Direct Action

DA # 35 Summer 2005 £2

DruggedSociety

War on Drugs: Fails to Score

State Sponsored Druggery

IWW One Hundred years

International News

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Direct Action

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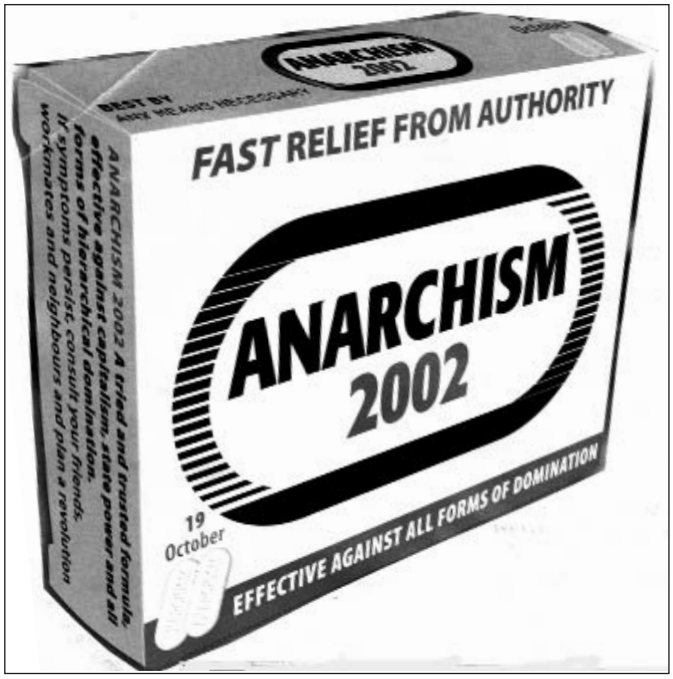
Stoned Immaculate?

This issue has many enlightening articles about 'drugs'. Info on how to get them, and what to do with them when you have - this is all available in government publications found in any school, clinic, or unemployed drop-in centre. But we treat you like adults and assume you know all that already. The articles here show how 'drugs' can be about much more than those, like 'smack' and 'coke', that our 'glorious leaders' love to spread scare stories about in the Daily Liars.

There's a history of drugs, including the role of the state in promoting some and banning others so they can keep control of the workers and make loads of money while they're at it ('State Sponsored Druggery', page 18). 'Talk to Frank', the government's latest wheeze to get kids to shop anyone they think is an 'evil druggy' (including their mothers) and stay pure, comes in for a bit of a hammering ('The 'Talk to Frank Website' - Frankly, a Load of Bull Shite', page 6). So too do the 'dream drugs' of advertising to kids ('...', page 22) and the prejudice peddling 'news' papers for us adults ('The Daily Drugs', page 4).



As well as all this there's the usual mix of topical articles - on asbestos and land developers ('A Dangerous Development', page 10); ' workplace bullying' (page 9); activism and charity ('Brown Nose Day', page 8), Blair's election victory ('Labour Troubles Ahead'). You can't beat the breadth of stimulation in a dose of ***DA***.

There's even stuff from around the globe... . Meanwhile, we have a version of the IWA's May Day statement ('Against Capitalist Exploitation - Organise and Fight', page 16) which shows how capitalism and its need for energy causes seriously dangerous problems all over the world.

Bringing it down to a local level, there's also a report on how May Day went in Lancaster & Preston - where a local drug dealer has just been 'caged' so we're all saved - ('Lancashire Reclaim May Day 2005', page 24). Alongside is an interview with Jess from 'urban rail punk' band, Eastfield, who provided two slices of the entertainment at the Lancaster and Preston events (page 25).

If that's not enough there's a history of the American IWW for your bedtime reading ('A Wobbly Century', page 30), along with letters, reviews and a brand new 'agony' column ('Ask Auntie Ana', page 23) and she's eagerly waiting to hear about your problems and worries so don't be shy. Also don't forget to look at the ads and notices in our 'resources' section (pages 34-5) as something might get you going.

The DA collective hopes you enjoy the read and learn something about anarcho-syndicalism in the process.

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The '*Daily Drugs*'

According to my Farnworth dictionary – I couldn't make it to Oxford – the definition of 'drug' is:

any substance used in medicine; a narcotic; to administer drugs to; to stupefy.

This last one throws a different light on the whole sanctimonious debate about drugs. Because 'Big Toe' and all his Daily Mail chums only think of drugs as something the yobbish riff-raff take in sleazy joints and dark alleys while waiting to pounce on fine upstanding citizens, who also read the Daily Mail.

They don't think of the 'Hate Mail' and all the other right wing rags as drugs in themselves. But by pandering to the pleasure zones of people's prejudices – prejudices that they have helped create – they are administering a 'reactionary' drug. It's a drug that stupefies readers into accepting an intravenous drip of 'shit' (an old word for dope). Brains become more addled than after ten pints of Holts bitter. Real experiences and memories about work, rip-off gaffers, what it was like when they were young and so on, get lost in a 'haze' induced by 'shit'. They get more 'paranoid' than if they'd been smoking 'white widow' for the last five years solid. They begin to think any foreign lorry is full of bombs, rapists or even 'asylum seekers'. They get scared of everything outside their doors, especially the drug crazed youth, and write letters to the papers to say so. Then someone else gets 'hooked'. That's how the drug gets passed around.

'I started on them teenage magazines and one day a friend said "try the Daily Mail" – I've been on the hard stuff ever since', said one of the 'unfortunates', mouth dribbling and eyes red after sleepless nights obsesses with single parents and 'asylum seekers' taking over their world.

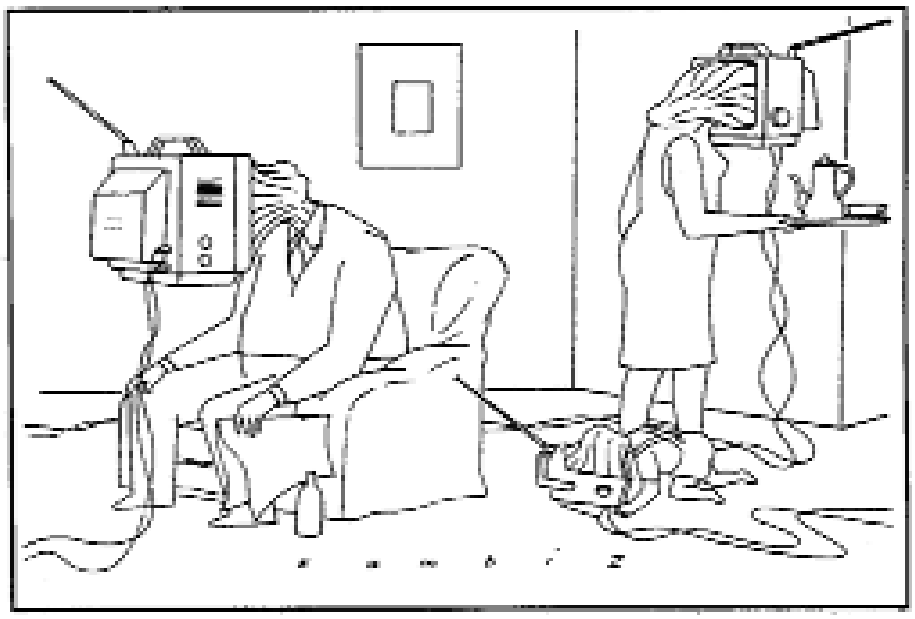
> **'I started on them teenage magazines and one day a friend said "try the Daily Mail" – I've been on the hard stuff ever since'**

The 'shit' they take allows them to ignore what their wonderful, well-behaved, bright little brats are up to, what they themselves may have got up to, and still do. They can also ignore all the pills keeping half the country on an even keel. The new puritans don't go on about being 'tough on the causes of depression', 'tough on bullying bosses', or anything like that – oh no! Their drugs induce the 'hallucination' that there's a wonderful world somewhere where everyone wears beige, drinks red wine and votes. I think they should all piss off there.

I say these drastic words because another 'side effect' of the drug passed down from the 'idle, thieving bastards' at the top end of society is people getting 'hooked' on the search for money and power. It shows itself in consumerism and the search for eternal life. The ones with the real power don't have to scramble about for the 'fix' of fame, wealth and long life. They just get it, while some arse licker will make sure they're remembered long after death by writing books, painting pictures, or building statues in their memory. For the rest it's owning things and consuming things. You see the 'addicts' showing off how much they're 'hooked' at the posh shops with loads of bags, drinking 'starfucks', in their 4x4's that can splatter any other car on the road, continually moving to bigger houses and mansions, having bigger everything, being more sophisticated, climbing ladders to ridiculously high paid jobs, wearing shiny suits

and daft ties, being 'celebrities' nip-tucked all over and covered in an even suntan.

What's worse is that these drugs are peddled, alongside other drugs like sugar for kids, all over the silver tellies to people who can't afford them. No problem for the dealers though – they've got a side racket as loan sharks and they're on the silver telly too. The world becomes stupefied and some of it turns to smack or drinking binges on a Friday night. For the rest there's happy pills and twenty-three hour shifts to pay it all off, while the kids look like they've been blown up with a foot pump. And the 'shit heads' who make a fortune out of all this have the nerve to moan about 'drugs'.



War on Drugs Fails to Score

Great news! The global 'War on Drugs' has been so effective that only 200 million people now use drugs! According to an as-yet-unpublished UN report, despite multi-billion-pound anti-drug measures, the market is as insatiable as ever.

What the report didn't mention is that at this rate every man, woman, and child on planet earth will be on drugs by Christmas – expect some wild New Year's celebrations!

South America, Africa, Australia, South East Asia and the Caribbean have all seen serious drug problems emerging. In Europe, although the rapid rise of cocaine use has slowed down, an estimated 5.3 per cent of the population used cannabis in the past year and use of heroin and crack is still increasing in many regions.

This is proof positive that prohibition creates a black market, floods the streets with drugs, and churns out crime as fast as you can say 'would you please hand me my crack pipe, it's under that nappy bag?' Current anti-drug policies have failed miserably in every way. Demand, supply, addiction, and abuse are rampant globally. Murder, theft, and money laundering are the norm all over the world.

The report says that demand has increased in three quarters of the 150 countries surveyed. Consumption levels in some states are surprisingly high — Israel uses 100 tons of pot, 20 tons of hashish, 20 million tabs of ecstasy, four tons of heroin, three tons of cocaine, and hundreds of thousands of LSD blotters annually. Wow, they are really 'Stoned Immaculate' over there!

So the stark reality is that people are going to use drugs regardless of the penalties and consequences involved. So it would be better for society to attempt to educate in order to reduce the harm caused by all those drugs. After all, is all the fuss about drug use itself, or is it about the harm caused by it? Now, if you'll excuse me, I'm off to Israel. It's party time!

Source: Eat the State.org

The 'Talk to Frank' Website - Frankly, a Load of Bull Shite

On drugs and drug addiction, the Oxford Dictionary of Sociology has the following to say:

"These terms generally refer to illegal drugs...Research shows that patterns of use, behaviour and subjective experience will be influenced by particular properties of drugs but also by social factors such as culture and social expectations. Most commonly used is cannabis, but the greatest social concern is heroin and more recently crack/cocaine, LSD, amphetamines and ecstasy."

This perception of addiction is unhelpful; it suggests a habit with serious repercussions for the individual and society. Not all drug users develop dependency, neither do these consequences always happen. Too often the media portrays drug users as evil criminals, when often the reason that people use drugs is to block out the oppression they experience from living in a capitalist society.

The recent New Labour 'Talk to Frank' campaign is a case in point. Established to 'advise' young people and parents on drug misuse, it includes a website with A to Z information on drugs. It emphasizes prison sentences for possession; the side effects, the nicknames, the ways to take them. But there's no info on using drugs safely or on rehabilitation. It all suggests that lives will be ruined by experimenting with drugs. The 'Talk to Frank' TV and radio adverts moralise to young people and imply that phoning Frank will solve their troubles. Obviously Frank is some good fairy who will cure the poverty the third generation unemployed live with, along with the despair that comes with it!

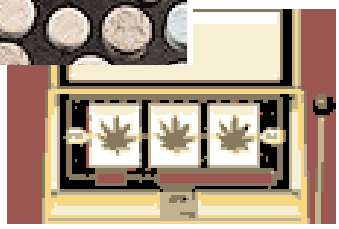
> 'Obviously Frank is some good fairy who will cure the poverty the third generation unemployed live with, along with the despair that comes with it!'

In the run up to reclassifying cannabis, Drugs Minister, Caroline Flint, was at pains to stress that 'cannabis remains illegal and that under 18s will still be arrested for possession'. The accompanying 'Talk to Frank' radio adverts focused on prison sentences, reduced employment prospects and inability to travel abroad. Emphasising to young people that something is illegal makes it more attractive and enjoyable to experiment with. The government is concentrating on moral panic rather than really useful knowledge.

According to the UK Cannabis Internet Activists (UKCIA), Frank's information about drugs is dangerous and misleading. For example, Frank advises that 'cannabis is not something that dealers mix anything with...' but, as UKCIA has been warning, so-called "soap bar" is badly contaminated with all sorts. Of course, if Frank were honest, he'd warn that because cannabis is illegal, there are no controls on the supply. On occasion dealers rip you off and offer other drugs, but this is caused by the law, not by cannabis. Frank has this to say on alcohol: 'Because it's legal and sold only in licensed premises, most alcohol is unadulterated'. Which is true, so why not warn of the dangers of the unlicensed, unregulated cannabis market caused by the fact that cannabis isn't legal?'

A more disturbing piece of info from Frank suggests that 'frequent use of cannabis can cut a man's sperm count and suppress ovulation in women'. But of course cannabis users have no problems in breeding! This prompted one visitor to the site to ask 'How long does the contraceptive effect of cannabis last and how many joints will we have to smoke to get the best contraceptive effect?' I have visions of millions of unwanted pregnancies and another government website moralising about young people's sexual behaviour.

A group of Manchester University Community and Youth Work students, researching the effectiveness of 'Talk to Frank', showed that the broader perception appeared to be very limited, with hardly any uptake by youth workers. Youth workers' views on Frank show they thought it had a very limited effect as young people don't use the website or helpline at all. Young people don't seem to be interested; they remember some of the ads but not the posters. Some workers thought it was a waste of money, but found the adverts funny.



The Frank campaign has made little impact on young people. It sees drugs as an issue for young people only, rather than discussing them in a wider social context. It concentrates on problematic substance use and ignores non-problematic use. It also ignores such issues as identity and growing up; poverty, exclusion and lack of opportunity - in short, the oppression caused by living in a capitalist society.

Just in Case you're a Drug Dealer

(the constable might need to smash your head against the wall)

Years ago reality TV cop shows from the US, featuring some bizarre action man type commenting on grainy footage of car chases, were stuck in late night slots.

Later, the odd local show appeared with British bobbies upholding good old British law 'n' order. They revolved around young working class people out on the town, getting a bit leery and a bit lippy, and occasionally threatening to knock seven bells out of each other. The cops were portrayed as hard working compassionate types saving people from being beaten up – usually done by piling in and shouting a lot.

Now, having lived near pubs, spent quite a lot of time in them and been on the wrong end of a pissed up idiot or two, I know drunken louts aren't new. What is new, are pub chains packing drunk kids in, getting 'em extra juiced up and shoving 'em on to the street the minute the bar shuts. What better way to create trouble.

And it makes ideal telly – lots of 'incidents' for heroic TV crews riding round in armoured cop vehicles; lots of equally armoured cops; and lots of scary youngsters, the worse for wear, with little clothing, let alone armour. What's more, it's cheap. All it needs is a camera, sound person, someone to kick off, and a bod to pixilate faces. No big travel budgets. The only major expense is over time – oh, and an editor to stretch the whole thing out to half an hour.

the usual plot

More recently there's been a move to prime time. The other night BBC1 had a show about police operations in Norwich against drug dealers and drug users who commit crime. Just the usual plot – a nasty, scary, brutish world teeming with ne'er-do-wells; the cops know who the ne'er-do-wells are and they'll be hunted down and banged up; in saving us from the ne'er-do-wells, the jolly nice cops have to use a few unpleasant means. In Norwich they'd decided to reduce crime by targeting known drug users and thieves one by one. So a dozen coppers tore around Norwich in cars and helicopters for days looking for some bloke who was asleep in a tent behind some trees. They followed another bloke around before superior amounts of plod piled in to stop the 'criminal' – not 'suspect' – from 'swallowing the evidence'.

It's not as though such shows put police activity in context or show its full extent. It's not as though the people targeted are given any depth or background. It's not as though alternative approaches to problems of drunkenness or drug addiction are addressed. Being TV, the producers want exciting images, cops running about Sweeney-style, hooligans terrorising town centres, druggies robbing our cars and dealers seeping poison into our pleasant homes.

bored kids

In Norwich the lads harassed by repeated stop and search were 'cocky drug dealers' – not bored kids on street corners. In the city centres the people being piled into, shouted at, pushed about and randomly thrown in the van were 'violent drunkards' – not strikers or demonstrators. The people being tracked, targeted and pounced on were 'one man crime waves' – not some poor sod the local bill had decided was a menace to society.

These shows are police propaganda putting the sugar on the pill of aggressive and authoritarian policing by portraying it as a reasoned response to carefully selected and edited bogeymen.

Consumer Culture

While Tony Blair pops into hospital for a routine heart operation to cure his palpitations - undoubtedly caused by the pressures of juggling a wife, children and a full time job, certainly not by the fact he is responsible for thousands of deaths - my teenage children inform me they know what palpitations are since they suffer them regularly. Classic symptoms of stress at fifteen! Some will nod sympathetically and point to the pressures of school and exams, which no doubt play a detrimental role in the increasingly stressed lives of young people, but there are other issues to think about.

Writers like Klein ('No Logo') and Quart ('Branded') highlight how we are bombarded by brands on a daily basis. The global media has

a homogenising effect on the world's cultures, creating a culture of consumerism. This has led to the rise of global brands like Nike and McDonalds, who no longer promote a product, but a way of life.

Advertisers use celebrities such as David Beckham and Britney Spears to endorse brands to inspire an image of wealth, beauty, success, intelligence and sophistication. Buying them means buying a piece of that image. It is also part of the message that whatever you have will never be good enough - you can always have more. Magazines and television bombard us with the luxury lifestyles of the very rich, creating an artificial and subjective sense of insufficiency, to ensure we keep on consuming.

And it's not just teenagers who are targeted. Studies now show that more four to five year olds recognise the McDonalds logo than recognise their own name.

The power of advertising is phenomenal. Whilst advertisers and manufacturers argue that they merely supply the goods we demand, the effect is not positive. Images of skinny models which adorn teenage magazines are linked to the rise in anorexia. This goes alongside rising childhood obesity. So, in an effort to maintain a healthy diet, parents often find themselves battling children influenced by the daily barrage of junk food adverts.

The result - young people judge themselves, and each other, not on their actions but on their clothes. This is a problem when taken together with poverty and unemployment. The poor live in the same world that has been manufactured for the benefit of those with money and power. The consumer culture is all around us - on television, at cinemas, in magazines, on the internet and increasingly within schools. Many people do not recognise the extent to which advertising has tied them in to a culture which encourages feelings of doubt, insecurity and inadequacy - feelings which are especially strong among teenagers.

This is a concern. Wearing brands is so normal now that, even when faced with evidence of the abuses which take place to supply them, many feel nothing can be done. The rise of the global brand has left people in many parts of the world living and working in terrible conditions so we can convince ourselves, and society around us, that we are part of the consumer culture.

Young people use branded goods to label themselves; to give the outside world what they believe to be the right image. The construction of an identity based upon your work is no longer an option when jobs for life are no longer a reality. Therefore people build their identities on what they eat, drink and wear, constantly striving to be seen with the 'right names' and in the 'coolest' places.

The power of the global brand, aided by the media's global reach, has led to the rise of the global teenager. The global teenager conforms to the latest fashion trend, is told by global celebrities what to drink and what to wear, and is made increasingly insecure by the portrayal of the perfect, ever-youthful body image, to which many can never aspire.

Fear of crime and isolation, worries about education and unemployment all mean that teenagers, far from being free-minded individuals making rational personal choices in a global marketplace, are instead controlled and brand-orientated, with Coca-Cola, McDonalds, Nike, and others, creating a homogenous culture of insecurity and doubt.

And they worry about them having the odd spliff!

Workplace Bullying

The level of workplace bullying is now truly staggering. Research by Manchester University found that 50% of people had witnessed bullying at work; one in six had been bullied in the last six months; and one in four had been bullied in the last five years.

Such a high level has severe implications for workers' health. A study, entitled 'Workplace Bullying in Britain', found that each year 18 million working days are lost due to sickness caused by bullying. This level of bullying puts paid to the partnership myth peddled by employers and unions that the British workplace has been transformed into happy teams of workers who cannot wait to get to work to do their bit for the company and add to their personal development. The reality is that Britain's increasingly deregulated workplaces are full of bullying managers using fear, intimidation and guilt as tools to force workers to work longer and harder for less. The result is a growth in stress-related health problems like depression, severe fatigue and immune system suppression.

intimidation

The reason for the rise in workplace bullying is not hard to find. Under capitalism control of the workforce has always rested on management intimidation. It is in their ability to fire workers who refuse to follow orders that managers' power ultimately rests. And historically it has been the ability of workers to organise, using their collective economic strength, to challenge management's use of intimidation to ensure ever-greater productivity and profit. Unfortunately the last twenty years have seen the virtual collapse of workplace organisation and, faced with less workplace resistance, capitalism demands ever greater flexibility resulting in ever greater insecurity. The result is a sense of powerlessness which makes it hard for workers, collectively and individually, to challenge the attitudes of even the most obnoxious of managers.

This situation is virtually the norm across Britain – a workplace culture in which the sack is a constant threat creating a climate of fear in which management bullying and intimidation thrives. The message is driven home on a daily basis. As workers have no rights, their only long-term future lies in putting the employer's interests first. Those who do not conform to this free market mantra – those who have the nerve to go sick, or refuse to work long hours, or even take their holidays – become branded

as not being team players. They find themselves marginalised, bullied and punished, and ultimately driven out or sacked. The message is clear – conform or face the consequences.

In the US and Japan where this free market inspired culture of conformity is most successful, people now work longer than at any time in the last 100 years. On average they only take 10 days holiday each year. In the US prayer reading has been introduced to maintain the 'American way of life' in the workplace. Hence the workplace has become a flag waving environment where to question management or to refuse to conform are seen not only as undermining the company's future prosperity, but also as unpatriotic, 'un-American' acts. It is hardly surprising that in such a poisoned atmosphere bullying is on the increase, not just by management, but sadly by other workers too.

The only sure way to challenge bullying is for workers to challenge management power by creating a workplace culture based on their own needs as workers. Workplace bullying in all its cruelty will ultimately only disappear in a democratically controlled workplace where decisions are taken collectively, banishing for good the fear and insecurity on which bullying thrives.

ON THE EDGE

Centra Strikes

A 24 hour strike on May 9-10th by RMT members at Centra Buses in Croydon has forced the company into talks just 2 days before a second planned stoppage for May 20-21st. This is despite Centra's attempts to break the strike by threatening dismissal for those taking action, and by breaking health and safety laws by requiring unqualified agency drivers to be available for up to 24 hours. Workers are claiming a basic £500 weekly wage, equal contracts with equal pay for all employees, no zero-hours contracts, adequate annual leave, sick-pay from day one of employment, full rostered earnings for victims of assaults at work, fair allocation of overtime and an end to victimisation for trade union membership.

Migrant Workers

A damning report, 'Forced Labour and Migration to the UK', was delayed until after the general election. Compiled at Oxford and Sussex Universities, it details how employers coerce migrants to work for low wages in appalling conditions; how they subject them to intimidation, to physical and sexual violence, to blackmail and debt bondage; how they report to the immigration authorities anyone who complains about their treatment. There are also examples of the state, as an employer, paying migrants below the national minimum wage.

While the research is wide ranging, it focuses on farming, cleaning, building work and residential care. It found migrants being prevented from seeking help; being forced to take loans from loan sharks; and being forced to work very long hours in dangerous conditions. One of the more disturbing findings is that the NHS is involved in this exploitation through the use of agencies, which demand huge deposits for accommodation. This report looks unlikely to see the light of day until it is substantially revised.

ON THE EDGE

RSI

Although you might never have heard of it, International Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI) Awareness Day came and went on the 28th of February. Meanwhile the fifth TUC survey of workplace safety reps showed that stress, RSI and back strain are the three top workplace hazards in Britain. What's more, these problems are getting worse - two years on, the incidence of stress is up 2% to 58%; RSI is up 3% to 40%; and back strain is up 4% to 35%. Employers are still failing to protect workers from illness and serious injury, all the while seeking to blame workers themselves. For further information on these conditions visit:

http://www.worksmart.org.uk;

or the HSE site at:

http://www.hse.gov.uk/msa/index.htm.

Text for Victory

At Ozer's restaurant, Langham Place (near Oxford Circus), workers used to be sacked on the spot if customers were not fully satisfied with the level of service being provided. This was the situation before a successful texting campaign instigated by GMB rep, Serdar, which forced owner, Huseyin Ozer, to stop putting cards on tables urging customers to inform on the mainly Turkish staff. Now Ozer has victimised Serdar because he told a customer that the service charge went to the company, not the waiting staff. GMB branch secretary, Mick Duncan, has called for another texting campaign to get Serdar reinstated. To join up:

text: **'reinstate Serdar now!'**

to Huseyin Ozer on 07850 667777.

A Dangerous Development

It is proposed that 650 homes and a children's nursery be built on the site of the Turner & Newall factory in the Spodden Valley, Rochdale, where asbestos was produced for over 100 years. Despite this, the developer's report, submitted to Rochdale council, stated 'of particular note is the absence of any asbestos contamination'.

This is somewhat surprising given that exposed asbestos waste can be found on the surface of the abandoned site, and this has been witnessed by the local MP and councillors. Furthermore, former workers witnessed, over a number of years, the dumping of thousands of tonnes of asbestos into an old coalmine located within the proposed development. This is confirmed by Turner & Newall's own records which show that by 1957, an average of 300 tonnes of dust were dumped on the site each year. Given the extent of contamination, it must have taken days for the developers to find a suitably uncontaminated scrap of land to test.

Should the Spodden Valley development go ahead there's no doubt that it will cost lives. Inhaling even small amounts of asbestos can cause mesothelioma and lung cancer. After years of denial the Health & Safety Executive has been forced to admit that there is no safe minimum exposure to asbestos. Nor is it just those living nearby that are at risk. Two million asbestos fibres can fit upon a pin head and once airborne they can travel for miles. Scientific reports estimate that living within 2km of a source of asbestos dust may increase the risk of cancer by up to ten times. Yet the developers plan to demolish 30,000 tonnes of asbestos factory, crush it into rubble on site, and use it for foundations releasing clouds of asbestos dust in the process. Unused rubble will be transported by road creating yet more contamination.

The risk the development poses to the local population was acknowledged by a Health & Safety commissioner and former Turner & Newall manager, who called the felling of tress and disturbance of soil on the site 'sheer madness', and suggested that 'with the potential amount of asbestos on the site, no development should be built'. The fact that the government and council did not force Turner & Newall to clear the site of asbestos before selling it to property developers is an outrage. To allow development on land awash with asbestos waste is to further risk the lives of local people who, for generations, have had to live with the horror of asbestos production. It is time for asbestos deaths in the area to stop.

Local people have started the 'Save Spodden Valley Campaign' to get the site cleared of asbestos before any development goes ahead. Following a recent meeting with local CWU reps the union has backed the campaign. The CWU has agreed that members with both postal and telecommunications jobs would be at risk, either when delivering mail or working to establish communication services.

Contact the campaign on 01706 644774 or at www.Spodden-Valley.co.uk.

Labour Troubles Ahead

In the last election campaign the media cast opposition to Labour purely in terms of Iraq. The impression was that without the war Blair would have been returned with another massive majority.

That is not to say that opposition to the war has not been a factor in Labour's growing unpopularity. Nevertheless, with only one in five of the population actually voting for Labour, it is their economic polices and the continuing social dislocation they cause, which is the root cause of the loss of votes. This is especially true in Labour 'heartlands' where much of the core vote either stayed at home or voted for the illusion of the Liberals as a radical alternative.

inequality

Labour strategists may comfort themselves that, barring another imperialist war, the anti-war vote will return to the fold. But this is unlikely to be the case with traditional voters stuck at the wrong end of growing inequality. Short of an economic about turn, Labour is going to be vulnerable in traditional working class areas which will continue to suffer the full effects of their free market policies.

But they're now so committed to the free market that they couldn't change even if they wanted. Besides a dwindling band of 'old Labour' die hards hoping that a Brown leadership may signal a change in direction, the party is rife with bright young things who actually see Maggie Thatcher as a hero. Thatcherite economic policies are not only pushed by the government but also by Labour councils up and down the land. Take Manchester City Council, whose slogan not so long ago boasted of 'defending jobs, defending services'. Right now they are privatising services so fast even Maggie would be dizzy. In addition, MCC has just done a deal with unions wiping out overtime pay and enhancements. For the lowest paid manual workers, who relied on shift and overtime payments, this means a gross weekly wage of £213 for a 35 hour week.

As Labour's efforts to deregulate the workforce continue, so too does the inequality eating away at Britain's social fabric. This will further alienate the core vote which may result in Labour finding itself slowly being replaced by the Liberals. Of course, voting Liberal Democrat will do little to help the working class – and not just because of the free market fanaticism that lies behind the nice words of cuddly Kennedy. The main problem for the working class, particularly those most affected by deregulation, is that they have no organisation to defend themselves. Historically workers have only made real gains when they have been able to organise themselves and take direct action. But the crushing of workplace militancy by the Tories was the prerequisite for capitalism to attack pay and conditions and usher in the growing poverty, brutality and inhumanity of society today.

confrontation

Our aim has to be the rebuilding of a workers' organisation in Britain. Nor can this be done by reforming the existing unions. Getting this or that left wing leader elected won't stop the decay in what now pass for trade unions. A new workers organisation has to be built both in the community and the workplace, an organisation centred on working class people directly controlling their own struggles and directly confronting the boss class. The key to this new movement is participation and, in terms of the workplace, the starting point is workers beginning to come together to discuss their common problems and how best to overcome them. From this, workplace organisation based on workplace meetings can be developed.

This kind of self-organisation is the only way to reverse the tide of defeats which has blighted so many lives over the last thirty years and to ultimately overcome a capitalist system that condemns much of the world's population to hunger and slavery. The only alternative to this is representative politics and giving control of our daily lives to the likes of Blair, Brown and Kennedy – in truth, no alternative at all.

ON THE EDGE

Deserters

The number of soldiers 'illegally absent' last year was 530, up from 205 in 2003. While many soldiers strongly disapprove of the government's stand on Iraq, a growing number are also not prepared to suffer the indignities and discipline of army life. Hardly a month goes by without some revelation about abuse and bullying of recruits while the shadow of the unresolved Deepcut murders looms large despite the government's outright refusal of a public inquiry.

Stress Kills

Working poorly structured shift patterns causes physical and mental health problems. This has been revealed by separate studies, at the University of Surrey and Cardiff University, on the physiological and psychological health of a group of 45 men working on offshore oil rigs. The workers on the more popular split rota of seven night shifts followed by seven day shifts 'were at increased risk of heart disease and diabetes and stress related health problems. This pattern also makes workers more tired and inattentive, increasing the chance of accidents and mistakes.

Doesn't Add Up

It seems Gordon Brown's drive to reduce Whitehall cost does not include money spent on that modern parasitic phenomenon, the office consultant. Last year the government spent at least £1.9 billion on management consultants, up 46% on 2003. A spokesperson for the Treasury stated that the consultants were needed to 'provide the expertise that civil servants cannot give' at a time when all departments are looking to make efficiency saving. Part of the efficiency saving includes the spending of £2 billion on consultants at a time when the government is planning to cut 100,000 civil servants jobs to make a saving of £3 billion.

ON THE EDGE

The CCTV Don't Work

Most CCTV schemes fail to cut crime and do not make the public feel safer, according to a Home Office study. CCTV cameras, acclaimed by police, government and the companies flogging them as a major step in tackling crime and disorder, have been 'disappointing' because many schemes are 'ill-conceived'. Only in one case in thirteen could CCTV be shown to have reduced crime. The authors blame these failings on the way the technology is being used. Nevertheless they don't even go so far as to claim that overcoming such failings would cut crime – just that 'effectiveness will suffer' in schemes lacking good management and staff. The Home Office spent £170 million on 684 local projects between 1998 and 2003.

£900,000 Fine no Deterrent to Shell

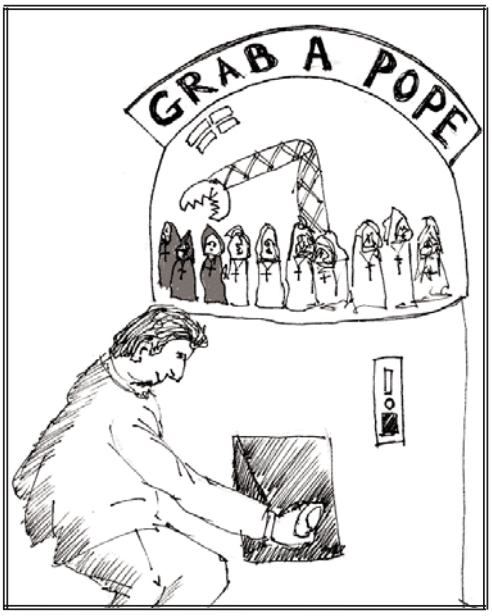
Shell has recently been fined a record £900,000 for a series of safety failings on its Brent Bravo platform which killed two workers in September 2003. Though the fine is almost treble the previous biggest in the North Sea, it will do little to alter Shell's appalling safety record. After all, it is equivalent to only a minute's worth of the oil giant's global revenue, which amounted to about £2.8 billion in the first quarter of this year. Though Shell released a statement taking full responsibility and regretting the 'sad loss of two lives', what they did not mention were the warnings issued in March 2003 by the offshore union, Amicus, of poorly maintained equipment, one of the causes of the accident. The company responded by doing nothing. Just as appalling was the fact that a HSE report published three weeks before the deaths said there was no immediate problem. Which just Demonstrates yet again that the HSE is more interested in protecting company profits than ensuring the safety of workers.

Brown Nose Day

Anyone working for a saner world will, from time to time, be faced with the choice of caring for present suffering or working to remove the cause of the suffering. The choice is always painful. More so because we know that a preoccupation with the present inexhaustible supply of suffering is a means of social control. We all know people who have become so involved in caring for present suffering that they have no time - and eventually no optimism - for the radical changes which would remove the source of the problem.

Charity has the double social role of relieving poverty while easing the guilty conscience of the giver. It keeps the poor in a permanent state of dependence and, for the sake of a coin in a box, gives the rich the feeling that they have done something to relieve suffering. What charity doesn't do is attack the cause of poverty, starvation, famine and disease.

In recent years charity has moved away from the world of religion and bourgeois philanthropy into the world of the cult of the celeb, single-issue politics and 'caring capitalism', it does some actual, if short term, good while presenting absolutely no threat whatsoever to the capitalist status quo. In fact it actively supports that status quo and thereby perpetuates the very cause of the suffering which it claims to want to alleviate.



It's not that there isn't enough food and medicines in the world – quite the reverse. Over-production is one of capitalism's major problems, due to insane notions like 'just in time' production. The problem is that the poor don't have the money to buy these essential commodities – and capitalism isn't going to give them away. History has countless examples demonstrating that capitalists would rather destroy surplus food than give it away to hungry people.

What charities do is encourage the rich to buy these essentials on behalf of the poor. Thus capitalism gets to sell its previously unsaleable surplus production and charity donations are recycled back into the hands of capitalism – which caused the problem in the first place.

Charity re-appears not as individual acts of generosity existing outside capitalist values, but as an integral part of a balanced capitalist ideology. So we get the spectacle of 'Lord Geldof Day' as the assembled celebs brown nose each other in an orgy of 'look at me'. Not that Geldof isn't important in understanding how the meaning of Live Aid has been constructed – far from it. In a period where the very ethos of a planned, socialised and welfareist society is running down – or being run down – and the 'individual-in-the-market' is the intended focus of all social organisation, a happy story where an individual can be seen to put the world to rights is of tremendous ideological value. Value, that is, to an interest group which depends on fostering Victorian charity values and free market fantasies.

Spain

It is always good to hear about the successes that our kind of unionism – anarcho-syndicalism – has around the world. We fight for unions that are under democratic control of the membership, with no permanent committees or delegates, that use direct action to solve disputes and that have a vision of the kind of society we would like to live in in the future.

With the International Workers' Association, the anarcho-syndicalist international established in 1922, expanding in many places of the world where we have not until recently had any affiliates, the future for revolutionary unionism looks bright. We realise, on the other hand, that our unions aren't as strong as they were in the early years of the twentieth century and not as strong as we would like them to be, but an International means that we can co-ordinate struggles better and win the battle against the bosses.

Recently, our sister organisation, the CNT (National Confederation of Labour) in Spain has been having lots of victories in the workplace and on the social front. Here are some brief extracts of recent successes and campaigns that the CNT has participated in.

In north Spain, in Burgos, the CNT and the Burgos Social Forum called a demonstration, which gathered together more than 1,000 protesters against accidents at work and to march against poor and unsafe working conditions. The immediate cause of the demo was the death of ten workers who were working on the construction of a cycle route in the city, and were employed by the Town Council. The reformist unions, for all their loud mouthing about accidents and the like, have done very little. While this march will do nothing to bring back the ten deceased workers, it is only by refusing to work in unsafe conditions, protest and direct action that can stop such things happening again.

Meanwhile, in Madrid, the CNT Construction Workers' Union held protests outside the Spanish Ministry of Labour. Workplace 'accidents' are the responsibility of the bosses, cutting out rest periods, putting on crap contracts and ignoring current legislation. A spokesperson from the CNT stated that these accidents are "a direct result of casualisation" in the workplace. We agree. Most of the new 'flexibility' of work practices benefits the bosses and not us and makes it easier for them to discipline us and get rid of us when they want. The CNT continues with its national campaign against casualisation as does the IWA across its member Sections.

The CNT, which does not stand for workplace elections and does not participate in workplace councils because they are undemocratic, has recently established several 'Union Sections' in different workplaces. These Sections are controlled by the membership and all decisions taken in them are through the workers' assembly. Recently in the television company CATSA in Malaga such a Section has been established recently and, with other workplace unions, has called for a strike in order to implement basic agreements and to get them respected. Again, while the reformist unions do little so as not to prejudice their position of power in the workplace, the CNT is organising workers with an aim to taking control of their own struggles.

In the Town Council of Adra in southern Spain, better working conditions have been achieved in terms of wages and hours worked and in Cornellá, near Barcelona, a CNT member was given his job back after being sacked from FASKA company.

These may not be huge victories and some of what we have reported on is clearly 'on-going' work. But a union which does not make compromises before management or the state, as far as it can, is what we need in Britain, where workplace 'accidents', casualisation and generally poor conditions are fast becoming the norm. In the future, we will report on the progress of the IWA's anti-casualisation campaign and on what's been happening in this country too.

Croatia

Formation of the Anarcho-Syndicalist Confederation (ASK)

At the last Congress of the IWA in December 2004 in Granada, Spain, the Anarcho Syndicalist Front (ASF) of Croatia was present, having sent a delegate to observe the Congress' procedures and the activities of the International. As a result of that presence, the IWA accepted the ASF into the IWA as Friends of the IWA, a status given organisations which either wish to join as fully fledged members at a later date or which cannot, at present become full members because of their small size.

The ASF has now reorganised and changed its name to the Anarcho-Syndicalist Confederation (ASK), representing a step towards achieving the goal of building a confederation of anarchist workplace syndicates and libertarian neighbourhood assemblies.

The ASK has increased its propaganda activities particularly in

local communities where it exists, and has recently grown in response to increased interest in its activities. The ASK also publishes its paper Antibarbarus every month or two. In addition, with the help of the IWA, they intend to translate and publish general anarcho-syndicalist literature, something which does not exist in the region. We are told that the only place where anarcho-syndicalist ideas were present was, somewhat paradoxically, in the analysis made of them by some Yugoslavian Marxist papers.

The ASK intends to ask for affiliation to the IWA at the next IWA Congress, an event scheduled for Manchester in 2006. In the meantime, they have close contacts with the Slovenian Union of Self-organised Workers and the Serbian Anaracho Syndicalist Initiative, both of which have close ties with the IWA.

We hope that the consolidation of anarcho-syndicalist organisations in the former Yugoslavia marks a starting point for the creation of independent workers' organisations and for the strengthening of our International, the IWA. What follows is a brief text by the ASK which describes their organisation.

'The Anarcho-Syndicalist Confederation (ASK) is a confederation of anarcho-syndicates and neighbourhood assemblies (community syndicates) inside the territory of Croatia. All involved in the work of this confederation are striving to build a non-hierarchical and anti-authoritarian movement of working-class solidarity, dedicated to the building of a society based on the principles of solidarity, collective mutual aid, equality and true liberation of every individual.

'ASK strives to organise workers on two basic levels; inside their workplaces (which is a form of an economic organisation) as well as inside their community (which is a form of a political organisation). United in this way, workers form one economic-political formation, ie., they form organisations which are embryos of direct-democratic institutions of the future society: the Commune. As a syndicalist organisation, ASK has two tasks: the immediate protection of workers' rights, and the fight for improvement and better conditions of living for workers within the existing society.. This aim is achieved through reforms, which are only a reflection of our struggle to the final goal: the radical transformation of society, through Social Revolution, which will be based on the principles of Libertarian Communism, where people will cooperate on the principle ''From each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs''.'

Colombia

Young anarchist killed by police in Bogotá

A 15 year old, Nicolás David Neira Alvares, was killed while marching in the anarchist block on the Mayday demonstration in Bogata. Many young people had decided to come together to protest against capitalism and they joined the huge demonstration which included union workers, farmers, students, unemployed people and activists. They marched in a non-violent manner on one of the main streets of Bogotá.

The demonstration not only remembered those who were killed by the State in Chicago, but also denounced the current unstable economical and social conditions of Colombia, demanded a halt to the Free Trade Treatise and made public the atrocities

that are being committed by the current quasi-fascist government.

Trouble occurred when the ESMAD (police) started to use tear gas without any reason, and after one explosion, began hitting protesters with wooden sticks and firing rubber bullets. It was during this that many people were severely injured, including Nicolás who was beaten on the head by the police until he lost consciousness. Around eight policemen surrounded Nicolás covering themselves with masks to prevent recognition.

After some time, Nicolás was finally taken by some comrades to a hospital. There he waited for some hours until he was taken to the Salud Coop Hospital where he remained in critical conditions until he died on Saturday 7th May.

During this week, many people denounced the situation, writing articles in the alternative media, helping the family, organising and protesting in the streets. Many of these people are in turn being harassed by the police. The media covered the whole affair by trying to hide the real facts. The ESMAD claim that they never beat anyone.

South Africa

When Nigeria tried to force through tough new labour measures in the face of fierce resistance by workers, over 50 African countries condemned the moves - these countries included South Africa.

Now the business-friendly ANC government has unveiled similar plans to further exempt 'small and medium enterprises' from 'central bargaining and other labour arrangements'. The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) has warned of major conflict if the government persists with forcing ever more workers into the informal economy. Mbeki, the ANC President, hopes the changes will be in place by the end of this year. We at ***Direct Action*** hope that COSATU's warnings amount to more concrete opposition.

Japan

Union members in Japan have placed the blame for a massive train crash that claimed 106 lives squarely on the railway company, saying under pressure workers face humiliating penalties for slight delays.

'The accident is a result of JR West's corporate stance of prioritising operations and high-pressure management that uses terror to force employees to follow orders,' said Osamu Yomono, vice-president of the Japan Confederation of Railway Workers' Unions. Japanese trains are renowned for their punctuality, with JR West and other operators running timetables down to every 15 seconds.

But it takes its toll in terms of stress on drivers, with punishment including 'nikkin kyoiku' - dayshift education. That means retraining sessions for those responsible for delays or overrunning stops. The sessions often include making drivers write reports all day long on topics such as how to improve themselves or chores such as weeding, which the union says is humiliating. A 44-year-old train driver of JR West hanged himself in September 2001 after he spent three days in retraining for being 50 seconds late when departing from a station. There have been allegations that the 23-year-old crash driver Ryujiro Takami, who had only 11 months' experience and who had gone through re-education, was speeding after falling 1 minute late due to overrunning a station.

Bangladesh

Compensation demanded for Spectrum victims

Garment workers in Bangladesh staged a demonstration demanding the payment of compensation to injured workers and the families of those who were killed after the collapse of the nine-storey Spectrum factory. The disaster was due to faulty construction and left at least 93 workers killed, 36 missing, and over 200 others injured.

Their demands also included the immediate payment of arrears on wages and overtime to the 6,000 workers of Spectrum Garments and Shahriar Garments, as well as job security and the settlement disputes at both factories, owned by the same management.

Police intercepted and blocked the parade of workers, mostly women, as they were heading towards the Labour Ministry to lay siege around it to press home their demands. However, they did allow a four member delegation of the organisers of the demonstration to enter the ministry to submit a three point memorandum to the office of the Labour Secretary.

Other workers staged a demonstration on the spot and shouted slogans against the owners of the factories.

Organised under the joint auspices of the National garments Workers Federation (NGWF) and Bangladesh Garments and Industrial Workers Federation (BGIWF), the demonstrating workers, earlier held a brief rally at Muktangaon in the capital with NGWF general Secretary Amirul Haque Amin in the chair.

Against Capitalist Exploitation - Organise and Fight!

Everywhere, we see capitalist rivalry and sustained attacks on workers' rights and conditions. Meanwhile, capitalism continues to exploit us, not only economically, socially and culturally; it also mobilises us for its own economic and military madness, exploiting our fear of job losses, fear of other races, fear of terrorism and so on.

The world economy is very critical and may face a dollar collapse. The US thought the Iraq war would pay for itself in terms of Iraqi oil pouring into the world market; increased oil production lowering prices; and the main OPEC countries like Saudi Arabia, Venezuela and Iran being destabilised due to sharp declines in oil revenues. Today we have the opposite - the enormous costs of the war in Iraq (and Afghanistan), high oil prices and falling profits have combined to aggravate the huge US deficit.

Although oil is traded in dollars, oil-exporting countries won't lose any profit. They merely respond to the falling dollar by raising oil prices. And increasingly they are considering the strong euro as an alternative for oil transactions. In addition, developing countries with large dollar reserves are also diversifying from to the euro to lessen the threat of big losses due to the dollar's decline.

'peak oil'

The situation is dramatically worsened, according to the IMF, by the threat of 'a permanent oil shock' caused by a combination of surging demand from emerging countries and limited new supplies from outside the OPEC countries. The passage of so-called 'peak oil' - the point when oil extraction hits its maximum and begins to decline (predicted by some to be 2010, but may be sooner) - will fuel rivalry between capitalist powers, in turn increasing the exploitation of workers.

Such rivalry can be seen in every continent. In the light of 'peak oil' the capitalist powers are acting as oil-junkies, desperately seeking to ensure their present and future energy supplies. And whoever controls energy resources and the supply lines, also controls their rivals because oil and gas are the lifeblood of capitalism.

The changes in Georgia and Ukraine are major victories for the USA. Georgia is a transit country for the new Baku (Azerbaijan) to Ceyhan (Turkey) oil pipeline. This is routed through Georgia and Kurdish areas of Turkey, but avoids Russia and Iran. Ukraine, the main transit country to the EU for Russian oil, will be used by the US, just like the new EU and NATO members, to undermine Russian and German/French interests.

The true nightmare of the US and other imperialist powers is that, as their energy needs rise, they will become dependent on hostile and/or 'unstable' countries. The US strategy of controlling the 'Eurasian corridor' - from Eastern Europe to Central and Eastern Asia - has become a very important aspect of its wider activity within the so-called 'Arc of Instability'. The 'Arc' stretches from Latin America (with US-inspired militarisation like Plan Colombia) to Africa (where Washington is rapidly increasing its presence) through the Middle East (occupation of Iraq and threats against Syria and Iran) to Central Asia (war and occupation in Afghanistan) and on to Eastern Asia (threats against North Korea and attempts to counter the rise of China).

the middle east

Special attention must be drawn to the Persian Gulf where America is preparing air-strikes on military targets and suspected nuclear, chemical and biological weapons installations in Iran, in a plan to provoke a regime change. According to US journalist, Seymour Hersh, the Bush administration has been using the Pentagon, not the CIA, for secret missions inside Iran to avoid having to report to Congress.

Such actions, as with Iraq, have a very important and hidden reason. Saddam's regime became a definite target when Iraq converted its oil transactions from dollars to euros. Iran has, at least since 2003, been considering launching an oil stock exchange that would trade in euros. This plan is, according to Alexander Gas & Oil, scheduled for August 2005. If set into practice, it will strongly undermine both the International Petroleum Exchange (IPE) in London and the New York Mercantile Exchange (NYMEX). It will send shock waves around the financial world because trading in petrodollars is one of the foundations of US economic domination. Given the huge US deficit and the weak dollar, a successful Iranian Stock Exchange would be a major threat and the US will use all means necessary to prevent it.

And we should not be amazed to learn that the Israel/Palestine issue is also tied in with the control of oil supplies. In March 2005 a number of foreign consortia, con-

sisting mostly of US investors, contacted Israeli government agencies and the government-owned company, Petroleum and Energy Infrastructures, with proposals to renew the oil pipeline from Haifa to Iraq through Jordan. This plan could put into practice the main strategic interests of America and Israel - solving the Israeli energy crisis, and securing oil transportation to Europe and the USA. But it first requires the 'hostile' regime in Syria to be diminished or eliminated, and the resistance in Iraq, especially the sabotage of gas and oil pipelines, to be crushed.

attacks on iran

This strategic project of a pipeline to the Mediterranean is even more important in the light of possible attacks on Iran. First, the USA and EU want to be less dependent on oil shipments from the Persian Gulf through the Iranian controlled Strait of Hormuz. Second, Iran has threatened to block the Strait in the event of an attack thereby pushing oil prices to an all time high.

At times like these it is important to uncover the motives of the capitalist powers. For instance, the EU is not a soft, humanitarian bloc that counters the USA; or take the US forces involved in the aid effort for tsunami victims - they were also clearly showing off US strength in the region. The Strait of Malacca, east of Sumatra, for instance, is a critical sea lane between the Persian Gulf and the likes of Korea, Japan and China.

China, with its rapidly expanding energy needs, is increasingly considered to be a major strategic enemy as it challenges US influence in Asia; maintains close ties with Iran; and counters the US in Africa and Latin America. Brazil and Venezuela, for instance, have agreed to increase oil exports to China, while China has been expanding its trade, including arms, throughout the continent.

Disagreements between the USA and the EU are clear to be seen over policies towards Iran and China. On Iran, the EU has a more 'moderate' policy than the US; on China, it is challenging the US by talking about lifting the weapons embargo. America fears an EU alliance with energy-rich Russia, as well as its growing relations with Latin America, India and China.

Washington's tactic of dividing the EU into 'Old Europe' and 'New Europe' was openly exposed before and during the initial phase of the occupation of Iraq. What Iraq and Ukraine have shown is how the US seeks to control all energy sources and supply lines, and to block potential challengers to its hegemony. The expanding EU is a superpower in terms of trade, but it is militarily weak. However, efforts to speed up military and economic integration will continue despite recent setbacks over the proposed EU constitution.

casualisation

In Europe, as elsewhere, the rule for capitalism is 'expand or die'. The offensive we see worldwide against public services is designed to open more markets for private corporations. Many governments are watching Britain as Blair attempts to turn a fifth of public services over to the private or 'voluntary' sector by 2007.

Another major global trend is casualisation. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) uses as many as 22 indicators to compare levels of employment protection in different countries. This is very helpful to capitalists wanting to make extra profit, especially in a global economy where it's easier and easier to move production. So attacks from the likes of new Labour focus on different indicators, from difficulty of dismissal to the forms of temporary work that employers can impose on workers.

One form is that provided by temporary work agencies, which are often multinational corporations making profits from slave labour. Besides dividing the work force and undermining wages and working conditions, agencies also have an international and political impact in terms of the so-called 'war against terrorism'. Israel, for example, uses agency labour from the Philippines, Eastern Europe and China instead of Palestinians for 'security reasons'.

surrender or fight

As global capitalism throws its mask off, bosses and states alike never cease telling us to accept 'the logic of the market'. Bureaucratic reformist unions, with their dependence on state aid and subsidies from the very bosses who attack us, must surrender or fight. If they mobilise at all they are doomed to fail, since they are not built to counter attack on broad fronts, or to rely on their own strength. Instead, they've become service institutions and burdens upon the backs of workers, not tools for self-activity and emancipation.

The only true 'job-security' we have as workers is to rely on ourselves, on solidarity and on the actions we can take together. In contrast to reformist unions, the IWA rejects integration into the capitalist system. We don't have paid union officials; we don't take subsidies from the enemy; we don't collaborate with the capitalist system, for example, by participating in state sponsored 'union elections'.

Capitalism attacks us in many ways, so the IWA fights on the economic, social, cultural and anti-militarist fronts. The anarcho- syndicalist coherence of the International is essential as these struggles are also part of the fight to replace capitalism and the state with the free federation of workers free associations - that is, *libertarian communism.*

article adapted from the IWA May Day statement - full text at www.iwa-ait.org

State Sponso

drugs, capitalism an

Mention drugs and most people think of illegal drugs like heroin, cocaine and ecstasy. But loads of other compounds are used daily by millions and are rarely thought of as drugs. Alcohol is a sedative, similar to barbiturates, but we don't call it a drug because drinking's a national pastime. Medicines are seen as beneficial because the medical profession, drug companies and governments say so. And a lot of them are, but a lot are just as dangerous and damaging to our health and well-being as some of the illegal ones. If drugs are chemical agents, then our food's so full of shite, and people are eating so much of it, that life expectancy is going to fall for the first time in years.

Then there's addiction – we all know heroin and fags are addictive, but so are some medicines like sleeping pills, painkillers and anti-depressants. Boozing and gambling and ever more abstract things seem to be habit-forming, like TV, work, shopping and talking shite on mobile phones. What's more if drugs are chemical agents, as it says in the dictionary, then the chemicals stuffed in our food and water will make us *all* drug addicts. Either that or we'll all be dead and it just so happens that life expectancy is going to fall for the first time in years.

So why are some drugs legal and some not? Why are some seen as so dangerous that people are fined or imprisoned for using them? And why are some that are just as dangerous seen as beneficial?

Humans have used drugs in one form or another for thousands of years. Archaeologists have found that neolithic people grew plants like cannabis, mandrake, henbane and belladonna. Opium was grown 6,000 years ago in Turkey, Afghanistan, Spain and southern France. People have brewed beer and wine in Europe for thousands of years and the use of various magic mushrooms has been widespread in every continent. One archaeologist has reckoned that the Celtic tribes who followed Boudicca and burned London down were probably off their heads on mushrooms.

social control

There seem to be as many reasons for taking drugs as there are drugs but you can group them into a few areas – medicinal, ritual or religious, enjoyment and the pursuit of oblivion. A bit general maybe, but it covers most drug use. Add to this a more modern use – social control.

So, let's have a closer look at two 'illegal' drugs - cocaine, drug of choice of the rich and famous, and heroin, associated with poverty and the underclass.

Cocaine is derived from the coca plant, native to Bolivia, Colombia and Peru. It was widespread as a stimulant, a cure for snow blindness, toothache and loads of everyday aches and pains. The Incas chewed their way through tons of it. When the Spanish Conquistadores discovered silver in what's now Bolivia they enslaved the local population and encouraged them to chew coca so they would work harder and longer. They paid them in coca; started coca plantations to meet the demand; and paid the plantation workers with coca too.

At this point we get the first example of a recurring theme surrounding drugs – a moral panic. In 1552 the Catholic Church had a conference in Lima to decide what to do about the new empire in South America. One topic was the use of coca. Some said it was the Devil's work and wanted it banned. The king of Spain sympathised but wasn't about to lower the productivity of his slaves, so nothing happened. At the second Lima conference, fifteen years later, they had another go but by the third conference the king had offered the church 10% of the profit from the mines. Needless to say, priests fell over themselves to say what fantastic stuff it was and how useful it was for the workers.

Nothing much happened to coca for the next 300 years until a German chemist, Friedrich Wohler, brought back a bale of it. He gave it to one of his students who developed a refining process that produced a few crystals he called 'coca-ine'. Then, in 1863, a chap called Angelo Moriani mixed it with wine. It became a big success and celebrity endorsements from Jules Verne, Thomas Edison, H G Wells and the US president, William McKinley, boosted sales. He marketed a range of products from coca throat lozenges to coca tea and it got into all sorts of medicines and pick-me-ups, including fizzy pop.

Then the medical profession got in on the act. Sigmund Freud thought it was a wonder drug for treating depression. A mate of his used it as a local anaesthetic. But Freud then made a drastic mistake, giving it to a friend who was a morphine addict. It seemed as if, after three weeks, he'd cured him. In reality he'd just replaced one habit with another, in the

ored Druggery

nd the working class

process inventing the speedball, a mix of cocaine and heroin or morphine. His mate died a slow nasty death, but the belief that cocaine could be used to treat morphine addicts persisted for years.

By the early 1900s cocaine use in America had exploded, mainly due to Henry Hurd Rusby who thought it would be better to produce cocaine on the spot rather than exporting the coca leaves. The price of cocaine dropped which was good for cokeheads, but got the killjoys chattering. In 1905 concerns about the health hazards of cocaine led to coca cola removing it from its drink and the next few years saw a full-blown moral panic. The reasons were as much to do with racism and fear of the working class getting out of control as with any concern about public health or welfare. The power addicts thought black men on coke would go round raping white women and tainting the colour. While wild-eyed working class riff-raff might become superhuman, killer rebels.

heroin

Like cocaine, heroin was chemically refined from a natural substance, opium, which had been a medicine and narcotic for thousands of years. Apparently, in the early 1500s, the Portuguese found out that smoking opium gave instantaneous effects and this became common. Later, opium was mixed with alcohol to produce laudanum. Just like cocaine, it started appearing in all sorts of remedies. Dovers powder was a lethal mix of opium, salt peter and white wine. Laudanum was regarded as a cure for all sorts including crying babies, while in 1805 a new compound, morphine, was discovered by isolating one of the chemical components in opium. Morphine was ten times stronger than opium.

By the 1830s opiate-use was widespread in Europe and America and there was an epidemic of opium addiction in China, with up to 15 million users. This came about due to the East India Company selling tons of it to local traders who smuggled it into China to avoid import restrictions. The Chinese government got pissed off and in 1839 confiscated 20,000 chests of opium from British warehouses in Canton. The British sent warships, shelled some cities and forced a treaty on the Chinese. They also nicked Hong Kong in the process. A few years later the French joined in the second opium war, and got another favourable treaty.

Opiate consumption got another boost in the American Civil War when thousands of soldiers were treated with morphine. European and American doctors also treated opium addicts with morphine. Then in 1874 a new drug was discovered – heroin, even more potent than morphine. It went into mass production at the end of the 19th century and was used for a variety of ailments, including morphine addiction. As the laws surrounding opium use were tightened, addicts switched to heroin, which was cheap and easily available. Some estimates put the number of heroin addicts in the US at 200,000 by the mid-1920s. This was too much for some and heroin was made illegal in 1924. It's at this point that heroin and cocaine diverge. Cocaine became linked to the rich and famous; heroin to the poor.

Although the Second World War disrupted smuggling routes, afterwards new routes were opened, especially via Cuba. These were initially controlled by the Mafia, then by Cuban drug gangs by the end of the 1950s. When Castro took over he chucked out the American gangsters and their Cuban partners who flitted to Florida. Using CIA money they set up cocaine production in Chile, Panama, Bolivia and Colombia. By the 1960s cocaine was becoming popular again amongst the middle classes while Colombia became an important centre of distribution.

civil rights

At the same time heroin use was boosted by the Vietnam War. Thousands of US soldiers came back addicted to opiates produced by local warlords to fund private armies. Along side this the civil rights movement in America took on a more revolutionary tone. Riots erupted in cities across the US as poor and politicised blacks took to the streets. It seems more than coincidental that cheap heroin flooded into the ghettoes on a scale far outweighing the needs of the servicemen returning as addicts. Stories that the CIA had a hand in this have never gone away. The result was the ruination of thousands of lives, an increase in violent crime, shattered communities and dissipation of the revolutionary movements. But the moral panic mongers had a field day, they could blame the whole problem on the 'underclass' and keep the best 'gear' for themselves.

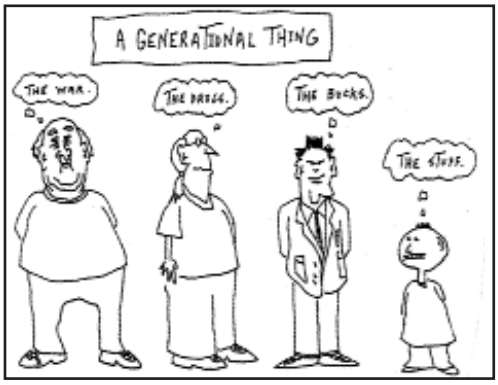
In Britain there hadn't been much of a heroin problem. When laudanum and other opiates were made illegal the British working class turned back to alcohol as their drug of choice. The few heroin addicts were mostly doctors, sailors and jazz musicians. When drug use took off in the '60s heroin was viewed with fear, so youth culture was fuelled by cannabis, bluey's, bombers and other amphetamine sulphate pills, then later by LSD. Heroin use rose slowly through the early '70s but didn't really become a problem until the 1980s. In 1978, there were 2,402 registered addicts; by 1995, the figure had leapt to 37,164 and estimates put the number of heroin users at over 250,000. The Thatcher government was directly

responsible. Working class communities became wastelands; working class culture was attacked and undermined; and alien values like self help, thrift and selfish individualism were promoted at every opportunity. While spivs and yuppies hoovered up tons of cocaine, working class kids were sniffing glue and getting turned on to cheap heroin, which seemed to get cheaper as youth unemployment rose and rose.

So what did our modern entrepreneurial society do with these kids, apart from create another moral panic about them? F*ck all – sent them to prison and got them addicted to synthetic heroin, methadone, which is even harder to get off than heroin. One reason why people take drugs is the pursuit of oblivion and this was, and still is, the prime reason behind heroin addiction. For many, heroin was and is an alternative to boredom, hopelessness, low self-esteem, poverty and exclusion from Maggie and Tony's brave new world. While damaged lives and communities become even more damaged. Junkies will do anything to maintain their supply:

Junk is the ideal product, the ultimate merchandise, no sales talk necessary. The client will crawl through a sewer and beg to buy. The dealer does not sell his product to the consumer. He sells the consumer to his product…you would lie, cheat, inform on your friends, steal, because you would be in a state of total need, because you would be in a state of total sickness, total possession, and not in a position to act in any other way.
(William Burroughs, *Naked Lunch*)

Up to 1970 the few opiate addicts were treated as if they had an illness and were prescribed opiates to manage their addiction. Tougher penalties against use and supply in the '60s and '70s didn't stop more people using drugs. The ridiculous 'war on drugs' promoted by successive British and US governments has been a spectacular failure. Only the security services have benefited, getting to play cowboys in the Colombian jungle. There's more prisons, more screws, more bureaucrats, and more ex-cops paid massive salaries to be 'drug czars'.



The ridiculous 'war on drugs'...has been a spectacular failure. Only the security services have benefitted, getting to play cowboys in the Colombian jungle.

more drugs

The US government has done more to flood our streets with heroin and cocaine than all the Golden Triangle warlords and Colombian drug cartels together. US foreign policy has created the conditions that let drug production thrive. And our problems are nothing compared to addiction levels in producing countries. Since the US invaded Afghanistan opium production has increased dramatically. In 2003, the harvest provided three quarters of the world's heroin and 95% of Europe's – last year's crop topped even that. There are now 10 million people worldwide addicted to Afghan opiates. Washington has linked an aid package of 2.3 billion dollars to the destruction of opium crops. But with an acre of opium poppies earning $2,500 compared to only $120 for wheat, poor farmers become even poorer while the richest landlords pay bribes to prevent the destruction of their fields. Just as the war on terrorism produces more terrorists, the war on drugs produces more drugs and more addicts.

The role of heroin as a method of social control and its use to undermine the black power movement has been mentioned. Prescription drugs perform a similar function. We were told at the end of the 1950s that we'd 'never had it so good'. There was an economic boom, more consumer goods were available to more people, but more people were being prescribed dangerous psychotropic drugs, which had appeared in the early '50s. By the 1960s diazepam (valium) was the world's most widely prescribed drug and by 1990 one in five American women used some kind of tranquiliser. Added to which, the pressure on women to conform to an unrealistic physical image meant that doctors prescribed millions of amphetamine based slimming tablets.

The popularity of tranquilisers, sedatives and sleeping pills raises an important question – if everything was so fantastic in our liberal democratic consumer society why were so many people prescribed addictive happy pills? We can ask the same question about the next generation of pills, anti-depressants. There's no doubt that since the Second World War our physical health has improved but our mental health has nosedived. Depression, stress and anxiety have reached epidemic proportions. So have allergies. Any kid with too much energy or who doesn't fit in at school is diagnosed as having 'attention deficit disorder'. At best they get suspended, at worst shunted off to some quack psychologist to have their behaviour modified. These kids, especially in the US, are prescribed Ritalin, a drug with similar properties to cocaine. 4% of American children are taking some form of anti-depressant and, while we reached this level in Britain, more and more young people are treated for depression and anxiety with drugs.

The mental health charity, MIND, estimates 3 out of 10 people experience mental health problems every year. Most are treated with anti-depressants. However, the vast majority of these people are actually suffering from capitalism – poverty, environmental pollution and chemicals in our food, not to mention stress at work, at home and at school, are all products of

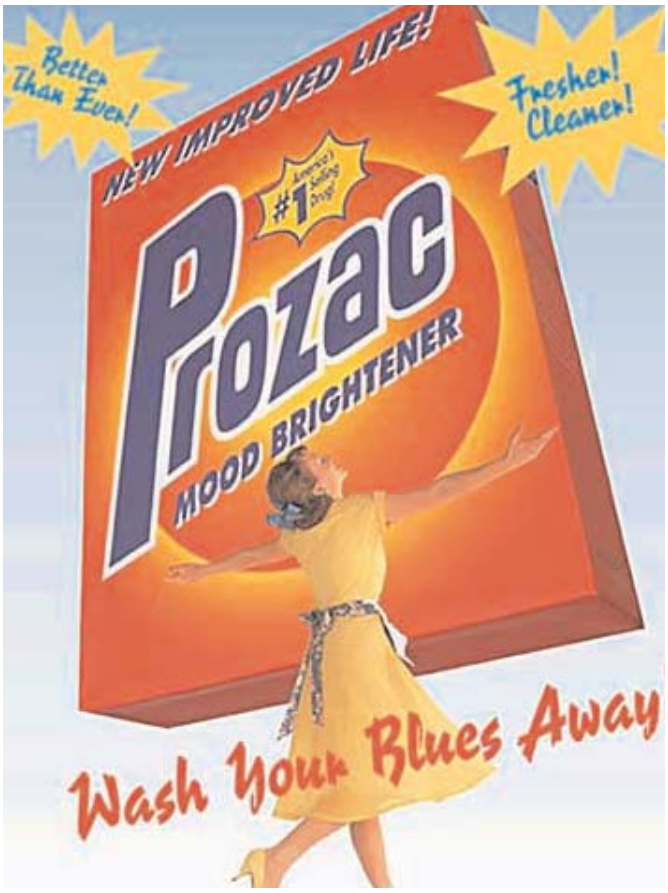
capitalism. What's more, we live in a world where it's almost a crime to be miserable.

doctor dependence

In *Limits to Medicine*, Ivan Illich argues that 'recent times had brought a medicalisation of life which involved the expropriation of health by the medical profession whose prime aim was power and aggrandisement'. He goes on to say that the medical profession creates disease rather than cures it. People might be living longer but they spend more time being ill and grow ever more doctor-dependent. Medical costs escalate and the main beneficiaries are not the sick, but the medical profession along with insurers, lawyers and pharmaceutical companies. Similarly, people like R D Laing and some radical psychiatrists have argued that it is psychiatry that has made people mentally ill. The medical profession, the psychologists, psychiatrists, therapists and counsellors want to treat the depressed by turning them from chronically unhappy introverts into confident, energetic extroverts. In effect, this is changing people from what our culture finds least desirable into what it finds most desirable – well-balanced, competitive consumers.

It's likely that in the next few years more people will suffer depression and mental illness; there will be more alcoholics, more addicts to gambling, shopping and sitting in front of the TV. More kids will be given more drugs to modify their behaviour. Drug companies will make more powerful happy pills and billions more dollars in profit.

Drug use is a cultural phenomenon and binge drinking isn't something that's just started to happen. Alcohol consumption per head fell from 1900 through to 1960 when levels started to rise again but per capita consumption is still much lower than in 1900. What we're seeing is a good old-fashioned moral panic, the type usually used to justify a change in the law. Like at the end of the 19th century when opiates became less culturally acceptable to the 'chatterers'. One reason for this was the middle class reformers like the first temperance movement and the utilitarians who wanted a drink and drug free workforce. Another reason was the rise of the medical profession and the idea that doctors, as specialists in health, should have total control over drugs like opiates. While alcohol was never in danger of being banned, due to the vested interests involved, opiates came under an international control system that was strengthened in the early 20th century under American influence. These controls have influenced states' domestic drug policies for the last 75 years while the pharmaceutical industry is seen as the only legitimate drug producer.



state control

As the medical profession became more powerful the idea that doctors know best took hold. People who feel stressed or bad with their nerves don't think twice if their doctor puts them on a course of prozac. The doctor isn't going to say 'right, pack your job in and go fishing' or 'here's a couple of ounces of skunk – go and have a good smoke'. They're in the business of prescribing expensive medicines to ensure a docile compliant workforce who consume state-controlled drugs.

What can be done for the thousands of addicts and the millions taking anti-depressants and tranquillisers? A couple of things spring to mind. We can stop the insane practice of giving addicts methadone and argue for the legalisation of all drugs, and specifically the provision of free heroin for addicts. Pure pharmaceutical heroin can be taken indefinitely without any negative effects. Before 1971 this was the norm and it would immediately remove the need to steal to get money for heroin.

As for anti-depressants and tranquilisers, that's more difficult because until there's an end to capitalism and the authority of a few over the many, we'll go on getting ill. All the while the war on drugs will go on too, giving the US government the excuse to interfere in the internal affairs of other countries under the guise of drug control programmes and aid packages that pour money into military and security services. These policies confine millions of people around the world to a short and brutal life while the rich get their addictions treated at specialist clinics like the Priory and the Betty Ford clinic.

'In effect, this is changing people from what our culture finds least desirable into what it finds most desirable – well-balanced, competitive consumers.'

Ask Auntie Ana

DA's very own agony aunt – guaranteed to help with all those tricky bouts of activist angst and anarchist anxiety

Dear Auntie Ana

I am very new to anarchism and I have just been to my first anarchist bookfair. I spent loads on books and pamphlets – but I really need a recommended reading list – can you help?

Earnest Very, Lancaster

Dear Earnest,

Bless! This takes me right back to the days when I thought I could be an Airfix anarchist (find the assembly plans and join the right dots etc.) My advice is very simple, dear. Stop reading the books, get out and meet some nice anarchists who are active in the workplace and local community and next time you stop by at the bookfair, just buy a T shirt (if you must).

Dear Auntie Ana

I keep hearing Voices in my head. These Voices seem to hail from THE NORTH and tell me it is my destiny to form an organisation to show those who push anarchism from its true path the error of their ways. They also tell me that I could become the new FATHER of Anarchism in the NORTH. How can I gather more people around me?

Worried Blue Eyes,
T'Frozen North

Dear Worried,

Look mate, anarchists in the north don't need a father, least of all one with a random use of capital letter problem; we're happy to be free-thinking BASTARDS. I'll make it as clear as I can - being a rampant individualist doesn't make you and your Voices anarchists. I prescribe a good dose of political principle followed by a firm kick up the arse - and that is one for each and every Voice, by the way.

Dear Auntie Ana,

The other week I went to a meeting and met this bloke who seemed to know a lot of anarchist theory – I've been active in a local group for ages and I've never heard of some of the stuff he quoted at me. It's left me feeling a bit uneducated – I couldn't even understand this magazine he sold me. Should I start at the beginning again then? The whole thing is making my head spin.

Connie Fused, Keighley

Dear Connie,

It sounds as though you have had your first run-in with what we in the movement call the 'Beardy Blokes'. I'm not surprised your head is spinning after trying to read some of the quasi-intellectual bilge they peddle as 'authentic' anarchism. If do manage to pick your way through the strangled phraseology and the spurious quotations and name-dropping you will see that they use these wretched rags to rubbish each other and anyone else who doesn't agree with them. (He didn't mention anything to do with any Voices, did he?) You don't need to be able to drop Kropotski or Chominsky into your conversation to be an anarchist. Cheer up – you know it makes sense!

Dear Auntie Ana,

I am writing about my financial situation which is dire. I can't even afford to buy my comrades a post-meeting drink down the pub. Can you find me a sponsor or donate something to ease my situation?

A. Nonymous, Wythenshawe

Tony, you're fooling no-one. Get your hand in your pocket and get a round in you tight get.

letters

radical webcasting

Dear DA,

I'm involved in an innovative 'webcasting' project which might interest DA readers and contributors.

Basically, the idea is to create a series of online radio-style features focusing on issues like anti-globalisation/anti-capitalism, anarchy, prison and criminal justice reform, employment and workplace issues (e.g. 'casualisation', declining health and safety standards), drugs policy reform (e.g. cannabis legalisation), social and economic 'alternatives' (e.g. LETS)…no doubt potential contributors could come up with plenty of worthy topics!

Contributing individuals, groups, organisations would record their own specific broadcasts in MP3 format using simple, straightforward equipment (computer, mics, MP3 recording device, etc). The nature and style of the 'broadcasts' would be largely up to the contributors – as simple or complex as they wish. These would then be collated and posted on the host web site (from where they could be downloaded to listeners' PCs and even transferred to a portable MP3 device), probably on a monthly basis. A kind of regular, audio magazine, if you will.

Anyway, we aim to initially get a number of 'pilot broadcasts' together to help focus potential contributors on their own ideas. So far, they conform to the following formats:
- 'interview': (e.g. a telephone interview with environmental campaigner Mark 'Mad Cow' Purdey);
- 'soapbox': any individual can have his/her say on anything at all;
- 'magazine': a regular review of issues, events, news, etc, surrounding any of the suggested topics;
- 'feature': (e.g. Copenhagen's famous Christiania "free state");
- 'debate': (conducted via the internet with Skype or AOL9 software!).

Anyway, if any DA readers or contributors are interested in getting involved, I'd be delighted to hear from you at markpickard@aol.com.

Mark Pickard

labour friends of iraq

Dear Comrades,

In DA34, the Labour Friends of Iraq website is publicised. We are told to 'visit these web pages for more information and suggestions for action' and this website is under the statement, with two others. This all appears under a letter which publicises the 'plight' of Nozad Ismail, an Iraqi 'trade union' leader, and promotes the 'Labour Friends of Iraq' organisation.

When selling DA I could argue that the advert for a Labour Party website was an editorial oversight. This is made harder in that the letter is published with no reply contradicting the statements it makes.

For the record: The 'Iraqi Federation of Trade Unions' (IFTU) is controlled by the Iraqi Communist Party, part of the interim government responsible for murdering tens of thousands of Iraqis. The IFTU has never opposed privatisation nor led any workers struggles. It was appointed by the interim government as the sole representative of the labour force as it does nothing but appeal for international support from people like 'Labour Friends of Iraq' and idiots in the British trade union bureaucracy.

It's all very well for people here to condemn the 'so-called resistance' but we are not seeing neighbours arrested, held without due process, tortured and sexually abused. The politics of many in the resistance are suspect but most of those defending their communities from US/UK terror are not Baathists or fundamentalists, but ordinary people backed into a wall. It is unwise for anarchists to advocate armed struggle, but condemning or dismissing the actions of a desperate people amounts to siding with western state terrorists. I know the editors of DA would agree on this but it is important to demonstrate to readers where they stand.

That the letter writer was passing on an appeal by the Labour Friends of Iraq should have alerted you to this person's political agenda. A bit of digging would have revealed support for a leader in a bosses' union.

I have no problem with the letter being published but, given DA is an anarcho-syndicalist publication, some correction to this person's statements would have been in order to avoid confusion among readers as to the real politics of DA and the Solidarity Federation to which DA is accountable.

Jacob

Reply: *Yes, it was an oversight, and we agree with the points you have raised. Obviously, the Labour Friends of Iraq site is not on our list of recommended viewing.*

just books back in belfast

Dear Comrades,

Just Books was opened by the Belfast Anarchist Collective in 1978. It was more than a bookshop, however, as it included a cafe and print workshop and provided a focal point for the collective's many activities for sixteen years. The Just Books collective then disappeared for a while but we hadn't really gone away. In recent years we have provided book stalls at various events and our third catalogue is currently being compiled.

Just Books is now working toward a new centre in Belfast, aiming to be up and running in July 2006 to mark the 70th anniversary of the Spanish Revolution. For this we need some active solidarity. Again we want to be more than a bookshop. We envisage a solidarity centre providing accessible resources and information for workers in struggle, including a multi-lingual resource library, bookshop, meeting space, internet access and coffee shop. We'd also like a print workshop and film projector. These are possibilities - we ask for your support to achieve them.

At the minute you can help by:
- donating books to our multi-lingual resource library;
- buying a T-shirt ('Solidarity is Strength' cat - red ink/black shirt or black on red) for £8 + £2 postage;
- buying 'A Wee Black Booke of Belfast Anarchism', by Máirtín Ó Catháin (£2.50 + 50p UK postage);
- attending or organising a fund raising event;
- if you are in Ireland, requesting Just Books stalls at your events;
- or sending us a donation.

Contact us at JustBooks@safemail. com; jst_books@yahoo.co.uk; or P.O. Box 505, Belfast, BT12 6BQ.

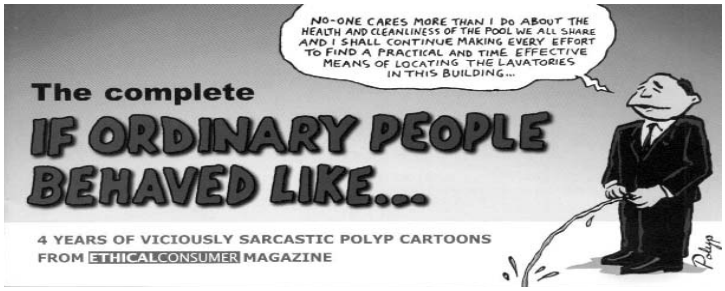
We need several thousand pounds - the more we raise the more ambitious this project can be.

Jason, for the Just Books Collective

Polyp - 'The Complete...If Ordinary People Behaved Like...'

Ethical Consumer 2004 (www.ethicalconsumer.org)

As it says on the cover this is a collection of the 'If ordinary people behaved like…' strip cartoons where the actions and attitudes of corporations, government bodies and the like are viewed through the prism of how their actions would be seen if they were transferred to everyday scenarios.



The targets are obvious, because their behaviour is well known for their complete immorality, sheer lack of shame and twisted justifications for their actions; what Polyp does with the skewed view point of the cartoons is bring all this to neat, precise and very funny slices of razor-sharp satire.

This slim volume contains cartoons that have not only appeared in Ethical Consumer but also in previous DAs and no doubt many other places. In fact Polyp is the modern Steve Bell, whose strips used to appear everywhere during the Thatcher years. It's not a huge tome by any means, but it's well worth a flick through and to leave lying around for others to have a quick look too.

Lancashire Reclaim Mayday 2005

For the second year running anarchists in Lancashire, including Preston Solidarity Federation, organised 'Reclaim Mayday' events to try and get back to the origins of the holiday in working class struggle and to celebrate International Workers Day with style. The theme this year was 'clampdown' with attention focussing on the proposed ID cards and the election.

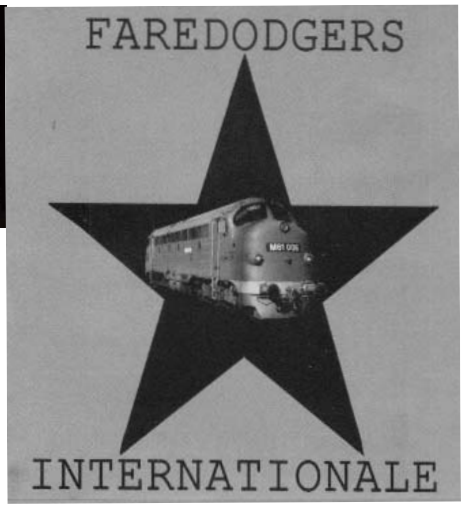
It started on Saturday with asocial at the Yorkshire House in Lancaster with a D.J. and several bands. These included Eastfield, Forenzic, Three Ages of Elvis, Confrontation as well as a solo spot. Once again a video show was running all through the event and the room was decorated with anti-election and anti-ID posters.

Next day there was a picnic with over a hundred people including children with games and music. G8 and Defy-ID leaflets were distributed. In the evening a cabaret and quiz night was held with excellent free food. Best quiz question of the night was "what dodgy organisation did the new pope belong to" to which someone shouted out "the Catholic Church" and so gained a bonus point to the other answer which was of course the Hitler Youth.

Monday night saw the Preston event with Eastfield and Confrontation once again playing along with Instant Agony (pic below) and St Elmo. Local singer-songwriter Claire Begley (pictured above) also did a well-reeived solo spot. Preston Defy-ID and Preston SolFed were the co-organisers. Someone commented on the anti-voting leaflets raising the old cry of 'if you don't vote then you can't complain.' This was answered by us saying that it is those who vote who can't complain because by voting you are accepting the system the state has set up. No use moaning if you don't like the result.

The aim of these events is to give an alternative to the staid Labour Party/TUC dominated ones that have simply become part of the status quo. Mayday should be about having fun and sticking two fingers up at authority and it was in this spirit that everyone came together. Unfortunately the third leg in Burnley did not happen this year but we are still hoping that from these modest beginnings we have begun something that can grow in the years to come. Roll on Mayday 2006!

Eastfield



Eastfield were formed in 1996 playing their first gig in April that year in Sheffield. Since then they have gone through various line-up changes with one constant, that is Jessi Adams, singer, guitarist and songwriter who has remained the inspiration and guiding light to their brand of do it yourself 'Urban rail punk'.

For the last two years he has been instrumental in the organising of the Lancashire Reclaim Mayday events and this year Eastfield played both Lancaster and Preston. We thought it was time to catch up with him and ask a few questions.

DA. Tell us something of how and why you began Eastfield

Eastfield began because I hate 'rock n roll'! The preferential treatment and disproportionate interest given to people and the ins and outs of their lives just because they play in a pop group has always been a source of bewilderment. Does it really matter what someone's favourite colour is? The anti-hero stance of punk was great but sadly a lot of punk rock literature comes across as Smash Hits for people with spiky hair. Eastfield formed to counteract pop star attitudes, aiming to prove that even if you play the guitar it is possible to climb down from the pedestal to lend a hand and have a bit of fun whilst trying to say something worthwhile...you don't need to know our favourite brand of 'Tippex' to listen to our music either!

To enable this to happen I put a rucksack on my back, picked up my guitar in one hand, an amplifier in the other and caught the train to Birmingham.

DA. Eastfield haven't signed to a label and are self promoted. How do you keep going?

The answer lies in the question to some extent. Keeping integrity is quintessential for survival. Call it sheer bloody-mindedness but the fact that we can do it our way and it works is a reason to carry on in itself. If we were aspiring to be 'rock stars' or chasing that elusive 'record deal' then we would have got disheartened and split up years ago, but signing to a record label has always been irrelevant to what Eastfield do.

Eastfield has always been more about lifestyle choice than just a band and the ethics of DIY are firmly ingrained in this. I don't need a record company to tell me what to do or how the band should be run. We make our own decisions and choices – if they work - great, if not - then we can learn from our mistakes. Eastfield produce good quality stuff at sensible and affordable prices and it sells without ripping people off.

Our CDs are properly pressed but we liaise directly with the production companies. We print our own t-shirts which means extra work but it keeps the costs down. We make a small profit on everything but this goes back into the collective pot to help fund the day-to-day running of Eastfield whether it's recording, releasing, mending broken equipment or buying petrol to play benefit gigs.

Everything is covered without anyone needing to dip into their own pockets but no one makes a living from Eastfield either. If we were doing it simply to line our own pockets then I for one wouldn't bother.

DA. When you go to your website and click on photos its all photos of locomotives not the band. Why's this?

Look at the photo section on any bands website and you'll find it consists of countless photographs that fall into three distinct categories: badly taken live shots, the band posing in the cheesiest manner possible or those depicting a band in-joke which usually means the drummer has passed out when drunk, has toilet paper draped over him and some wag has marker-penned "I love Kylie" on his forehead.

Having no desire to inflict such images on the unsuspecting public, I believe my photographs of locomotives taken at Eastfield depot have greater relevance and are much more aesthetically pleasing. I'm still working on the idea of having an mp3 section that plays snippets of freight trains in full thrash rather than our songs!

DA. Do you have any trouble mixing pop & politics?

If you separate 'politics' from the farce that is 'party politics'

then politics are present in everything we do; our choices (or lack of them), our decisions and our interactions with others. Thus like anything else there is no reason why pop cannot be intertwined with politics. Bands such as Chumbawamba have always done the pop and politics thing very well. However, when working within a limited framework such as a song, care has to be taken so it doesn't come across as empty sloganeering or sounding too corny and therefore not able to be taken seriously. Conversely, I believe an injection of relevant humour can actually be an effective tool if used in conjunction with serious issues. This is what we strive to achieve in Eastfield.

Obviously music isn't purely about politics and protest but to be 'political' in music shouldn't be limited to churning out some fast screechy dirge. Far too often bands can make profound points only for them to get lost with indecipherable lyrics. Surely music that is catchy and accessible is a better vehicle for highlighting issues which individuals can then themselves explore further via other media?

DA. So what's all this about Burt Reynolds?

Burt Reynolds has always been the target of some superficial ridicule due to his crap moustache, his crap films and his crap macho attitude. Recently I have been informed that he has a far more sinister side in that he had a penchant for domestic violence. I find it offensive that so-called celebrities that commit such abhorrent acts are still at large in the public eye. (David Soul, Gazza there's a few of them still out there). If they want to be perceived as role models then surely film footage of them getting their just desserts would set a much better example.

Contact details
Eastfield, PO Box 7804,
Birmingham B13 8AS, UK
www.eastfieldrailpunk.co.uk

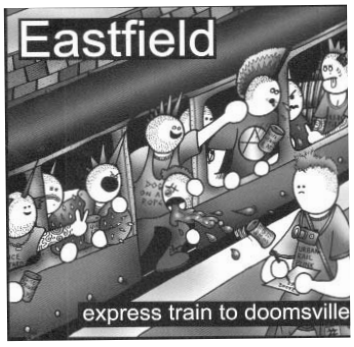
'Express Train to Doomsville'

Ruptured Ambitions 2005 - CD (www.eastfieldrailpunk.co.uk)

Eastfield's latest CD carries on their proud tradition of anti-authoritarian good time punk rock with a distinct railway motif.

This is the first outing for the new line up of Jessi - guitar and out of tune singing, Bambi - bass and singing, Chris from Bishops Stortford - drums, Trina - tuneful singing.

The songs include an attack on the decrepit British railway system, a new campaign song for the sharks against surfers (T-shirts available too), a celebration of the deaths of the neo-fascist McWhirter twins and a put down of Burt Reynolds, not for his moustache or crap films but for his penchant for domestic violence.



All in all a good 12 song CD to set the toes tapping, the mind thinking and the mouth laughing, remember – get on board for the Eastfield Express tickets cheap as chips.

£5 from gigs or the website

The Ex - 'Turn'

Ex Records 2004 - double CD distributed by Konkurrent (ex@theex.nl; info@konkurrent.nl)

Perennial Dutch anarchomusicians, The Ex produce another masterful slice of music that is not quite punk, not quite jazz, not quite folk, not quite pop, not quite world but consistently excellent.

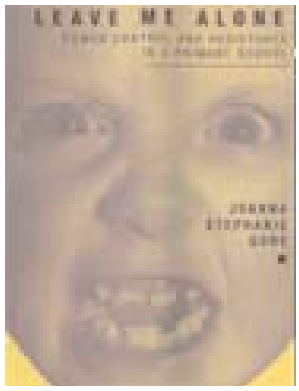
After roughly two and a half decades of constantly entertaining and intelligent releases (and nearly a decade of reviews in DA) if you've not already encountered The Ex then give 'em ago. If you have encountered them before and are not a cloth eared lost cause you'll probably have bought, stolen or blagged a copy of this by now. The music is driven guitar, drums, double bass and vocals, and is the sort of thing all these bands rediscovering the late seventies/ early eighties post-punk sound should have progressed that sound on to, rather than trying to ape the one and a half good moments that the Gang of Four stumbled upon. The politics is in the lyrics from the celebration of pie-ing the infamous in 'The Pie' to 'Huriyaet' an Eritrean liberation song, which I think is the second one mentioned in DA (see reviews in DA 1 for the other). The lyrics are less than straight forward polemics, but the compassion, anger, urgency and drive is clear.

Leave me Alone

Power control and resistance in a primary school

Joanna Stephanie Gore/Lib Ed - ISBN 0 9513997 8 0

Joanna Gore spent 3 months in a school experiencing what children experience day to day - endless lining up, eating dinner, sitting with 'back straight, hands on head, bottoms on the floor', playing in the sand, having her hair pulled and sneaking sherbet into assembly. She considers the everyday forms of power and control exercised over children. Much of this control is internalised and embodied within the person as the children 'grow up', but they also find ingenious, playful, creative and effective ways to resist and so get to play a part in social change.



Joanna begins by trying to understand what a child is, and clearly mapping out the place children occupy in today's world. She points out that this concept of children as separate from adults now seems universal. It's a division based on the idea that children are not yet people, that everyday socialising and conditioning, turns them into people (adults). For Joanna 'the oppression of children is vicious ...no other group of human beings is stripped of its rights in such a ruthless but deemed-acceptable manner...persecution for being the wrong age...'

To make the point we are asked to imagine being forced by law to go every day to an institution where people make you stand in lines, sit on the floor and listen for hours to talk that is of no interest to you; where they restrict your movement, shout at you, and punish you for speaking or being lively; while they take away your 'privileges' for saying what you think. That basic human rights are called privileges when applied to children is telling in itself. To oppress children and allow these atrocities to go on with a clear conscience, adults must dehumanise them - they are not yet people, hence the category 'child'.

Joanna including some of her 'field notes' which add lots of wonderful colour to the concise and empirical understanding of just what was taking place. We get many simple tales of control, and resistance to it, from somewhere near floor level, from the classroom to the playground and, when allowed, to the toilet. The children get a redesigned playground divided into 'apartments' for particular groups to use. Of course, they break the rules, play on anything and everything, and the whole thing is closed as a form of punishment.

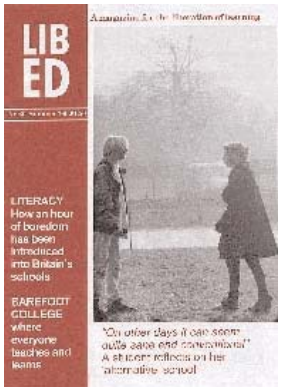
I found the section on resistance to noise restriction particularly poignant with the madness of grown-ups shouting 'quiet' at the tops of their voices. 'Children use noise control as an inverted tool of resistance...there was a constant shushing...it had become a habit to many teachers to shush at least once in each sentence...' By the time infants become juniors they have learnt to resist covertly.

Any discourse on power eventually gets to punishment - the powerful get to inflict their world on the innocent young. Children 'were not allowed sugar in their drinks and had to be nice and kind to others, while the teachers had sugary tea with biscuits and shouted at the children'. The children's codes of conduct tell them how they should behave, yet they 'are not allowed full knowledge of the adult world'.

We are told that 'schools are repressive institutions, no matter how hard the people inside them are trying to reform and improve them'; that 'the job of schools is to train children into conformity to an irrational capitalist society where people are only valuable if they produce a profit'; and that 'rational education centres would be so different from the ones we have now that...trying to reform an oppressive system in a piecemeal way is useless'. If we want any real freedom in education we must stop 'trying to confine everybody into the same narrow boxes', must abolish 'the education system as we know it, along with the class system, and must end 'the oppression of young people'.

Adults seem to have sacrificed their children to this whole idea of power. As a parent I found myself one day with two families, five children, with no TV, living in a big house trying to exist without the whole power trip. Some of our children were home-educated - school is not compulsory - and John Shotton's 'No Master High Or Low', and 'Freedom in Education', Lib Ed's d-i-y guide to the liberation of learning and other books were a great help.

Joanna Gore's book, and its clinical dissection of the whole school phenomenon, was particularly poignant. To read page after page of cleverly observed relationships across the age barrier was an eye opener. She has written a wonderfully woven and crafted story. For it is a story, the story of the everyday world of today's children, shocking in its truth. I will certainly pass this excellent book around my family and friends. Every parent should read it - but don't let the kids!!



School and education = learning capitalism - about sums it up.

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Jello Biafra with the Melvins -

'Never breathe what you can't see'

Alternative Tentacles 2004 - CD

At last - what we've all (well me at least) been calling for since the 1999 No WTO Combo and the 2000 Lard mini CDs - the erstwhile lead vocalist of the Dead Kennedys Jello Biafra returns with some more music and this time with fellow hardcore veterans The Melvins. Whilst Jello seems to put out voluminous CDs of his admittedly entertaining and informative spoken word material at regular intervals his musical output has been somewhat less intense. His choice of musical partners since the DKs split has been fairly exemplary and it works well this time, although given his distinctive voice it's always going to sound like Jello Biafra. What you get with 'Never breathe what you can't see' is probably the closest to the Dead Kennedys sound since they split.

question everything

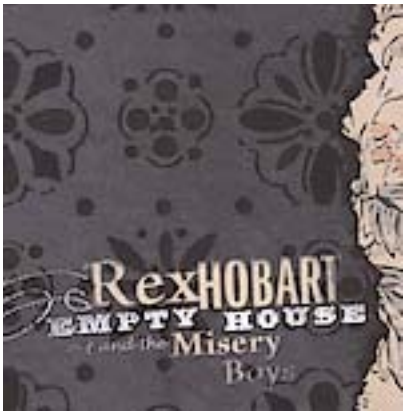
Again, as usual, the lyrics are worth a listen/look at for Biafra's skewed slant on things – helpfully printed inside for those of us who can't quite pick them up from the record. It opens with 'Plethysmograph' (apparently it's a device that is clamped around a male suspects penis and they are then shown images and according to whether the old man twitches or not they are deemed clean or unclean of mind) which continues on from previous songs about peeing in jars at work and lie detector tests as Biafra looks at ways those that would care for us find increasingly dubious technical ways to carry out their witch hunts. Other include 'McGruff the crime dog' which had me baffled until I checked out mcgruff.org and if its what it says it is its a sort of Tufty Club for US kiddies only more about crime prevention than crossing the road safely. 'Yuppie Cadillac' attacks the selfishness and arrogance of those driving round in SUV "armoured luxury tanks, To drive to work and drive home, keep my children safe, as I run down yours'. 'Islamic bomb' covers the ground of arms trade and the whole thing ends wih 'Enchanted thoughtfist' which calls on people to question everything, including things said by people they generally agree and then 'Dawn of the locust' puts activist as the magic plague undermining the decaying society form the inside out.

Rex Hobart & the Misery Boys - 'Empty House'

Bloodshot Records 2005 - CD

www.bloodshotrecords.com

The current leader in heartbroken honky tonk songs to sob salty tears into your bourbon to, Rex Hobart's latest is more of the excellent same as before and not an overtly political song on the whole darn thing – so why review it in DA? Because of its beautiful heart on sleeve wearing gorgeousness, of course – oh, and because in the pre-release publicity, Rex and band were described as 'crypto anarchosyndicalists'. And if that isn't an excuse to put a review of a finely crafted piece of music in DA then please write in with what is.



'States of abuse'

Entartete Kunst 2004 - 2 X 12" (possibly on CD by now)

www.entartetekunst.info

More high quality 'no-field electronica' from the San Francisco anarchist collective label that DA is endanger of losing critical faculties over.

Given that we've waxed more than exicitedly about Entartete Kunst releases in the past this is going to be fairly short. Fifteen tracks ranging through hip-hop, electronic, garage and even a bit of fairly house like stuff whilst it won't have them dancing in the streets – the beats all a bit slow for that. Artists From a country across the seas somewhere between Canada and Mexico and also from the islands off the coast of Europe all imbued with revolutionary spirit.

Highlights include, for title alone, 'shoot Ted Nugent', a slowed down track of drum and bass from Ruminant (for those lucky enough not to know, Ted Nugent is/was a reactionary old metal merchant obsessed with killing things in his macho way); 'Judas Goat (terrorismo mix)' by Filastine, which mixes up samples of spoken word about war, the US and killing of Arabs, with beats and the like; politial hip hop from Emcee Lynx on 'Nature of the threat'; Malatesta feat. 187 (AKA Raw Knowledge)…err ...just about noting in time the danger of listing all 15 tracks - this review is now curtailed. They make music better than this reviewer writes about it. Trust me, I am not a politician.

Asian Dub Foundation - 'Tank'

EMI 2005 - CD

Hitting the heights of 2000 release "Community Music' in terms of political delivery and musical fusion is obviously a big daunting task for anyone, but it's obvious Asian Dub Foundation are treading slightly different waters.

Last outing 'Enemy Of The Enemy' consolidated a new line-up without Bengali rapper 'Deeder' who is obviously sorely missed, instead ADF have incorporated new aspects of dancehall, reggae, and drum'n'bass to the the already heavy lashings of bhangra, hip-hop, ska and sampling. While it still holds the same quality of their old output it doesnt seem have the same flow, which I put down to the acquired taste of overused electronic synths. But when 'Tank' is hard hitting its as good as anything they've previously done, tracks such as 'Oil' and 'Take Back The Power' definitely stand out. And of course political it touches many bases with songs on militarism, indigenous struggles and challenging the status quo.

A good album and worth trying to see if you can catch their dynamic live shows.

Blaze Foley - 'Oval Room'

Munich Records 2005 - CD
(www.blazefoley.com)

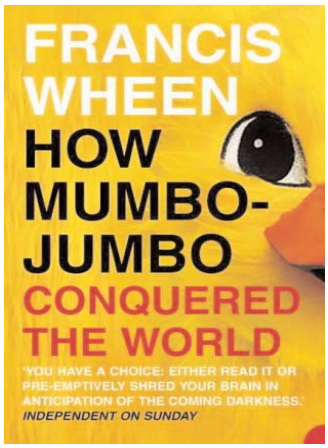
A renegade singer songwriter even in Austin, Texas where the streets are paved in renegades (possibly not true) Blaze Foley slept on coaches and pool tables whilst plying his trade in bars and clubs. He was murdered in 1989.

This CD is one of two available (there are apparently at least three tribute CDs out there as well) and captures some beautiful and poignant songs along side political pieces and humorous ditties. From the opening 'oval room' about the presidency to a song 'WW III 'about the patriotic types who whilst unfortunately too old to fight war love and demand more war. Then there bizarre 'Springtime in Uganda' a comic piece about about Idi Amin. Musically its American folk - country and western at its stripped down guttural bluesy best - rough cracked ole voice splendidly set with vocal harmonies, guitar, fiddle, piano, bass and a light touch on the drum where needed.

Francis Wheen - 'How mumbo-jumbo conquered the world'

Harper Perennial ISBN 0-00-714095-5

A consistent and clever writer Wheen takes to task a whole array of people who have irked him in their sloppy language, deliberate obfuscation, sophistry and general buggering about with words to hide meaning or lack of meaning in what they say. A journalist at heart he is at his best when on the attack whether it's the right of the US administration, New Labour nonsense talk, new age mystics or the now open season target of the post-structuralist/post-modernists. What this book doesn't do is set out anything in opposition to these examples of double speak and sloppy thinking except perhaps not to speak in double speak and try to avoid sloppy thinking.



As a book it is worth a read through, its useful to be reminded that its important that if you have principles then its important to be consistent with those principles. Its important to try and be clear in what is being said, tobe consistent in ideas and try to weed out hypocrisy whether intentional or accidental. Thus anarchist can and should oppose war, but not just because its wage by our current bogey state, but because war and the state are inseparable, because war is part of the nature of the state and it is the working class, the poor the powerless of all countries who fight and die in these wars. In opposing war especially by a big bully of a state against a smaller bully of a state it is an important and consistent part of anarchism that by opposing the bigger bullies war anarchists do not transpose their support to the smaller bully. A consistent line based on collective self empowerment, self organisation mutual aid and solidarity is at the heart of anarchist politics.

Wheen doesn't engage much with the anarchist/libertarian left in any real sense, a few pot shots at Chomsky are about it. Though given Chomsky's huge output its probably easy to pick out a few things to snipe at. In fact the feeling in some places that edifices are being built on tiny examples is one of the flaws of the book. It may be that Wheen has tried to stick too much in and these little pots shots are not isolated events but representative examples, but its not clear.

There are other flaws in the book's own inherent logic, as an attack on double talk and sloppy thinking. The section on attempts by those post-structuralists who sought to engage with science is fascinating and informative, well argued and clear, but it's a bit of a shame to blame post-structuralists for modern political double speak. Politicians have, lied, twisted, shimmied and dissembled for centuries – they didn't need a few French philosophers and those who have followed floundering for a grasp of reality in their wake to give them the language to do it.

Umlaut - 'Total Disfuckingcography'

Crimethinc 2004 - CD

While I don't think much of Crimethinc's lifestylist politics, I have to say if the rest of their music pressings are as good as this, they have earned my respect.

Angry, fast paced, hardcore, indecipherable lyrics amidst a constant heavy wall of sound isn't everyone's cup of tea, granted, but if discontent or uprisings ever had theme music this would surely be in for the running. Having a track listing of 35 sort of tells you what to expect really(!) Add to that, lyrics which are both thought provoking, managing to address countless issues, from bigotry to capitalist economics to political hypocrisy, throw into that inspiring art work (think Crass) and a lesson or two about Finnish culture, you have yourself a potentially devastating album. Crimethinc have kindly hosted some of the best tracks on the website, definitely worth a listen.

A 'Wobbly' Century

In late 18th century America, European immigrants with anarchist ideas combined with strong anti-statist traditions of US workers to create a burgeoning anarchist current. By the 1880's, anarchist influenced ideas dominated the emerging US revolutionary movement, with anarchist groups developing across North America, producing a diverse range of papers and magazines in a myriad of different languages.

It was no accident that anarchists in Chicago were at the centre of a movement that looked to the unions as a means of bringing about an anarchist society. They had been active in the workplace for many years, and had taken a prominent role in the struggle for the 8-hour day that led to the fateful demonstration at the Haymarket in 1886.

Anarcho-syndicalist ideas also developed in numerous anarchist groups especially in Paterson, New Jersey where Spanish and Italian anarchists were active. They published numerous articles reporting the development of European revolutionary syndicalism, and created a silk workers' union which was to later join the IWW. They were also important in helping to spread anarcho-syndicalism amongst western mine workers who were to play such an important part in future developments.

In the manifesto from the meeting in January 1905 that led to the creation of the IWW, the basic principles of anarcho-syndicalism were clearly evident. The main author, Thomas J Hagerty, was influenced by European anarcho-syndicalist ideas.

political parties

The original manifesto saw no role for political parties, arguing that workers should organise industrially to "take and hold that which is produced through an economic organisation of the working class". On the basis of the January Manifesto, a convention was organised on the 27th June 1905, again in Chicago.

PALMIST: "There is a Man Following You With a Bludgeon."
CAPITALIST: "Yes, Yes! What Else Do You See?"
PALMIST: "Nothing But Your Finish!"

The Western Federation of Miners (WFM), led by Bill Hayward, who chaired the convention, provided the largest presence. The WFM was a radical western industrial union that had in recent years fought a number of bitter disputes with owners who had engaged private armies against workers. There were also in attendance delegates from socialist organisations, including the two main US socialist parties (and bitter rivals), the Socialist Labour Party (SLP) and the Socialist Party of America (SPA).

The convention produced a preamble that sought to link the immediate struggle to the wider aim of overthrowing capitalism. The main tactic was unambiguous; the newly formed IWW was to set about organising workers into "one big union", whose aim was revolution, after which the union would take over the running of society in the newly established co-operative commonwealth. In the build-up to the revolution, the IWW would wage class war against the capitalist class, developing workers' revolutionary consciousness in the process.

From the outset, the new union condemned racism. The convention declared that any wage earner could be a member regardless of occupation, race, creed or sex. Anti-discrimination and internationalism quickly became part of its culture and two of its major strengths. Racism especially was recognised as a major factor used by capitalism to divide the working class, affecting both black Americans and newly arrived Asians and Europeans. The American Federation of Labor (AFofL) was openly racist - for example, it produced stickers drawing consumers' attention to those goods that had been produced by white workers.

From the IWW's earliest days, a source of controversy was its stance on political parties. The clause excluding a role for parties in the workers' struggle had been dropped from the January

'...the west coast groups...would create the culture of struggle that formed the central essence of the organisation'

Manifesto on the insistence of Daniel de Leon, the SLP leader. De Leon, a recent convert to industrial unionism, was much admired by Lenin, who was later to develop the idea of using workers' economic power to win himself state power in Russia. After much debate, a compromise was reached under which the general strike was included in the constitution as well as a role for political action.

turning point

At the 1908 IWW convention, a Chicago motion was passed which removed all reference to political activity from the constitution. In response, the SLP delegates formed a rival IWW based in Detroit, which had little impact. This proved to be a turning point. Detached from the SLP, the IWW developed its core revolutionary policies over the next few years. The strategy that emerged stated that in building "One Big Union", the IWW would seek to "form the new society inside the shell of the old". In time, the point would be reached where the workers' organisation would be powerful enough to use the general strike, take over the means of production, and abolish the wage system. In a nutshell, this would lead to the establishment of industrial democracy, in a workers' commonwealth.

The voting strength that had enabled the organisation to escape the influence of the SLP had come mainly from the west coast groups. Over the next few years, it was this vibrant part of the IWW which would create the culture of struggle that formed the central essence of the organisation. Often politicised by anarchism, they despised both capitalism and the state. They also had a deep mistrust of politicians and leaders in general, extending to the IWW leadership. Eastern-based radicals did not look too favourably on the western workers. Dismissed by the likes of de Leon as the "Overalls Brigade", criticism was not confined to the socialist intelligentsia. Some East Coast anarchists also berated them as "this bunch of pork-chop philosophers, agitators who have no real, great organising ability or creative brain power".

To organise unskilled workers in the west was no easy task. The western US was far less industrialised than the east. The workers were largely migrant and so had

no permanent workplace through which they could be physically organised. As an alternative, western workers made the "mixed local" the basis of their organisation. Centred on the union hall, the mixed local was a geographically based organisation, which included both the employed and unemployed. This contrasted with the workplace-based locals in much of the eastern IWW.

The union hall began to evolve as the centre of working class organisational life, and developed into the local intellectual and cultural centre. Here was to be found the basis of an alternative working class culture centred on the idea of solidarity and struggle. Combining art and politics, the western IWW groups produced plays, poems, songs and cartoons. In meaningful, emotional and personal expressions, Wobblies (as IWW members became known) sought to analyse the world from a working class perspective and create a rich culture of both unity and diversity.

free speech

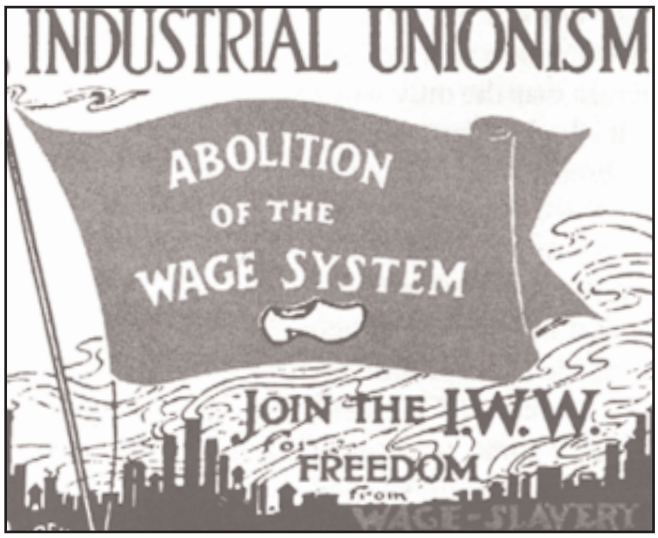
From this culture of solidarity and self-respect emerged the famous free speech campaign which propelled the IWW to prominence before the First World War. It grew out of the struggle against employment agencies which operated in gateway towns for the mining, lumber, and agricultural industries in the west. The IWW called for a boycott of the agencies and for workers to be recruited via union halls - similar to the recently successful CGT campaign in France. "Soapbox orators", the most common form of IWW agitation, set up outside employment agencies to denounce their corrupt practices. The police responded by prohibiting street speaking.

From 1908 to 1916, the free speech campaign became the focus of a bitter battle between the IWW and the US state, during which some 5,000 IWW members were imprisoned. The prisons rapidly filled, forcing the state to back down. In the process of winning the campaign, the IWW also exposed the brutality of the US prison system.

The emphasis on community, culture and free speech did not stop the IWW from taking on the capitalists in the workplace. After a difficult few years, by 1910 the IWW had recovered some of its early strength, organising many strikes. Perhaps the most prominent strike was in Goldfield, Nevada, where the IWW attempted to organise all of the 30,000 population. They won an 8-hour day and a minimum wage of $4.50, before being brutally repressed by the

state militia. By 1912, the IWW was strong enough to embark on what became two of the most famous strikes at Lawrence and Paterson.

In Lawrence, a Massachusetts textile town, 30,000 immigrant workers toiled in appalling conditions. Organising was particularly difficult as workers were from over a dozen countries, and spoke many different languages. The Lawrence strike took on an insurrectionary nature from the outset. The IWW made no attempt to play down its revolutionary ideas; on the contrary, they sought to raise revolutionary consciousness among workers. The state brought in 1,500 militia, backed up by the police.



shock waves

During the bitter dispute, these forces used guns, clubs and bayonets to try and force workers back to work, resulting in a number of deaths. Hundreds were arrested, some on false murder charges. Despite this, the IWW organised a tremendous victory, with a pay rise for unskilled workers of 25%. As a result, the American Woollen Federation was also forced to increase wages by 8% across 32 cities. The strike sent shock waves across America and acted as a rallying cry for the unorganised.

Paterson was next, in 1913. As already noted, this silk weaving centre near New York had a strong anarchist tradition. The IWW sought standardised, improved wages and conditions for 25,000 workers. However, after months of ruthless militia activity, with several workers killed and hundreds imprisoned, the strike ended in failure. This was a bitter blow despite the consolation that events in both Lawrence and Paterson had ensured that the IWW was now seen as the formidable organisation.

Behind the IWW's growth and success, however, was a rising controversy over internal democracy. Western locals were concerned that the IWW was too centralised. At the 1911 convention, western delegates had attempted to pass resolutions to limit the power of the General Executive Board (GEB) and devolve it to the regions. Though defeated, the resolutions reflected a growing rift between the eastern and western wings of the organisation.

At the following convention centralisation again reared its head. This time eastern sections argued for the free speech campaign to be brought under GEB control. This outraged the western delegation, reinforcing fears of centralisation.

The 1913 IWW convention is often portrayed as a conflict between anarchist de-centralisers on the west coast and the more socialist centralisers of the east coast. This is too simplistic. The division between east and west in many ways reflected two different cultures based on different conditions. To the eastern IWW, workplace organisation was far more important. The west was far less industrialised, with a large migrant workforce who campaigned on a wide range of issues.

Undoubtedly, anarcho-syndicalism was, and remains, anti-centralisation, so it is not surprising that many found the IWW over-centralised. That is not to say that anarcho-syndicalists would have backed many of the one hundred motions put forward by western delegates. If passed, these would have reduced the IWW to a loose-knit confederation of autonomous groups, with the attendant difficulties of maintaining cohesion.

In the event, the 1913 convention ended in defeat for the western delegation. Not only did their motions fall, but their fear of centralisation was justified by the passing of a motion bringing all publications under the supervision of the GEB. Worst of all, the acrimonious debate left the whole organisation deeply divided.

The outbreak of world war one led to increased economic activity and a shortage of labour. The IWW took advantage to win concessions and recruit workers, and entered its heyday period. By 1917, membership was 150,000, with large sections and unions in the metal, mining, railway, forestry, agriculture and marine transport industries. From this point on, its success and revolutionary politics combined to bring it into ever-increasing direct conflict with the state.

state repression

From the start, the IWW voiced its total opposition to the war. Hayward declared it was better to be a traitor to your country than a traitor to your class. The IWW continued to organise strike action wherever possible. The state response was a wave of repression.

In September 1917, the state authorities raided all the national, regional and local offices of the

'its success and revolutionary politics combined to bring it into ever-increasing direct conflict with the state'

'its success and revolutionary politics combined to bring it into ever-increasing direct conflict with the state'

IWW. They seized everything they could lay their hands on and arrested every IWW member they could find. Thousands of members, along with other anarchists and socialists, were harassed, arrested, imprisoned and deported as the state attempted to destroy the IWW. The intense, sustained tide of repression continued for the remainder of the war and after.

As well as direct state terror, the IWW was also subject to violence from state-backed vigilantes. Being a wobbly during the war was to risk beating, shooting or lynching. In a cynical move, the state also enroled the support of reformist unions. Federal labour laws introduced state mediation, the right to collective bargaining for AFofL affiliates; minimum pay and the basic 8-hour day. The reformist unions were quick to respond to the state attempt to win them over to the war effort.

In 1919, 23 states introduced criminal syndicalist laws. Overnight, the IWW found itself liable to prosecution all over the country simply for existing. The impact of the state terror campaign on the IWW was serious, but amazingly, not terminal. In May 1919, the membership was already down to 30,000.

communists

Where state repression had failed to destroy the IWW, internal division was soon to succeed. The dispute was triggered by communist attempts to take over the IWW, which in turn reopened the wounds of the bitter centralisation debate. The western sections opposed the communist influenced GEB's attempt to affiliate the IWW to the Third International and demanded the expulsion of all communists from the IWW. The communists concentrated their efforts on attempting to win over the eastern sections to the idea of statism, though ultimately they were to fail in this endeavour.

The GEB pursued a strategy based on the idea of left wing unity. In 1920, a communist who was attempting to take over the Philadelphia dockers' local accused the IWW of loading arms for the interventionist troops in Russia. This was a long-standing local, which had been successful in uniting black and white workers.

Though the accusations were later to be found groundless, the damage was done. The GEB immediately suspended the Philadelphia dockers local who, appalled that they could have been suspended on the say of one communist, left the IWW stating: "The history of the Philadelphia longshoremen's union is one of unswerving loyalty. Some have died while hundreds have been jailed as standard bearers of the IWW."

The IWW began to publish reports of the repression of workers in Russia, which had begun to appear in anarchist papers around the world. Those responsible were then condemned as traitors to the revolution by the growing communist movement within the IWW. The dispute came to a head at the 1924 convention, which soon descended into chaos as fighting broke out between centralisers and de-centralisers.

The de-centralisers put forward the "Emergency Programme", advocating that the GEB should be abolished, while the centralisers sought more control at regional and GEB level. The communists made the atmosphere worse and the convention ended in a decisive IWW split, with a 'real IWW' being set up in Utah (while the Chicago based IWW continued). The split, coming so soon after the state repression, and coinciding with the growing popularity of communism, proved too much. While the Chicago-based IWW was able to resist communist infiltration and did go on to organise major strikes in the coalfields, in Colorado (1927) and Kentucky (1930), these were temporary high points in the decline of the IWW.

The IWW grew from humble beginnings and, in a few short years, was able to shake the foundations of the world's most powerful state and capitalism's powerhouse - the United States. In the process, it drew on anarcho-syndicalist ideas from Europe and adapted them to its own unique conditions.

strength & weakness

The single greatest strength of the IWW was its emphasis on the culture of revolution. Unfortunately, in a relatively short time this strength was overcome by a combination of state oppression and internal weakness. While the former was clearly inevitable, the latter was borne out of an uncomfortable alliance between an anti-authoritarian, pro-autonomy camp and a centralist camp - a situation made worse by the efforts of the opportunist authoritarian communists. In a nutshell, the IWW's apparent early strength of appealing to all sharing the same goals and economic tactics, irrespective of political agenda, soon turned into a fatal weakness, as party political opportunists sought to take over and undermine the deep revolutionary politics of the organisation.

SolFed Contact Point

c/o 17 West Montgomery St, Edinburgh, EH7 5HA; 07984 675 281; solfed@solfed.org.uk
www.solfed.org.uk

Bristol - Box 43, 82 Colston St, Bristol, BS1 5BB

Edinburgh - c/o 17 West Montgomery Pl, Edinburgh, EH7 5HA ; 07813 920 097; edinburghsf@riseup.net

Manchester - PO Box 29, SW PDO, Manchester, M15 5HW; 07984 675 281; manchestersf@btopenworld.com; www.manchestersf.org.uk

Northampton - c/o The Blackcurrent Centre, 24 St Michael Ave, Northampton, NN1 4JQ; northamptonsolfed@hotmail.com

North & East London - PO Box 1681, London, N8 7LE; nelsfsolfed@fsmail.net

Preston - PO Box 469, Preston, PR1 8X; 01772 734 130; prestonsolfed@boltblue.com; prestonsolfed.mysite.wanadoo-members.co.uk

Sheffield - PO Box 1095, Sheffield, S2 4YR; sf@sheffsf.force9.co.uk

South Herts - PO Box 493, St Albans, AL1 5TW

South London - PO Box 17773, London, SE8 4WX; southlondonsf@riseup.net

South West - Box 43, 82 Colston St, Bristol, BS1 5BB; www.solwest.org.uk

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Aims of the Solidarity Federation

The Solidarity Federation is an organisation of workers which seeks to destroy capitalism and the state. Capitalism because it exploits, oppresses and kills people and wrecks the environment for profit worldwide. The state because it can only maintain hierarchy and priveledge for the classes who control it and their servants; it cannot be used to fight the oppression and exploitation that are the consequences of hierarchy and source of priviledge. In their place we want a society based on workers' self-management, solidarity, mutual aid and libertarian communism.

That society can only be achieved by working class organisation based on the same principles – revolutionary unions. These are not Trades Unions only concerned with 'bread and butter' issues like pay and conditions. Revolutionary unions are means for working people to organise and fight all the issues – both in the workplace and outside – which arise from our oppression. We recognise that not all oppression is economic, but can be based on gender, race, sexuality, or anything our rulers find useful. Unless we organise in this way, politicians – some claiming to be revolutionary – will be able to exploit us for their own ends.

The Solidarity Federation consists of locals which support the formation of future revolutionary unions and are centres for working class struggle on a local level. Our activities are based on Direct Action – action by workers ourselves, not through intermediaries like politicians or union officials; our decisions are made through participation of the membership. We welcome all working people who agree with our aims and principles, and who will spread propaganda for social revolution and revolutionary unions. We recognise that the class struggle is worldwide, and are affiliated to the International Workers' Association, whose Principles of Revolutionary Unionism we share.

SolFed membership application

I wish to join the Solidarity Federation. I have enclosed a cheque for **£5.00** (made out to 'Solidarity Federation') to cover my initial **three months of membership**. I understand my details will be passed on to the nearest SolFed local who will contact me shortly.

Name.....

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Return form to: Solidarity Federation, c/o 17 West Montgomery St, Edinburgh, EH7 5HA

Solidarity Federation

SelfEd Collective

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Manchester SF

8.30 p.m. 1st Wed each month - discussion meetings - upstairs Hare & Hounds, Shude Hill, central Manchester. Also we hold discussion in Bolton town centre. For details: www.manchester.org.uk

The 2004 'Stuff your Boss' leaflet is still available for free/donation from: SF, PO Box 29, SW PDO, Manchester, M15 5HW; solfed@solfed.org.uk

North & East London SF

Socials last Thursday of the month 8.00 p.m. near Camden Tube. Contact details opposite.

The Economics of Freedom

SF pamphlet - democaracy from the bottom up. What might a future, decent economy look like withoutparty politicans, corportate managers or union leaders? Here is a detailed model (but not a straight jacket) of how it might work. £2.50 (payable to 'Solidarity Federation') from SF, PO Box 29, SW PDO, Manchester, M15 5HW; solfed@solfed.org.uk

Catalyst

SF freesheet. If you like ***DA***, you'll like ***Catalyst***. Issue #13 out now featuring *Post Office privatisation*; *public sector pension rights*; *the TUPE trap*; *rank and file building workers.* For single copies or bundles to hand out at work or at play, contact: Catalyst, PO Box 1681, London, N8 7LE.

SF Stickers

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'Capitalism…Together we'll Crack it'
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'New Labour - Putting the National back into Socialism'; 'Does Work Make you Sick?'; 'Solidarity Works'; 'Give the Bosses the Rise they Deserve'

and other themes...

Payments to 'Solidarity Federation' to: SF, PO Box 29, SW PDO, Manchester, M15 5HW

Friends & neighbours, publications & events

To get listed here write to ***DA*** at the usual address. Due to changes in production, we apologise to anyone missed out or incorrectly entered.

Kate Sharpley Library – Dedicated to recording and revealing anarchist history. SAE to KSL, BM Hurricane, London, WC1N 3XX; or visit www.sharpleylibrary.net

www.cultureshop.org – online independent/radical/political video shop

ToxCat – Essential exposure of polluters, pollution and cover-ups. £2, or sub for £12, from ToxCat, PO Box 29, Ellesmere Port, CH66 3TX

Earth First! Summer Gathering 2005 – 17–21 Aug to inspire and train those opposed to the planet's destruction. 0845 355 011; www.earthfirstgathering.org.uk;

Resistance – Anarchist Federation freesheet from AF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London, E1 7QX; www.afed.org.uk

Eroding Empire – monthly gigs/events/actions/classifieds listing for London punk/anarcho/squatters; 56a Crampton St, London, SE17 3AE. 07890 350 448; eroding@eroding.org.uk

Organise! – *Working Class Resistance* is back on Irish streets – freesheet/info: PO Box 505, Belfast, BT12 6BQ

Office temps co-op – discussion list to create a workers co-op for office temps; blackstarcoop-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

Peace News – nonviolent revolution: 5 Caledonian Road, London, N1 9DY; admin@peacenews.info; www.peacenews.info

The Basement – café, bookshop, library, computers, meetings; 24 Lever St, Manchester; 0161 237 1832; mustsocial@yahoo.co.uk

Freedom – anarchist fortnightly: 84b Whitechapel High St, London, E1 7QX www.freedompress.org.uk

AK Press – anarcho books and merchandise of every descrition. For catalogue: PO Box 12766, Edinburgh, EH8 9YE; 0131 555 265; ak@akedin.demon.co.uk; www.akuk.com

56a Infoshop – bookshop, records, library, archive, social/meeting space for anarchist, eco-, queer, feminist, DIY, squatting, class struggle activism: 56a Crampton St, London, SE17 3AE. Open Thur 2-8, Fri 3-7, Sat 2-6.

NoLondon2012 – coalition of east London community groups, anti-authoritarian & social justice campaigners opposing the Olympic bid: www.nolondon2012.org

No Comment – invaluable for anyone at risk of arrest; free from www.ldmg.org.uk, or for a 21p stamp: No Comment, c/o BM Automatic, London, WC1N 3XX

www.libcom.org – online libertarian community and organising resource for activists in Britain

Stuff your Boss

Anti-casualisation campaign - initially in **NW England -** centring around workplace conditions, casual and temporary work, homeworking, health and safety at work, workplace bullying, as well as issues around Job Seekers Allowance and Incapacity Benefit.

contact: <stuffyourboss@lists.riseup.net>

or http://lists.riseup.net/www/subscribe/stuffyourboss

or write to: SYB, c/o PO Box 29, SW PDO, Manchester, M15 5HW to be put in touch with activists in your area

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