic connection between vegetarianism and anarchism. Historically, vegetarianism has been linked with religious elites – like the Brahmin caste in India – and has been embraced, as with religion and ecology, by people right across the political spectrum, including outright fascists. Anarchists have more affinities with the advocates of organic farming (Colin Tudge), permaculture (Bill Mollison), a subsistence perspective (Maria Mies) and perennial polyculture (Lierre Keith) than they do with the advocates of veganism, however important their critiques of industrial capitalism and factory farming.



INTERNATIONAL

NEWS IN BRIEF

GERMANY: Uber wanker, Bono, has described how he feared for his life after being chased down the street by a “group of anarchists”.

He was spotted by the group as he was lurking around at a G8 summit. They approached him and waved placards that read ‘Make Bono history’.

Although he was initially shaking like a shitting dog, he later appeared pleased with the incident. He said: “So, we are doing something right – we are annoying both the capitalists in Africa, and the anti-capitalists in Europe. The thing is, I am not an idealist, never have been, I am just quite pragmatic about finding solutions.” This from the man who has a £200 million fortune and pays his tax offshore!

MALAYSIA: Security forces arrested dozens of people during an operation to evict fifty homeless families who have been living in derelict buildings in the city of Seremban. Further arrests happened when supporters of those evicted attempted to stop contractors from the property developers who purchased the land, from demolishing the buildings.

The eviction of the squatters had been agreed by the courts in 2011, but it was then deferred as the Prime Minister intervene and insisted that the property developers should pay each family a laughably derisory amount of compensation.

UKRAINE: In September an activist from the student union group ‘Direct Action’ was viciously attacked by a large gang of neo-Nazis in full paramilitary attire.

The unprovoked attack took place outside a busy city centre subway station in full view of passers-by and security cameras.

The victim, Pavlo Myronov, is still in hospital and is experiencing significant memory loss.

This is the second such attack in the same area in less than a week. Days earlier another activist, Bohdan Biletsky, was attacked by a group of fascists, and was also admitted to hospital following a serious concussion.

UNITED STATES: A wildcat strike by 600 Boston school bus drivers meant that parents had to find alternative means of transport for around 33,000 schoolchildren.

The strike was in protest against the use of an electronic tracking device that enabled parents to see their children’s whereabouts. Whilst the original purpose of the device seemed well intentioned, it quickly became apparent that it was not being used for its described purpose, but was being used as a tool to monitor and manage drivers, and to determine how much they should be paid.

City officials tried unsuccessfully to gain a court injunction preventing the drivers from striking. But they need not have worried as the police were out in force on ‘scabbing’ duty.

LENS CAP BANGLADESH



Thousands of Bangladeshi garment workers clash with police during protests over pay and working conditions. The garment industry in Bangladesh accounts for over 80% of GDP, which means any stoppage in production is met with swift and brutal reprisals by the state. Despite the industry generating billions of dollars, workers are paid less than poverty wages, and are expected to work in conditions akin to the slave trade.

ANC and police in collusion

In Durban, Nqobile Nzuza, 17 years of age, was shot in the back by police at a road blockade and later died of her injuries. Several other protesters were gunned down and are currently critically ill in hospital. This is the police and politicians making good on their promises to ‘crackdown’ on protesters.

The shootings are the latest in a long line of assassinations and beatings meted out against anyone who stands against the local ANC council and their corrupt business partners who are running the housing projects in and around Durban.

It seems that anyone who does not support the ANC are being attacked and then targeted for eviction. Any attempts to resist the evictions are being met with extreme force by the security services.

It is being alleged that prominent local ANC activists and politicians are present (in disguise) at protests and evictions, and are directing the police which people to attack.

The police claim that the shootings were in self-defence, yet a spokesperson for Abahlali baseMjondolo said that “Remember how they lied about Marikana, Remember how they lied about the attack on our movement in the Kennedy Road settlement in 2009! Remember how in 2006 they lied and said that they had shot Monica Ngcobo, a 19 year old woman, in the stomach with rubber bullet at a protest in Umlazi and yet the autopsy showed that she was shot in the chest with a shotgun.” The police are liars and the ANC are anti-working class scum.

Luther Blissett

Notes from the US

Spying

As the extent of the state surveillance of citizens of the world continues to shock those in the United States who understand the implications (four broadly progressive websites voluntarily shut down in August because their operations have become impossible knowing what they know about email interception), Obama announced an ‘inquiry’ into NSA activity. Only the naive

would be surprised by the fact that it’s to be made up of four people highly unlikely to be even remotely critical of the (illegal) practices. The four Washington insiders are Michael Morell, former acting head of the CIA; Richard Clarke, former counter-terrorism coordinator under presidents Clinton and Bush; former regulatory boss Cass Sunstein, who served under President Obama until

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Teach 'em a lesson!

Cops lay siege to strike march of teachers and their supporters

Tens of thousands of striking teachers and their supporters have taken to the streets of the Brazilian capital, Rio, in a protest over pay.

The planned protest was initially peaceful, however when heavily armed police officers dressed in full riot gear and toting guns and tear gas launchers arrived, the mood quickly changed, and a violent confrontation ensued.

Protesters attempted to enter city hall and several banks, which was like catnip to the already 'straining at the leash' riot police, who responded with measured and proportionate rubber bullet and tear gas rounds. The protesters responded in kind, setting up road-blocks, torching, vehicles, and throwing rocks at the police. Local news agencies report that there were at least 18 arrests and that damage to property runs into several hundred thousand.



A teacher who took part in the protest, Hugo Cryois, said that, "Without the police, there is no violence. When they are there, there is always violence. You cannot trust them."

Teachers have been on strike and protesting since 8th August, demanding improved pay, conditions, and career progression. The government announced their revised offer on 1st October, but on examination it would benefit less than 7% of teachers.

Violence again escalated as teachers attempted to gain entry to the government building where negotiations had been taking place. Several people received serious injuries at the hands of the police, including 54 year old teacher, Luciane Santos, who described how she was held down by a police officer whilst he clubbed her in the face, resulting in a serious eye injury.

One police officer was found to have posted a picture on Facebook of his broken-in-half truncheon, with the caption "too bad teach"

written underneath. Pictures have also emerged of police officers planting evidence on protesters.

The response of the mainstream media has been typical in its distortion of the truth. They claim that no teachers were involved in the violence – it was just the 'anarchists'. However, to be fair they have reported one element of events correctly. They claim that a masked group hell bent on violence had hijacked a peaceful march by teachers. This is indeed true... the police had turned up, masked up, and were clearly hell bent on violence from the beginning.

Unsurprisingly, despite there being scores of injuries being reported from amongst the protesting teachers, the only airtime being given is to the two police officers who received minor cuts and bruises. Solidarity with the striking teachers in Brazil and their supporters!

Luther Blissett

Notes from the US

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last year; and privacy expert Peter Swire, who also served under Presidents Obama and Clinton.

Racism

More details emerged at the very end of August of the extent to which New York City Police Department spies on Muslims. The Associated Press reported that the NYPD labelled entire mosques 'terrorist groups' in order to use undercover informants that make secret recordings and spy on imams, often without any evidence (let alone proof) of wrongdoing. This further means that anyone attending services could be put under investigation and surveillance.

If ever proof were needed that it's corporations first and people second (particularly if Muslim) in the United States, a ruling in early

September by a Federal judge gave it: four Iraqis who were imprisoned at Abu Ghraib were ordered to pay nearly US\$14,000 (£8,906) in legal fees to the military contractor whom they unsuccessfully sued for torturing them: this included being caged, beaten, threatened with dogs and given electric shocks. Their case against CACI International was dismissed in June following a recent decision by the Supreme Court that restricts lawsuits against corporations for abuses on foreign soil. That – rather than the crimes of CACI – was cited.

Economy

In August new statistics (from Sentier Research) showed that median household income in the United States remains 6% below its level before the recession began five years ago.

Although median income has increased for two years, it is still US\$3,400 (£2,193.12) below the levels of December 2007. At the same time, the Economic Policy Institute found that wages for the lowest paid 70% of the population had gone down in the same period – despite a rise in productivity of 7.7%.

Between April and June this year US banks reported a record net income of US\$42 (£27) billion between April and June. Profits typically increased by 30%. JPMorgan Chase alone made more than US\$70 (£45) million a day during that period.

Louis Further

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Economic Policy Institute: www.epi.org
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ECONOMICS

Post haste



Jamie Ranger looks at the rushed privatisation of the Royal Mail

Unsurprisingly, the Tory-led Coalition are going against the public will in order to use their slender representative majority in our parliament to push through the unwise, short-termism of a Royal Mail sell-off. There seem to be two principle reasons for making such an unpopular move. One of which is realpolitik and the other ideological. Ironically, I believe that I've come up with a counter-intuitive plan that will have both Jacob Rees-Mogg's group of middle-England conservative privilege and that pragmatic, tongue-in-cheek group of anarchists actually agreeing on a political compromise that could have stopped this tragedy for public services.

Firstly, there is a degree of realpolitik in this move. This is a privatisation that New Labour tried and failed to implement, and there is sufficient Blairite feeling in Westminster that this vote could pass through without the fuss required to curtail any sell-off. The Chancellor will no doubt sell off the shares to many of the people who genuinely know him personally, some on first-name terms, and the coffers will be bolstered on the back of the housing credit bubble, artificially improving the economic performance of the government by chalking off some of that pesky debt. It will be mentioned that Labour

tried and failed to sell off Royal Mail, and thus by opposing it they will appear weak and uncertain. The Tories will paint the picture that this is a government that can push through with ambitious projects "in these tough economic times" that they have inherited. Obviously the long-term value of having a public service in national hands is far greater than the influx of cash gained from selling it off - after all, you can only sell something off once before it's no longer yours. The value derived from people being able to exchange letters and parcels, regardless of how remote their location in the United Kingdom, as well as being able to speak with some authority in regards to the price of stamps, the quality of service and the pay scales at the highest level of the company, will be undermined – at least in the mainstream political consensus.

The second reason behind the privatisation is, of course, the ideological position of the Tory party since the mid-1970s when monetarism and free market worship became the norm. A dismal failure of an economic plan in many respects, and yet nevertheless the consensus of our political settlement. British politicians may still yearn for universal benefits, but we are starting to see the use of Americanisms such as 'entitlements' replacing 'benefits', and dichotomies produced in tabloids between 'scroungers' and 'strivers' and all that sort of propagandist nonsense. Ironically, one of the biggest problems that Thatcher was containing during her first reform of the benefits system was the number of people who were signing on under fail

pretences and then going to work. So much for lazy, more like engineering clever ways to trick the government into giving them their taxes back, as they 'strive' to make ends meet during an economic recession. There will be members of the Tory party (see entire cast of Britannia Unchained, the free-market cult within the Tory backbenches) who genuinely believe that the Royal Mail ought to be in the hands of private individuals, and ought to be run for the purpose of deriving as much profit for a small number of shareholders as possible, as opposed to being run as a public service.

No doubt it will be the consumer that misses out. The Tories – notice how I've stopped bothering to call them a coalition government by now – only need the stamp prices and delivery service to remain static and intact until the next general election. After that, the shareholders can hike up all the prices, put all the regulations and blame for poor deliveries on to the consumer (you need to have a box that weighs x, y and z and fill out these forms, otherwise it's not our fault if it gets lost, etc.), and you'll have people living in remote locations, usually the retired and some of the more vulnerable people in our society, who will have their post either delayed to the point of becoming a ruinous, pointless exercise in futility, or will have their services removed because they won't be 'economically viable'. For people without internet access, the consequence of not being able to afford, or not having access to, a decent postal service, is potentially devastating, especially to those with family in opposite ends of the country, or abroad.

Amusingly, I thought of a way of posturing politically that could have stopped the sell-off. Why don't we, instead of putting the Royal Mail in the hands of corporate shareholders, we give it to the Queen? It could stay exactly the same, but all the shares will be owned by the Crown, and all the profits derived from the service can be sent back to the treasury. Obviously anarchists ought not to be suggested that constitutional monarchs should control our primary means of delivering post, but needs must. I can imagine this plan would have had Jacob Rees-Mogg squealing with histrionic delight, but alas we must keep protesting as long as this privatisation looks inevitable.



Back to the land

Gyorgy Furiosa on the pros and cons of anarcho-primitivism

"With man gone, will there be hope for gorilla?" Thus does a giant ape pose the polysemous question at the opening of *Ishmael*, Daniel Quinn's exploration of tribalism and anarcho-primitivism. The eponymous ape goes on to detail how the "greatest mistake in human history" – namely the development of agriculture – around 10,000 years ago has lead to our modern society of domination, domesticity and exploitation. The gorilla argues that the advent of civilisation has been the key factor in making humanity little more than captives of a system that compels us to go on destroying the world in order to live.

The primitivist view espouses the ideal society as that in which humanity lived for thousands of generations in pre-history, one based on a system of tribal hunter-gatherers. It cites the emergence of agriculture and the subsequent commodification of nature and stockpiling of resources as critical conditions in the support of the capitalist patriarchy. By advocating a 'rewilding' of humanity whereby our living conditions and psychology cast off domestication in favour of a feral existence in harmony with our environment, we would return to the non-hierarchical structures in place before the advent of governments, which were birthed by the specialisation that becomes possible with a surplus of food to feed priests, bureaucrats and politicians. The subsequent oppression and exploitation that evolved out of their appearance is intimately connected to the control and power that is innate in authoritarian structures. Primitivism finds a basic contradiction between liberty and mass society, and follows an individualist perspective in which organisations no larger than villages and tribes are the only structures viable for an unalienated life for its members. As a measure of scale, if you can't remember all the names of the people in your tribe, it's probably too big to live happily within.

This atomisation of societies into knowable proportions is the root of the anarcho prefix on primitivism. With society rejecting both civilisation and technology and the subsequent alienation connected with them, humanity would be able to return to an unalienated, free existence, without the exploitation and oppression endemic in mass-scale organisation.

The essential concept of rewilding purports a development of a new relationship with other species of both animals and plants. A common criticism of these ideas is that without agriculture, the current population of society could not be sustained. However, permaculture design theory, emphasising diverse, harmonious and cooperative systems of interdependence between humanity and nature, has been discussed at length within anarcho-primitivism



as to the extent to which horticulture and agroforestry would be included in primitive society. Although the traditional view of hunter-gatherer existence would rely on what nature produces without human intervention, as of ten millennia before, it is now feasibly possible to design self-sustaining agroforests that could provide the food needs of humanity and countless other species without threatening biodiversity and the balance of nature. Whether this would be possible for a global population of billions is debatable.

To examine the roots of green anarchism in the modern era, the themes of primitivism have been returned to in recent centuries, most notably in the writings of Henry David Thoreau. In his book *Walden*, first published in 1854, he attempts to gain an objective understanding of society through immersion in nature, and in his essay *Civil Disobedience*, he exhorts people to resist unjust governance and the state, with the intention of rejecting materialism in favour of self-sufficiency. These ideas consciously found a physical manifestation in the modern era through the anarcho-naturist communes of nineteenth-century Europe, which advocated polyamory, a vegetarian diet, nudism and outdoor activity as a rejection of civilisation, a concept they regarded as ignoble, filthy and inherently exploitative.

Taking up the primitivist gauntlet in the latter half of the twentieth century, John Zerzan, author of *Future Primitive* and *Against Civilization*, could be styled as the anti-Steve Jobs. He argues that the hunter-gatherer societies of paleolithic times and such modern equivalents as the !Kung and Bushmen live an unalienated lifestyle with a world-view of abundance and plenty, rather than in the anomic structures of civilised society based on scarcity. He sees domestication as the will to control and dominate, and therefore incompatible with anarchism, which he defines as being 'without

rule'. Zerzan's controversial opinions have been criticised as being anti-anarchist, vague on which technologies would be continued in a primitivist society, and as being linked to cataclysmic loss of human life. His works appeared regularly in anarcho-primitivist zine *Species Traitor* – a document deemed by Wolfi Landstreicher as immature in its arrival, yet still influential in chronicling the anarcho-primitivist meme.

Landstreicher points out that anarcho-primitivism has much in common with anarcho-communism in that it is little more than another programme for the imagining of a future ideal. He advocates instead that we examine these ideas playfully, and use them to develop an immediate, urgent anarchist critique that can be explored and reflected in the interplay between desiring, acting individuals, a critique that can be deployed in a physical, transformative manner, rather than descending into empty academic theorising of future possibilities. Many of the tenets of anarcho-primitivism and Landstreicher's insurrectionary immediacy are most prominently and actively manifest in the economic sabotage and guerrilla warfare deployed by the Earth Liberation Front – the 'Elves' – to stop the exploitation and destruction of the environment. The Elves employ a decentralised, non-hierarchical structure in their actions and as with animal liberationists, deep ecologists and the wider green anarchy movement are classified as domestic eco-terrorists.

Similarly he argues that the idealisation of pre-historical 'primitive' societies dehumanises those societies that still exist in that manner today. The ELF, indigenous solidarity movements and other groups engaged in active struggle against global and regional ecocide are significant manifestations of anarchist and primitivist ideals, and far more important to consider than illusory fantasies of 'going native' or playing at Indians in the forest.

FEATURE

FORWARD MARCH

What lessons have we learned from the counter-protest against the EDL in Tower Hamlets?

The Tower Hamlets demonstration against the English Defence League on 7th September was a big day for those of us hoping for a renewed opposition to the far-right in this country. Since the previous time the EDL were in Tower Hamlets in 2011 many things have changed. They suffered a general decline in their fortunes and early this year we were all getting ready to write their epitaph. Then everything changed in May when the EDL managed to swiftly exploit the murder of a British army soldier in London. Suddenly there were 2,000 of them on demos again, Stephen Yaxley-Lennon was being interviewed on TV all the time, their Facebook likes went from under 24,000 to over 100,000 within a day and they seemed to have leapfrogged further ahead than they ever were before.

There has been a general failure to adequately deal with the change represented by the rise of the EDL in the last four years. The anti-fascist and anti-racist movements have been found wanting in the swift change from combating the electoral politics of the BNP to the sudden re-emergence of far-right street gangs with the EDL. The 'official' anti-fascist movement represented by Hope Not Hate and UAF, for all the good work they do, are hamstrung by their close ties to the authorities – they are not willing to risk breaking the law in order to effectively confront the fascists on the streets. Politically they are tied to Labour politicians, union bureaucrats and conservative religious leaders which means their proclaimed politics can only be a fairly shallow liberal celebration of 'multicultural Britain', which is fine as far as

it goes, but leaves them struggling to combat the EDL either ideologically or physically.

The EDL national demo in Birmingham in July this year was a shock to many of us. This was the first EDL national demo which both we and they had had time to build for since May. The Newcastle demo immediately after Rigby's murder got vastly more numbers than had previously been expected, with 1,500 to 2,000 EDL turning out. And yet UAF only called a regional Midlands-wide counter-mobilisation for Birmingham and didn't even make a very good job of that – doing almost no publicity or building for the demo in Birmingham itself. As a consequence, in the country's second largest city, there were very small numbers of anti-fascists corralled out of sight by police while 1,000 EDL were very visibly taking over the city centre largely unopposed.

The world has changed since the 1980s and the fact is we cannot any longer rely on the mainstream left (in this case the UAF) to do 'their job' while we content ourselves with hanging round the fringes of their demos, slagging them off and lacking the confidence to do our own thing.

Hence the importance of the Tower Hamlets mobilisation – it was a response to the changing nature of the far-right and the general inadequacy of anti-fascism both militant and liberal to deal with this. Clearly a huge amount of effort went into calling a mobilisation under the name of the Anti-Fascist Network (AFN) and to do the sort of work that we normally rely on UAF to do. It was a bold attempt to try and do something new.

For a few days in advance of the demo, it looked like the cops might actually march the EDL right up Whitechapel High Street, but luckily this didn't happen. The EDL marched but they didn't get to go where they wanted and suffered a relatively poor turnout. Mr Yaxley-Lennon got arrested – my suspicion is probably as balance for all the anti-fascists who were arrested, so the policing didn't look too one-sided in the media. Most people were probably not expecting mass arrests on the scale that was experienced, although the 58 people arrested at the anti-BNP mobilisation in June did provide a warning of possible police tactics. The primary aim was of course to stop the EDL marching, or to get as close to that as possible – to disrupt them, interrupt them, delay them – to make a visible public display of more than vocal opposition. In a broader sense it was an attempt to organise mass direct action and to bridge the gap between small-group squaddist anti-fascism and UAF-style rallies – to be both militant and accessible to people. Was it possible to mobilise a large crowd of people who were up for attempting to get close to and confront the EDL?

The Tower Hamlets mobilisation involved a change to doing the sort of work UAF



normally do – stalls in the streets, leafletting sessions, press releases. But with the intention to be less politically compromised than UAF and with the clear guiding principles that we would not talk to or negotiate with the police or the authorities or have a hierarchical structure where discipline is imposed by the central committee. This was really a 'coming out' for the AFN, which originated as a less ambitious structure for allowing small autonomous anti-fascist groups across the country to travel to support each other when there was a counter-mobilisation against the far-right. But AFN has now stepped out of the shadows to publicly become an alternative and an addition to the rather more politically compromised UAF. On a straightforward appraisal of the day, it seems pretty clear that the cops were the main winners, with the cowed EDL sticking to the police orchestrated demonstration plan, and 286 anti-fascists arrested, complete with repressive bail conditions, DNA, fingerprints and details recorded. However, we





a way that worked for them – not everyone is up for running through the back streets with the cops on their tails.

Obviously, the number arrests in Tower Hamlets was exceptional and may represent a new tactic by the Met police aimed at intelligence gathering, taking people out of action through bail conditions and intimidating people from attending any protests not organised with the police in advance. It is important to provide good support for those arrested, whatever that might be: solicitors, publicity, supporters at police stations or courts, etc. We're unlikely to get out numbers on demonstrations if we fail to support arrestees now. And collective support can help prevent the effect of intimidation that the police aim to produce through mass arrests. That said, it should be recognised that almost all the anti-fascist arrests were for the same minor offences and are likely to go nowhere. Getting arrested is pretty much par for the course for anti-fascism, and arrests were always on the cards for the 7th.

The EDL are eminently beatable. They are not huge. They have a lot of fair weather support that fizzles away to nothing when conditions do not favour them. For most of my adult life there was practically no far-right on the streets, due to the efforts of past generations of anti-fascists. The EDL have been going four years or so and got 600 or 700 out for the national demo in Tower Hamlets they had been plugging for months. We got that number on just the AFN part of the counter-mobilisation. We can win as long as we don't start accepting fascists as part of the furniture and thinking that it's normal in 2013 for 300 racists to be marching down the High Street in Anytown. They weren't here five years ago. Lets make sure they aren't here a couple of years from now!

While Rome Burns

(A longer version of this article was published on <http://whileromeburnsjournal.wordpress.com/>)

succeeded in gathering a significant crowd of people (approximately the same numbers as the EDL managed to get out for a national demo) who were willing to move beyond listening to the speeches in Altab Ali park and try to actively confront the EDL.

Clearly it would have been better if there hadn't been 300 arrests and it would have been better if we had been more effective at blocking or disrupting the EDL march. It has been suggested that we shouldn't have met in Altab Ali park as this made it intrinsically difficult to leave. Clearly it is easier and there is a certain safety in numbers in choosing to meet at the UAF meet point. However, if we had known in advance that we were capable of getting out large numbers of people then we may well have done better to do as the EDL do and not announce the precise time and place until just before the event. We could publicise the date and rough area in advance so people can make travel plans and keep the day free but only announce the precise rally point when we have more of an

idea of the route the EDL will be taking. Or we could announce a time and place but just be willing to change it right up to the last minute. Both of these options would give us a better chance of being in the right place to stop them marching.

We could have announced our meet-up point to be the south side of Tower Bridge – meeting right where they were meeting – then there would be no issue of them not seeing or hearing us and we might have had more of a chance of stopping them marching. We should also have been more willing to split up and regroup to get to a particular location. If the Twitter and text information had been more oriented to giving members of the crowd the information they needed to be in the right place then potentially we could have simply informed everyone of where the police were and where the EDL were and let everyone get there in whatever way they chose. This would also help people avoid police kettles. In addition we'd be trusting the crowd we had mobilised to find



INTERVIEW

Seeing red

Louise Reynolds talks to Red and Black TV's Martin Wright

Veteran anarchist Martin Wright has taken to the web to spread his ideas, with regular videos on the YouTube channel Red and Black Telly discussing everything from global uprisings to polyamory and from UKIP to Jimmy Savile. He talks to *Freedom* about his method and his motivation.

Why video? You've been published twice, why not another book?

I've never used a computer in my life, but I hate writing. It takes up too much time. I like speaking, arguments in pubs, on the streets, long conversations with people with diametrically opposite views. I'm a verbal person, that's part of my cockney culture.

I wanna see more people put their heads above the parapet and start talking about their politics. It's something we've lost. It's all tap-tap on computer keys now. You don't know who you're talking to online usually, but this way people see I'm not the figment of somebody's imagination or a load of geeks sitting in a basement having a laugh, I'm flesh and blood. People have started to recognise me on the streets, so the visual thing does have impact.

Who's watching your videos?

As it's called Red and Black Telly, I imagine anarchists are tuning in. I spend a lot of time insulting the EDL, and they watch as well. Obviously I'm not gonna win them over to my politics, but if we spoke in the streets we'd probably end up exchanging blows, so it's best to do it this way. I'd like to show them that people who are anti-fascist and anarchist ain't just a bunch of hippies and middle class lifestylers, some come from backgrounds identical to theirs.

We're ordinary people, not particularly ugly or beautiful, and we could be your brother or your sister, or your mum or your dad. I'm not even a poor man's George Clooney, but I think it's good to show my face. I'm not scared to take any consequences. As I say, people recognise me, but so far no one's taken a swing at me.



What do you talk about?

Whatever pisses me off, or even what pleases me. What's in the news, and also what I speak with people about on the streets, everything from relationships to the government. I like to expound upon things that piss me off, even in my personal life. If I feel badly treated by people and consider it to be an injustice, this way I can combat that injustice.

Are the things you say what we typically hear from anarchists?

No, I don't think so. Obviously I'm against the police and the state, and I want a revolution, but if I talk about rapists and say: 'Oh he should have his bollocks chopped off', people might think that I'm advocating Sharia Law, but I don't seriously think they should have their bollocks chopped off, just their heads [laughs]. Sometimes I get angry when I do my videos, because they are genuine, not rehearsed. I express myself the way I would with anybody, I don't mitigate my language because it could sound a bit authoritarian to anarchists. That's usually done by people who haven't got the guts to tackle the subject.

Although I identify myself as an anarchist in just about every video, and criticise so-called 'anarchist lifestyles', I always think for myself, as most people do. We don't think: 'how would an anarchist react to that', we just react to it. And if we're anarchists, and

we believe in freedom, and hate authority, sometimes we express ourselves in a sort of rough and crude way.

You've got subscribers in all different parts of the world. Do they get your turn of phrase, and your accent?

Someone in Hong Kong said I had a really good accent. I try to speak so I can be understood, but I do lapse into cockney. It's tempting but I try not to swear too much.

You're going to talk about your videos at this year's Anarchist Bookfair.

Yes. I'm curious to see who'll come, and what the demographics are. I'll answer any questions about the content of my videos. If people want to have a go at me, they can, I'll give as good as I get but I'm not gonna get angry. I welcome it. Maybe I'm wrong on a few things and people can point that out.

I'm not an academic, just about everyone I know isn't, but I know a lot of really intelligent people which gives me great pleasure and I hope to meet more people at the Bookfair, who wanna do this too. I don't see why Red and Black Telly should just be me, why not loads of people? Are we scared to show our faces? The police have got all our mugshots, they know who we are. Just don't be stupid in what you say and what you do.

And although the written word and videos are good, you gotta be an anarchist in everyday life as well. Argue publicly, with friends, family, people at school and at work, not for the anarchist position, but from the anti-authority position, of extreme scepticism towards society and all it brings – religion, repression, work, the rich, the poor, war and so on. You might get shouted down, you might feel embarrassed at times, but that's the way to do it. We gotta get out there and spread our ideas.

Visit www.youtube.com/user/RedAndBlackTelly to watch and subscribe.



PRISON NEWS

PELICAN BAY

The hunger and work strike in Pelican Bay and other California State Prison Secure Housing Units (SHU), which began on 8th July, was suspended on 5th September. This was following the intervention of the chairs of the Senate and Assembly Public Safety Committees, Senator Loni Hancock and Assembly member Tom Ammiano respectively, who in a joint statement validated the prisoners' position and called for Public Safety Committee hearings and legislative action to address the widespread abuses that sparked the hunger strike and the two previous ones in 2011.

The nine-week protest called by the Pelican Bay SHU Short Corridor Collective represented the largest hunger and work strike in state history. On its first day, 30,000 prisoners in two-thirds of the state's 33 prisons, and at all four out-of-state private prisons, refused meals (more than twice the number involved in the previous protest) and 2,300 refused to participate in their work assignments or attend educational classes. Thousands continued to participate during the nine weeks of the hunger strike, stopping and starting in solidarity with the core of around 100 prisoners (the exact figures have proved difficult to ascertain as the prisoners' mediation team and relatives were not allowed contact with most of those taking part) who had refused food throughout.

That protest was carried out in the face of widespread and persistent abuse of the participants by California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) employees and officials. This included the targeting of the main Short Corridor Collective signatories with additional isolation and sensory deprivation via placement in the Administrative Segregation stand-alone building; withholding mail and visits; blasting cold air into SHU and Ad-Seg cells; confiscating property; fabricating rule violations and alleging gang activity; cell-extractions; threats and intimidation; and mass relocation to other SHU units to try and break-up what little solidarity is possible between prisoners held in total isolation. They had even rescinded so-called privileges granted following the previous two strikes.

Some of those relocated, who had already ended their hunger strikes, rejoined it in protest at the mistreatment they had been subjected to. Others were moved to a medical facility in preparation for the force feeding that CDCR won the right to administer on 19th August at a federal court hearing. The court also ruled that the state could ignore 'do not resuscitate' directives if they were signed for the purpose of the hunger strike, or if the state believed they were made following 'coercion'. At the same time, the CDCR propaganda machine was in over-drive, claiming that the hunger strike was all about inter-gang struggles over dominance of the drugs market – though how one is able to deal drugs whilst held in conditions of isolation CDCR have not explained.

Prison overcrowding crisis

In one of those interesting coincidences that life often throws up, the publishing of the results of a Freedom of Information request on overcrowding figures for prisons in England and Wales has neatly dovetailed with the Minister of Justice Chris Grayling's latest announcements on prison closures.

The FOI data shows that on a typical day last year nearly 20,000 prisoners – i.e. a quarter of the prison population – were being held in overcrowded conditions, with 19,140 forced to share a cell designed for one person and a further 777 people made to live three to a cell. This overcrowding is not just confined to the oldest Victorian nicks but is also taking place in the more modern privately-run PFI prisons like Altcourse and Doncaster, purposely built to so-called modern standards. Most of these prisoners also have to share a cell with an open unscreened toilet a mere arm's length away from where they have to eat and sleep. No wonder government ministers were putting a spin on the situation, claiming that this is a good thing as it provides an incentive for 'offenders' not to come back!

So, with the prison population still dangerously close to its record high of 88,179, the Coalition have embarked on a massive programme of prison closures with plans to close 11 nicks this year with a loss of 4,200 places, adding further stress to a system already bursting at the seams. This is on top of the five already shut in the past two years, in what is beginning to look suspiciously like a fire sale – all based on a 3% drop in the prison population, far less than the number of places being cut.

The latest tranche of four to cease operation includes HMP Reading, which dates back to 1844 and is best known for cell C33 prisoner Oscar Wilde. Three other prisons will be re-invented, including turning The Verne into an immigration detention centre, cutting a further 600 places. The Ministry will also see if they can persuade the owner of the 200-year-old Dartmoor prison to end their lease on the building, which has a ten-year notice clause, early. This may prove difficult, as the site is part of the notoriously money-grabbing heir to the throne's personal property portfolio. It is estimated that the closure of the four prisons will save £30 million from the annual prison budget but these savings will pale into significance compared to the potential costs of another Strangeways-style uprising provoked by these planned increases to the current overcrowding.

To supposedly ameliorate these pressures, the MoJ also (re)announced plans for a 2,000-place Titan prison to be built in North Wales – though the way they are talking it up, it appears to be little more than a massively expensive way of creating local jobs and boosting local economy in a deprived area of the country. This new prison will not open for at least another two years and a second one, possibly planned for West London on the site of HMYOI Feltham, could be even further away. Even the 1,260 places on new wings (houseblocks) at four prisons around the country will not be open for at least another year, so things look particularly tough for the average prison in the foreseeable future.



COMMENT

ABOUT FREEDOM

ANGEL ALLEY

A merry Anarchist Crimbo to all our readers! For new readers, this is the London Anarchist Bookfair held just down the road from us at Queen Mary College on Mile End Road. As ever there are dozens of stalls and meetings and thousands of comrades celebrating another year closer to the revolution. This year we will have a bumper Freedom Press stall with a wide selection of "singed by the fascists" titles, as well as all our usual range along with some shiny new books as well. As always you can meet people from the collective at the stall on the day, but please don't be offended if we don't have time to chat as this is our busiest and most stressful day of the year (Nazi firebombings excepted).

However we will all be chatty and relaxed at the post-bookfair Freedom Party from 7pm in the shop. So come along after the bookfair and enjoy the fine company and witty repartee as you examine all the renovations and improvements that comrades have contributed to over the last eight months. There will be nibbles and refreshments. You can even buy an extra book or two.

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NEXT ISSUE DEADLINE

The next issue will be dated November 2013 and the last day to get copy to us for that issue will be Saturday 12th October. You can send your articles to us by email to copy@freedompress.org.uk or by post to 'The Editors', Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

A sideways look

by SVARTFROSK

The latest inflation figures in August show it 'eased down' to 2.7%. The government and their allies in the press have tried to paint this as a positive thing. On closer inspection, the reason inflation is down is that petrol prices are going up slightly less than they were a year ago. Yes, they are still going up, and of course, this measure of inflation tells you very little about what you actually spend money on. Many people only pay for rent, bills and food – these are all going up way more than 2.7%. The Retail Prices Index, the other measure of inflation used by the government, is currently just up to 3.3%. The RPI includes housing costs and would be even higher if mortgage rates weren't flat.

Wage inflation, i.e. the amount wages are going up by over a year on average is 1%. It has been there or thereabouts since the credit crunch. Inflation has been over 2% all that time. Put simply, wages are going down in real terms and prices are going up. Of course, this isn't happening in the same way for the very wealthy, but that's not really a surprise, but for the majority of people real incomes are shrinking: this is especially true for people reliant on savings like pensioners as interest rates offered are currently way below inflation.

There are three possible responses to inflation – you can earn more, spend less or

find different ways of meeting your needs, for example by stealing from shops or growing food. Unfortunately, the latter is not an option for many people – there are limits to what most people are prepared to do in taking what they need directly and there are physical limits on options like growing food, particularly in big cities.

Earning more ought to be relatively easy, if there really was a recovery. There are labour shortages in a number of industries, but the reason for them is lack of skills or employers who insist on paying as little as they can get away with. In such conditions, simple supply and demand would lead to higher pay. Instead, the government's welfare cuts are being used to force people to work for free for large companies.

Buying less is in one sense a good thing, as so much consumption is wasted, including a large proportion of food. But many of the things we buy we have very little choice over – rent or mortgage, bills, food, travel – and as I've already discussed, these are all going up. People have been buying less, one of the fallouts from the economy taking such a hit has been that the government's tax take from petrol has dropped as less is bought. But it is limited as a tactic. It seems to me that we need all three approaches – earn more, pay less for stuff and take action to be less reliant on money.



Early days at the squatted Classics Free Shop in Bristol, which was entirely stocked by donations of unwanted items. The shop has now closed down.

FEEDBACK

Fanning the flames?

I'm new to anarchism and I did think twice about writing this letter in case I was just being a bit simplistic about the issue. But no, I want to put this out there so I will take the risk. Be gentle with me. Here goes... There is, quite understandably, a lot of talk about how to deal with the EDL in anarchist circles. I really liked the piece by Louise Reynolds (*Freedom*, August 2013) but I can't help feeling that we pay the EDL too much attention sometimes. Attention, of course, being exactly what they want – so are we playing into their hands by giving it to them?

It didn't exactly fill me with hope when the police nicked all the anti-fash on the demo on the 7th September. Is that how it's going to be from now on? That worries me. I'm all for promoting anti-fascism as vigorously as we possibly can, of course I am, but I am really somewhat on the fence when it comes to turning out and physically appearing in front of these groups on counter-demos.

I'm a huge advocate of direct action but like any protest tool it must be used sensibly and intelligently. Turning out for a fight just might be encouraging them and not really achieving much else. It's worth thinking about. If I'm wrong then I'm not afraid of being told why!

Nick Black

After a fashion...

So you've got sports pages, which some would consider a bit odd for a political newspaper. Why not have fashion pages too? I can see it now. Black is the new black! Every month. You could test out the best marching boots, flog clever t-shirts and badges: all sorts. Or something. Ahem.

DONATE YOUR OLD BOOKS

The ravening wolves of capitalist depredation are constantly howling around Angel Alley seeking the destruction of our noble bookshop. You can help keep these fey hounds at bay by donating books that you no longer want so that we may sell them on to knowledge-hungry proletarians for a pound a piece (more to rich arty types who only came in 'cos they got lost on the way to the Whitechapel Art Gallery).

And don't even get me started on the possibilities which an agony column would open up. "Dear *Freedom*, I'm a bit hacked off at the moment because the world is totally fucked. What shall I do?" or "Dear *Freedom*, My boyfriend called me a Leninist and now we're not talking. What shall I do?" Genius.

As for personal ads, well. You can't not! Seriously. Just imagine...

Bert R.

Hunger games

Last Sunday 6th October, Sacramento Food Not Bombs was kicked out of the Cesar Chavez Park by the Sacramento police. Volunteers were greeted by about 15 officers when they arrived at the park at the usual time to start sharing the meal they had made. We were told that our stuff would be confiscated and we would get a summons due to an ordinance that has yet to even be passed, which would prevent any group from handing out free hot meals in the park.

Last week advocates for the poor were also told to stop sharing meals with the hungry in Sacramento and Santa Monica, California, Taos, New Mexico and Olympia, Washington. Groups were confronted and threatened with arrest in Colorado, Raleigh, North Carolina, Portland, Oregon, Seattle, Washington and other cities across the United States this summer. In all over fifty cities in the US have passed laws banning or limiting the sharing of meals with the hungry in the past two years with enforcement on the increase this autumn.

Our food is vegan, organic and no one has ever reported being made ill from eating with Food Not Bombs. The goal of giving the public the impression we are required to get a permit is to justify forcing us to stop.

We have no paid staff and our food is a gift and unregulated by the authorities. Like all acts of commission no permission from the government is necessary.

Please support Sacramento Food Not Bombs. We will be risking arrest again on Sunday 13th October in Cesar Chavez Park at 1.30pm.

Keith McHenry

*Co-founder of the Food Not Bombs Movement
PO Box 424, Arroyo Seco, NM 87514 USA
www.foodnotbombs.net*

Computer generation

The ongoing financial crisis has exposed the fragility of the banking and finance system, and the 2008 crash would have been impossible without the 'dark magic' of computer-generated derivatives. But while we continue to debate banker's bonuses, automated High Frequency Trading has taken over the stock market, creating new volatility as algorithms complete trades in milliseconds. Back in the real world of austerity created by the crisis, automation is contributing to public sector job loss, as workers are replaced with machines. How can we get technology to serve people not profit? Our next event is being held to discuss just that...

Breaking the Frame 4 – Financial Crisis and Austerity: the Role of Technology will be held on 14th October 2013 at 7pm at Fairly Square Bar & Cafe, 51 Red Lion Street, London WC1R 4PF, with introductions from Dave Dewhurst, Occupy London Economics Working Group, and speakers from Corporate Watch and Kaput, tbc.

For more information and details of events visit the *Breaking the Frame* blog at <http://breakingtheframe.org.uk/> or contact luddites200@yahoo.co.uk.

Breaking the Frame

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GETTING ACTIVE

WHAT'S ON

OCTOBER

- 1st Radical Anthropology talks, *Claude Lévi-Strauss: The science of mythology* with Chris Knight at St Martin's Community Centre, 43 Carol Street, London NW1 0HT from 6.15 to 9pm, for further details see www.radicalanthropologygroup.org or Twitter: @radicalanthro.
- 1st and 15th Practical Squatting Evening at LARC, 62 Fieldgate Street, London E1 1ES from 7pm to 8pm, for more see <http://www.squatter.org.uk/>
- 3rd, 10th, 17th, 24th and 31st London group of The Anarchist Federation meets weekly on Thursday evenings at Freedom Bookshop, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX. If you would like to attend please email london@afed.org.uk beforehand.
- 8th Radical Anthropology talks, *Why does 'epeme' have to be danced at dark moon?* with Chris Knight at St Martin's Community Centre, 43 Carol Street, London NW1 0HT from 6.15 to 9pm, for details see www.radicalanthropologygroup.org.
- 8th and 22nd Practical Squatting Evening at 56a Infoshop, 56a Crampton Street, London SE17 3AE from 7pm to 8pm, see <http://www.56a.org.uk/> for details.
- 12th News from Nowhere Club presents *Before the Plebs: Independent Working Class Education in the nineteenth century* with speaker Keith Flett at The Epicentre, West Street, Leytonstone E11 4LJ, from 7.30pm, see <http://www.newsfromnowhereclub.org/> or call 0208 555 5248 for details.
- 15th Radical Anthropology talks, *Darwinism and modern genetics: 'the science of solidarity'* with Chris Knight at St Martin's Community Centre, 43 Carol Street, London NW1 0HT from 6.15 to 9pm, see www.radicalanthropologygroup.org for details.
- 18th The Red & Black Club at LARC, 62 Fieldgate Street, London E1 1ES from 8pm, Dissident Island Radio will be broadcasting live as the local anarchists host a traditional east end knees-up.
- 19th London Anarchist Bookfair at Queen Mary, University of London, Mile End Road, London, E1 4NS from 10am until 7pm, see <http://anarchistbookfair.org.uk/> for details.
- 22nd Radical Anthropology talks, *Contemporary egalitarian societies* with Jerome Lewis at St Martin's Community Centre, 43 Carol Street, London NW1 0HT from 6.15 to 9pm, for details see www.radicalanthropologygroup.org or Twitter: @radicalanthro.
- 24th Reel News film night at The Grosvenor, 17 Sidney Road, Stockwell, London SW9 0TP, from 7.30pm until 11.30pm, see <http://reelnews.co.uk> for further details.
- 29th Radical Anthropology talks, *People, animals, blood and the moon* with Jerome Lewis at St Martin's Community Centre, 43 Carol Street, London NW1 0HT from 6.15 to 9pm, for details see www.radicalanthropologygroup.org or Twitter: @radicalanthro.



● Every year the victims of the components made at the EDO MBM factory rise from the grave and lurch toward the Brighton arms manufacturer in search of revenge and living flesh... **Smash EDO** will be demonstrating again on 31st October from 4pm until 6pm at the EDO arms factory, Home Farm Road, Brighton BN1 9HU. Dress in Halloween costume and bring some noise (musical instruments, pots, pans)!

Millions are killed every year in military conflict, from the more-than-a-decade occupation of Afghanistan, which has brought nothing but death and turmoil to the people of the country, to the Israeli state occupation and apartheid against the people of Palestine to the US's covert drone attacks in Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia. Military companies are benefiting from these bloody conflicts while the net result of all this is to maintain the current *status quo* – global domination by a handful of capitalist states.

See <http://smashedo.org.uk/>
Twitter @smash_edo

● **London Celtic Punks and London Anti-fascists** are presenting a benefit gig, a night of acoustic folk'n'punk with Jay Stevens, The Lagan, Leeson O'Keefe and DJ Greenford Bhoy on 15th October at Tottenham Chances Club, 399 High Road, N17 6QN London.

Devastated to hear the news of yet another young anti-fascist murdered by nazi scum

recently in Greece, they decided this gig would be a benefit for the family of Pavlos Fyssas, so no excuse not to donate a couple of quid extra.

See <http://londoncelticpunks.wordpress.com/>

● **Into the Fire**, a film by Guy Smallman and Kate Mara, is a hard hitting documentary which shows the plight of refugees and migrants in recession hit Athens (see *Freedom*, September 2013). *Into the Fire* will be touring during October, screenings include:

- 4th, Eeklo, Belgium, N9 Muziekclub with David Rovics.
 - 5th, Sint-Niklaas, Belgium, Masereelhuis with David Rovics at 8pm.
 - 6th, Utrecht, Netherlands, Rooie Rat at 6pm.
 - 7th, Münster, Germany, Cinema at 9pm.
 - 9th, Witten, Germany, Trotz Allem at 7.30pm.
 - 11th, Freiburg, Germany, KTS at 8pm.
 - 12th, Offenburg, Germany, Kessel at 8.30pm.
 - 14th and 15th, Reutlingen, Germany, Theodor-Heuss-Schule, Pavillon at 1.30pm.
 - 16th, Leipzig, Germany, Meuterei at 7pm.
 - 17th, Plzeř, Czech Republic, Klub Kapsa at 8pm.
 - 18th, Prague, Czech Republic, Studentský klub K4 at 7pm.
 - 19th, Poděbrady, Czech Republic, tbc
 - 21st, Brno, Czech Republic, Café Paradigma at 6.30pm.
 - 22nd, Bratislava, Slovakia, Foajé at 7pm.
 - 23rd, Vienna, Austria, W23 at 8pm.
- See <http://intothefire.org/> for more details.

Jack 'John Bull' Wilshere

Arsenal and England midfielder, Jack Wilshere has sparked controversy during an interview in which he stated that "only English people should play for England". Whilst at first glance his remarks would make sense to most people, they do require further examination.

As someone who writes for *Freedom* my stance on nationalism and patriotism should need no introduction, however, I do – like most sports fans – take an interest in international sports competitions.

Wilshere's remarks come on the back of an impressive display by a Manchester United player who is breaking into the first team. The individual in question will be able to play for Belgium or for England, should his performances merit an international call up.

John Bull Wilshere's views are from bygone times. Whilst he did not flesh out his argument further, presumably the children of people he deems unfit to play for England would also be excluded.

By Wilshere's logic, several of the current England squad would not be able to play: John Barnes would never have pulled on an England Jersey, Kevin Peterson and Matt Prior would have never played cricket for England, Justin Rose would have never represented England at golf, tennis player Greg Rusedks would have been excluded, as would athletics legends, Mo Farah, Linford Christie, and Jessica Ennis.

In the face of increased scrutiny the challenging of his views, and an argument on twitter, Wilshere is backtracking on what he said.

The whole issue reminds me of Bernard Manning's 'dog born in a stable is not a horse' remark, and the BNP posters from the late 1990s when they pixelated the faces of the England players who they claimed should not be playing. They advised England fans to go and support Denmark or Norway.

Such poorly thought out statements by such a high profile individual – and potential

future England captain – play right into the grubby little hands of the BNP and associated knuckle dragger. You can imagine the glee on Nick Griffin's face when he first read of Wilshere's comments. The only surprise is that he has not already made a statement in support of him.

No doubt the mainstream media are doing some research into the Wilshere family tree. Imagine the egg on his face should he have some 'foreign' blood in his ancestry.

Luther Blissett



Activists crash match

◀ page 24

With its oil drilling projects, Gazprom is putting the fragile Arctic eco-system on the line. Gazprom has no experience of the high seas and is playing Russian roulette with the Arctic. The question is not if, but when, Gazprom will make history with a full scale oil disaster in the Arctic."

The Russian Prime Minister, Dmitry Medvedev has demanded that the 'pirates' face tough sanctions for their action, and they are potentially looking at a 15 year prison sentences and fines of up to 500,000 Roubles (approximately £15,000).

Play was suspended by the referee until the protesters and their banner had been removed from the stadium. Basel, the team

who owns the stadium are now facing heavy penalties from the European football governing body, UEFA, due to concerns over inadequate security measures that meant that several people in orange boiler suits managed to enter the stadium and get onto the roof with lots of heavy climbing equipment and a 100ft banner. UEFA state that all clubs participating in European competition are solely responsible for ensuring that matches progress in a timely and safe manner.

Basel are one of the smallest teams who participate in European competition and their finances mirror their size. Any fine handed down by UEFA is likely to have

serious consequences. Perhaps they would take a different approach if the club in question was a multi-billion dollar industry in its own right, such as, Real Madrid or Juventus. This is nothing more than the bullying of a small club because they had inadvertently embarrassed UEFA and one of the dubious sponsors.

Clearly UEFA and the cosseted spivs who run it had little or no idea that teaming up with the gangsters and pirates at Gazprom would bring negative and unwanted attention on their corrupt gentleman's club and on the completions they run. Solidarity with the Arctic 30!

Luther Blissett

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REVIEWS

FICTION

The Resolution

After five weeks of non-cooperation with the time-sheeting system, an all-staff email arrived.

"Following consultation with recognised trade unions, LobCo has issued an updated handbook. This forms part of your contractual terms and conditions and you are required to read it and abide by it," Dom read out to the assembled team.

"Does that mean we have to start doing these time-sheets?" asked Sarah.

"It probably does, but we'll run it past the legal people at HQ. I've already asked if anyone anywhere within the union was consulted. Probably someone was in deepest Inverness-shire or something," he replied.

Dougal MacKenzie smiled when Dom came into his office.

"You've had the email, then?" he said. Dom smiled back.

"Yes, I have. We have an emergency union meeting about it this afternoon. I was just coming to tell you."

"Oh, what about cover? You have to ask my permission for a meeting," said MacKenzie.

"Nah, we just have to keep you informed, as per the Time Off for Trade Union Activities Agreement."

"What are you going to talk about at this meeting?"

"Well, it should be obvious, shouldn't it?" answered Dom.

"But, what exactly?" persisted MacKenzie.

"We will talk to you after we have made a decision on how we respond. At present, I couldn't tell you anything even if I wanted to."

The union meeting was small but had almost all the affected staff there. The Branch Secretary led off, and it was informal enough that several people felt able to contribute ideas. In the end, they passed a resolution to continue to boycott the time sheets until a fast reliable connection was established to head office. Dom accompanied the Branch Secretary to see MacKenzie, whose face seemed to look redder every time they met.

Three days later, another all staff email came though, from Clive Alison, who was higher up the company tree. It stated that Dougal Mackenzie "has left LobCo to pursue other opportunities."

Ged laughed. "That's one down!"

"And did you see the last bit?" asked Sarah. "Where he goes I have arranged for his access to all LobCo and customer sites to be revoked?"

"I just hope we don't end up with someone worse," said Dom.

"Who could be worse?" asked Ged.

"I hope you're right. Bear in mind we've seen how ruthless they are with people who've been with them for ages, they're hardly going to treat us with kid gloves, are they?"

Martin H.

To be continued...

TELEVISION

Top Boy, series 2

by Ronan Bennett

Screened on Channel 4 from August to September, this exceptional television fiction continues the depiction (previously reviewed in *Freedom*, December 2011) of drug-dealing and the lives directly affected by its associated activities. As before, the narrative is rooted in scrupulously researched everyday minutiae, allowing the cast, headed by Ashley Walters, Kane Robinson and a host of Hackney amateurs, ample scope to improvise for improved authenticity. This 'bottom-up' perspective then accommodates crime thriller excesses which might otherwise overwhelm the realistic tapestry of ordinary characters dealing with extraordinary situations – resisting the sensationalist overkill of UK urban cinema over the last decade¹ while convincingly rendering the implacable constraints facing many inner city youth and the institutional, social and economic vectors within which their vicious circles appear as least-hopeless options.

The minimalist discipline relaxes in the new episodes as the first series' youngsters and families, tentatively repulsing entanglement with the drugs posse, find themselves fatefully drawn back in. Meanwhile business networks extend beyond the estate, where variously pragmatic and psychopathic rivals, additional middle-childhood recruits, crack addicts and less desperate patrons, and sundry representatives of 'straight' society mesh in more complex ways than discourses of the alien underclass suggest. Outsiders partaking of profitable opportunism include financial and legal professionals and gentrifying property developers as well as the now-obligatory East European type of mafia who, along with the police, seriously threaten the titular gang leader. His reluctant ruthlessness, sacrificing his people in pursuit of raised stakes, inexorably undermines the 'godfather' paternalism which vouchsafes loyalty in a hostile world and justifies his boast to arresting officers that "there are no gangs – just family, friends and neighbours".

Urban Junk Bonds and Derivatives

Under such multi-dimensional pressure, allies shapeshift as partners, employees, customers,



grasses or competitors, while local small enterprises are squeezed out by corporate predators with official approval and unofficial clout – further attenuating slim prospects of independent livelihoods in the borough. Clearly, 'criminality pure and simple' could only convince if the overarching culpability of 'respectable' society was equally castigated.² In any case, this criminal top dog – now also dreaming of escape – is scarcely in charge at all, tenuously thriving only thanks to quick wits and the residual trust of footsoldiers but always susceptible to fresh twists around the next corner. Yet even amidst escalating war of all against all, with tolerable futures almost impossible to envisage, *Top Boy* places centre stage the perseverance to seek (however misguidedly) genuine connection, fellow-feeling, and even altruism. All of the pivotal plot points revolve around the tragedy, poignancy and/or positive potential inherent in this unquenchable thirst. Moreover, the further you descend the poverty ladder, the more tenacious as well as dangerous such desires become – being both precondition and antithesis of selfish individualism's ascendancy.

Tom Jennings

<http://libcom.org/blog/tom-jennings>

1 See 'The Poverty of Imagination', *Variant*, 43 (2012).

2. A theme developed in the film *Twenty8k* (David Kew and Neil Thompson, 2012), based on allegedly real-life – but successfully hushed-up – pre-Olympics East End collusion among entrepreneurial, municipal and police gangsters.

QUIZ ANSWERS

- Russians are so used to official corruption that cars there are routinely fitted with dashboard cameras so that they are covered when someone tries to fit them up. When a meteor crashed near Chelyabinsk in February 2013 locals were able to film it.
- Kirby, Conservative MP for Kemptown, associated with Hastings Anarchists when younger.
- The birds (*Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*) like to sunbathe on tarmac on hot days. University of Tulsa biologist Charles Brown started studying the birds in 1982 and still does over 30 years on. In 1982, about 20 a year died on the road in his study area, but now hardly any of them get killed – there were only four in 2012, despite both bird numbers and traffic growing. Brown found the dead birds had longer wings and that the wing length overall of the population has been shortening. Shorter wings make for faster take-offs because of increased manoeuvrability.
- They navigate by the stars, using the Milky Way as a starting point, according to research from researchers in South Africa.

Top of the Lake

This bewitching imaginary of symbolic expression and obscene realism has far more depth than your average TV police drama

Representing six hours of summer Saturday primetime, an enigmatic, atmospheric ‘scandal melodrama’ series sees yet another prominent filmmaker decamp to television citing opportunities for artistic freedom and novelistic scope compared to narrow, juvenile, exploitative and conservative commercial imperatives in contemporary cinema. Not that writer-director Jane Campion ever had any truck with safe soporific entertainment, in her groundbreaking explorations of desire and agency among strong, flawed women beset by sundry societal, familial and personal limitations¹ – now returning to her native wilderness for the first time since multiple Oscar-winner *The Piano* (1993). Recalling the otherworldly and estranged physical, psychological and social landscapes of David Lynch’s *Twin Peaks*,² this anti-pastoral crime thriller (co-directed with Garth Davis and hauntingly shot and scored by Adam Arkapaw and Mark Bradshaw respectively) schematises geographical and human stratification with a tremendous ensemble cast scattered around New Zealand’s spectacular and/or sinister Lake Wakatipu mountains and forests – the ‘rich man’s playground’ of Queenstown, hardscrabble suburbs in Laketop, and a therapeutic commune of lost female souls camping in shipping containers at the upland sanctuary of Paradise.

Myth, metaphor and symbolism bristle in the mystery narrative (co-written with Gerard Lee), too, as a pregnant twelve-year-old disappears after attempting suicide in the lake – which Maori folklore describes as a demon’s grave. The casework by a detective



specialising in child trauma (played by Elisabeth Moss balancing vulnerability, confusion and resolution) – back home visiting her dying mother – immediately confronts the missing lass’s father (Peter Mullan’s neighbourhood criminal tyrant) and his clan, as well as practically an entire population intent on sweeping every imaginable sin under the carpet. Requisite red herrings abound, fuelled by gossip, rumour and barely concealed bitterness, resentment and violence, and excavating the truth entails a demeaned and isolated sleuth grappling with her own repressed horrors which inextricably mesh with the histories of other damaged characters and the town itself. The whole mess projects onto present institutions and relationships, which unravel as unwelcome revelations lay bare various self-interested rationalisations, complacencies and misbegotten family romances as defensive evasions, distraught disavowals or downright mendacities.

Still waters run depraved

Top of the Lake enriches the fictional film canon of intrepid investigators exposing the evils that men do,³ but transcends generic conventions as well as Campion’s usual focus

on women’s suffering in purely individual and interpersonal terms – now locating monstrous pathologies of patriarchal domination firmly within class dynamics. A grass-roots perspective is assumed throughout, from those who inhabit the surroundings rather than seeking instrumental control – including the prodigal daughter clearly less ill at ease among the rugged scenery and its rough characters than with her professional colleagues, despite being thoroughly alienated from both strata. But against lower-class vulgarity in caricatures of casual macho brutality and the hardened femininity necessary to survive in desperate straits of poverty and insecurity, comparably vicious, cynical and sad weakness and cruelty lie beneath the respectable hypocrisy of middle-class character armour privileging veneers of taste, restraint and sophistication. So suspiciously incompetent local police comfortably coexist with underworld counterparts and visiting businessmen, and the baleful pattern culminates in a liberal educational programme for disadvantaged youth providing resources for both sexual and commercial predation.

This audaciously precise socio-economic condensation, exerting a vice-like stranglehold on all concerned, is facilitated by a commodity (drugs) economy whose tentacles systematically infect every aspect of existence. Yet its power is undermined thanks to the space for indeterminate autonomy and solidarity carved out by the post-menopausal perverts occupying Paradise – for whom no utopian idyll is nevertheless possible, at least while they remain separated (if not separatist) from wider society. Initially appearing as comic relief, this sideshow-freakshow gradually takes centre stage, increasingly providing a forum for Laketop’s tensions and conflicts to play out – coming complete with the built-in astringent of Holly Hunter’s irascibly reluctant guru⁴ puncturing superficial wish-fulfilments of genteel fluffy reconstruction,



THE ARTS

CROSSBONES GRAVEYARD

When the young Charles Dickens lived close to Red Cross Street it was known as one of the worst areas in London. The police usually considered it a 'no-go zone'. Located outside the city like its northern counterpart of Norton Folgate, it had been a medieval Liberty, a place outside the city walls where gambling, playhouses and prostitution were tolerated.

Although the Liberty of the Clink and thus its brothels were controlled by the Bishop of Winchester, whose ruined palace may be glimpsed on nearby Clink Street, the prostitutes, because they were prostitutes, were refused burial in consecrated ground.

Over the centuries the area became a dumping ground for the local poor and disenfranchised, the story of their short lives and myriad diseases now recorded in their bones. As you head north up Redcross Way towards the trendy Borough Market, on the right you will pass a set of red gates festooned with ribbons and totems, poems and memorials. This is the site of the crossbones graveyard and one of London's most resonant 'underground' zones.

For over 15 years John Constable, aka John Crow, urban shaman, writer and Southwark psychogeographer, and his partner Katy Kaos have campaigned to turn the graveyard into a memorial garden for London's outcast dead.

Freedom talks to John Constable, aka John Crow.

Who is in Crossbones?

Up to 15,000 men, women and children, the working poor, paupers, prostitutes, outcasts and other outsiders. Up to half the burials on the site were children. The graveyard originally served one of the most deprived parts of London. It was closed in the 1850s, by which time it was said to be 'completely overcharged with dead'.

Can you give me an idea of the history of the area? Why is it so special?

The Liberty of the Clink goes back to the twelfth century, when the Bishop of Winchester became the effective lord of this often riotous manor, which lay outside the

law of the city. In 1161AD, the Bishop licensed the 'stews' or brothels of the liberty, under ordinances signed by Thomas Becket. The whores of the liberty became known as 'Winchester Geese'. Despite the fact that they enjoyed a measure of protection by the church, there is an ancient tradition, first recorded in John Stow's 1598 'survey of London', that such women were denied Christian burial and that their human remains were consigned to a single woman's churchyard... Far from the parish church.¹ By the eighteenth century, local folk-lore identified this with the Crossbones burial ground on Redcross Way. To me, Crossbones is a place 'to honour the outcast, dead and alive.'

How did you first find out about Crossbones? On the night of 23rd November 1996, I was doing some experimental writing. I found myself channelling, in verse, the voices of two entities: my own magical persona John Crow, and a medieval prostitute who called herself The Goose. The verses developed as a kind of dance between them, leading us on a journey through a 2,000 year secret history.

Somewhere in the middle of the night, The Goose conducted me on a walk about my Borough and Bankside neighbourhood. She led me to the gates of Crossbones, which back then was a desolate works depot. Only later did I learn the story of Crossbones, and realised that what I'd written was rooted in historical fact. Those original verses grew into the poem and play cycles of *The Southwark Mysteries* – later published by Oberon Books and performed in Shakespeare's Globe, Southwark Cathedral and at sites specific all around the old borough. They also led me to become the site's unofficial caretaker.

What happens on the 23rd?

On the 23rd of every month since June 2004 (so we're now into more than a hundred consecutive months of vigils), we meet at the gates to remember and 'honour the outcast' – not only those buried there, but also contemporary sex workers and other outsiders, including friends who once stood with us at the gates and have since died. On one level, we're simply reclaiming a public space, the



Photo © Max Reeves

Book review

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scorning charitable objectification and ideological imperialism, and urging attention instead to the 'immense intelligence of the body'. Or, perhaps, of a 'body-politics' materialism which, rather than subjugating flesh and affect to the arrogant sociopathy of purely rational calculation, can offer real potential to nourish successful struggle and genuine liberation – here satisfactorily and skilfully signposted in a cascade of dovetailing denouements which emphasise the

difficult, dangerous, dirty work to be done as well as the uncertain but worthwhile rewards to be thereby won together.

Tom Jennings

<http://libcom.org/blog/tom-jennings>

1 See review of her erotic thriller *In the Cut* in *Freedom*, 23rd November 2003 (available at <http://libcom.org/library/cut-dir-jane-campion-2003-film-review-%E2%80%93-tom-jennings>).

2 Discussed in 'Class-ifying Contemporary Cinema',

Variant 10, March 2000 (see <http://libcom.org/library/david-lynch-contemporary-cinema-social-class-film-review-%E2%80%93-tom-jennings>).

3 From, say, *Chinatown* (1975), *Twin Peaks* (1990-2) and *Silence of the Lambs* (1991) through *Prime Suspect* (1991-2006) to *Red Riding* (2009) and *The Killing* (2007-13).

4 A character based on Campion's friend, the late Indian philosopher U.G. Krishnamurti.

Top of the Lake is out now available on DVD.

VEYARD

road outside the gates on Redcross Way where we've created a contemporary shrine. The vigil is conceived as a secular ceremony 'open to all faiths and none'. We don't follow any belief system, though some of us work with The Goose as a transpersonal agency. The vigil includes simple, participatory rituals, with the emphasis on creative expression. I conduct many of the vigils, often performing selected poems and songs from The Southwark Mysteries. My partner Katy has created many of the art and craft-works that adorn the gates. Thousands more people have also tied on totems and mementoes, or performed their own songs or poems at the vigils. The Halloween Vigil (held on 23rd October) is a specially important festival for us. It includes a reading of some of the names of those buried at Crossbones, representing the many more unknown people who ended up there. The vigils end with us calling out an 'unconditional blessing', sealed in a protective circle of gin – the only comfort for many of those denizens of Crossbones.

What is an urban shaman?

In The Southwark Mysteries, John Crow is sometimes referred to, playfully, as a shaman. I'm not working within a particular tradition; in many ways I make it up as I go along – only 'I don't make it up'; the poems, teachings and practices seem to manifest autonomously; their mediatrix is The Goose; John Crow does his best to receive and act on them. When I was in South America, a friend used to introduce me to the local curanderos as 'a magician in the line of merlin'. I liked that! My work is about observing and creating new patterns in the chaos of existence, thereby effecting small but significant changes in what is carelessly called 'reality'. I think of myself



photo © Max Reeves

primarily as an artist; my origins were in street theatre and performance art, in twentieth century counter-culture.

What is your relationship with the landowners? What is the invisible garden?

My relationship with the site-owners is long and complex. Transport for London (TFL) are a huge government agency; their officers are legally required to maximise their assets. And of course they'd like to develop their entire site, including the cemetery area. Having successfully campaigned against any previous attempts to build on Crossbones, myself and other Friends of Crossbones are now into constructive engagement with TFL. We'd accept or even support an appropriate development on the rest of the site, in return for a public park/garden of remembrance on the graveyard area. Our main influence on TFL is through public opinion. We've spelt out to them why to build homes on the desecrated graves of outlaws and their children would be a PR disaster. Whereas money couldn't buy the kind of goodwill there'd get from helping to create the Crossbones Garden of Remembrance!

We sometimes top up this mainstream approach with a spot of street-magic or direct action. We were able to get on site for several years (2007-2010) working with our mysterious 'Invisible Gardener' to create a secret, guerrilla, wild garden on the site of the old graveyard. Recently, TFL locked the site; we're now in um... 'sensitive talks' re public access for community gardening. I can reveal that the invisible gardener is alive and well! But if I tell you any more, I have to kill you!

Tell me about the campaign. Does Crossbones have a continuing link to sex workers and the poor?



Photo © Max Reeves

Sex workers support us mostly as individuals, attending the vigils or appearing in some of the short films made to promote our work at Crossbones (see our website at www.crossbones.org.uk). We have informal links with the International Union of Sex Workers. An amazingly diverse range of people attend the vigils at 7pm on the 23rd of every month. We all come to Crossbones for different reasons, though we all seem to share a desire to transform our lives and our urban environment; to 'reclaim the Liberty'. Katy and I recently conducted 'walking workshops' for The Dragon Cafe, a mental health self-help initiative [see Freedom, January/February 2013]. And the poor are always with us at the Crossbones gates; some rough sleepers leave beer-cans like offerings! I reckon we all come to Crossbones to work on ourselves.

What happens on Halloween?

For thirteen consecutive years (1998-2010) we conducted the Halloween of crossbones, a ritual drama in which John crow honours the goose with poems and songs from the Southwark mysteries. The Halloween night ceremony climaxed in a candlelit procession to the gates of crossbones, for the reading of the names of the dead. Having completed this 13-year cycle, we moved these ceremonial observances to the night of the 23rd October, our October vigil.

- The Halloween vigil will be at 7pm on Wednesday 23rd October. John and Katy will be doing special Halloween Ghost Walks ending with a short ritual Monday 28th to Thursday 31st October inclusive. Book your place at <http://www.wegottickets.com/location/8698>.
- For more information see <http://www.southwarkmysteries.co.uk/#/guided-walks> and <http://www.crossbones.org.uk/>

SPORT

Activists crash match



From the high seas to the Champions League

Just minutes into an important UEFA Champions League match between Swiss team Basel, and the German side, Schalke 04 FC, the referee abandoned play due to a team of people in orange boiler suits dropping down

on ropes from the roof of the stadium.

Before they reached the bottom they unfurled a huge banner protesting against 'Gazprom', a sponsor of the UEFA Champions League and of Schalke 04 FC, who are conducting damaging oil drilling projects in the Arctic. The banner read, 'Gazprom, don't foul the Arctic' and 'Free the Arctic 30'. The Arctic 30 are a group of activists who attempted to board an offshore oil platform owned by

Gazprom. They were subsequently remanded into custody on charges of 'piracy', where they remain almost two months later. A spokesperson for the climbers stated that, "With this action, the defenders of the Arctic showed the red card to the Russian sponsors of the Champions League and German club, and to their oil-drilling and dirty tricks in the Arctic."

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THE QUIZ

- How did distrust of the state in Russia lead to very good amateur film of a rare superbolide meteor strike?
- Which political group did Tory MP Simon Kirkby associate with in his youth?
- Why have cliff swallows evolved shorter wings in Nebraska in the last thirty years?
- How do dung beetles find their way about at night?

Answers on page 20

The Anarchist Quiz Book by Martin Howard, with illustrations by Paul Petard, is available for a mere £5 post free via our website at freedompress.org.uk or you can pick up a copy from the Freedom Press bookshop at 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

