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## WHAT'S IRAQI FOR 'NEWSPEAK'?

The media fanfare pronouncing that 'sovereignty' was transferred back to the Iraqis at the end of June showed how it bows down to power. That they could, in the main, report with a straight face that the Americans giving limited powers to a group of US-appointed Iraqi politicians shows a willingness to genuflect that knows few bounds.

Of course, reality crept in sometimes. The transfer being brought forward two days early and concluded in a tiny, highly secret ceremony says far more about the situation in Iraq than the US intended. Undoubtedly it was a wise move but one whose symbolic message is clear. There were no public festivals celebrating the 'transfer', suggesting that most Iraqis see it for what it is.

After all, the 'sovereignty' transferred is less than you would expect. There is the continuing direct (and indefinite) military occupation. Over 160,000 foreign troops, none of which are under the new government's control, are, thanks to a late edict of Paul Bremer, completely immune from Iraqi law and courts. But as these troops are the only thing saving the appointed government from a quick exit, it is unsurprising that the US has no fears that it will be asked to leave.

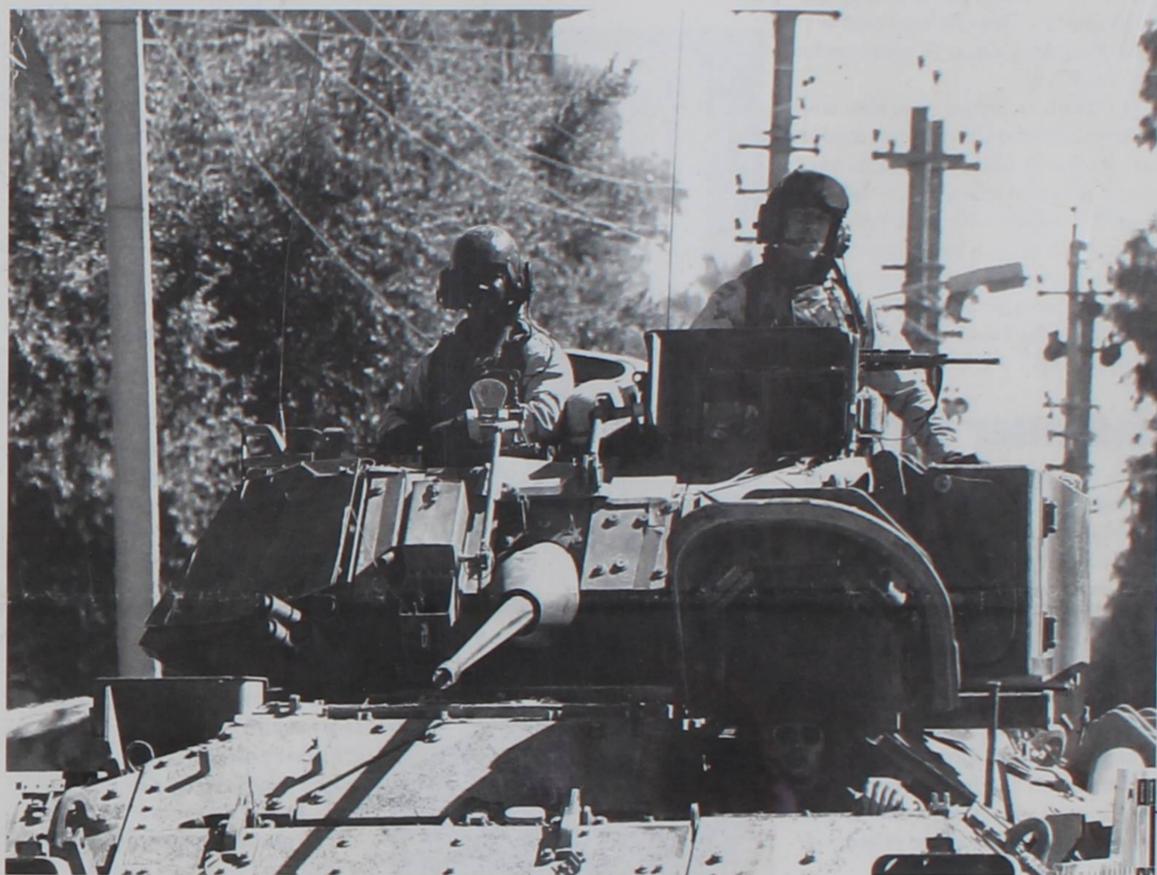
And the appointed Iraq government is restricted in other ways. The US has installed officials at the highest levels of the state bureaucracy. It has introduced numerous policies that will ensure that

the new 'sovereign' government will do what it is told. Take Iraq's oil revenues. While these nominally pass to the new government, in reality it inherits all outstanding contractual obligations made by the occupying powers. This includes all those passed shortly before the official transfer. Bremer also passed a whole series of edicts at the last minute to ensure US control.

He also acted to ensure the outcome of any future elections, outlawing from the ballot any groups with unapproved militias. He also appointed an electoral commission which can ban any party from the elections. Finally, he hand-picked and gave five-year terms to the national security adviser, national intelligence chief and the inspector-generals who will look over all 26 government ministries.

But it is not only 'sovereignty' which is being redefined. Bush likes to blame 'terrorists' for the attacks on US forces in Iraq. Strangely, both the CIA and the State Department do not agree. In their yearly tally of the number of terrorist attacks worldwide, both excluded all attacks on US forces in Iraq. Why? Because they do not meet their definition of terrorism as they are directed against combatants.

Perhaps this is understandable. If these attacks were included, Bush would not be able to suggest America's imperialist wars had reduced terrorism. As it was, the US already had to admit



Iraq – a free country at last. Totally sovereign. Not occupied. Oh no.

to overlooking numerous terrorist attacks last year when it reported that terrorism had been reduced. With the missing incidents, they had to conclude

that such attacks had increased. If they had to add Bush's 'terrorist' attacks in Iraq, the figures would go through the roof. So, Bush's claims that any attack

on US troops amounts to 'terrorism' has been rejected to make the statistics look better. The nature of sovereignty, see page 4

## ARMY GROUNDED

The trade unions of South Korea's two airlines, Korean Air and Asiana Airlines, declared last week that they will refuse to transport any materials related to military intervention in Iraq.

Members of the Association of Airline Unions (AAU), which was founded by workers in both national Air carriers and employees of the Incheon International and Kimpo Airports decided along with the militant Korean Confederation of Trade Unions to oppose the despatch of Korean troops to Iraq. The workers claim they will launch an 'all-

out struggle' against South Korean military intervention and will block the movement of all soldiers, armaments and other equipment if the airlines sign contracts with the Army agreeing to aid the Occupation.

The AAU have also threatened a complete shutdown of all air traffic to show their opposition to the war – which given the nature of Korean trade unionism is not one to be taken lightly!

Asiana Airlines and Korean Air bosses claim that they have not even begun negotiating with the military, and that the workers' threats are premature.

• Fire Brigades Union member Brian Joyce visited Iraq in 2003, where war and sanctions left firefighters in appalling conditions. He saw that they had to fight fires wearing just sandals and moth-eaten boilersuits. So he came back to the UK where FBU branches donated uniforms and materials and last month returned to Iraq to show the grateful firemen how to use their new high-tech equipment (see picture).



Photo © Guy Smallman

## UK INEQUALITY RISING

Inequality is at the highest level for forty years. Inequality rose by 40% between 1979 and 2001, with almost half caused by cuts the Tories made to benefits and top rates of tax in the 1980s. The pay gap between men and women stands at 40%.

The poor are getting poorer, with the number of households in poverty rising from 21% in 1991, to 24% ten years later. The north-south divide is getting wider although Hackney and Tower Hamlets, both in London, are the poorest areas in the UK (poverty increased in Hackney by 9% in those ten years). Glasgow has the highest poverty rate outside London, a massive 41%.

It is so bad that even the Tory shadow work and pensions secretary admitted that "we in the Conservative party have to recognise that our country faces a serious problem of poverty."

Within companies, executives enjoyed 23%-plus rises in their annual salary. Their workers, without whom no wealth could be produced, got less than 4%.

The typical chief executive of a FTSE 100 company now earns eighty times more, on average, than one of his workers. The bottom fifth of workers pay a higher proportion of their income in tax than the top fifth.

Is there a solution? It is no coincidence that the last 25 years has seen a rapid decline in union membership and militancy along with the fastest increase in inequality of any country in the developed world. The growing gulf between rich and poor is the consequence of a weakening of organised labour. The balance of power in the workplace has shifted and, consequently, workers cannot hold onto, never mind bolster, their share in the wealth they create but do not own. With a weakened labour movement, management can ignore their workers, giving spurious reasons for failing to increase wages or closing pension schemes while finding money for themselves, no matter how badly a company is doing.

We need to tip the balance of class

forces. We must support all workers in struggle, refusing to let the media demonise those unions (like the RMT or FBU) which actually at least slightly responsive to their members and stand up for their interests. We must seek to encourage the spirit of revolt in all workers, unionised or not, to fight for their own interests. That means creating a rank and file movement in the unions which can fight not only their actual bosses but also trade union bureaucrats who place their cosy relationships to New Labour or the employers above their members' interests.

See FBU breaks from New Labour, page 3

**THE ANARCHIST BOOKFAIR 2004**

SATURDAY 27 NOVEMBER 2004. 10AM-7PM  
ULU, MALET STREET, LONDON WC1  
www.anarchistbookfair.org

# Home and away

## FREEDOM

Volume 65 Number 14

### Anarchism

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

Freedom Press is an independent anarchist publisher. Besides this newspaper, which comes out every two weeks, we produce books on all aspects of anarchist theory and practice.

In our building in Whitechapel we run Britain's biggest anarchist bookshop and host a social centre and meeting space, the Autonomy Club. We're currently developing open-access IT provision for activists to use.

Our aim is to explain anarchism more widely and to show that human freedom can only thrive when the institutions of state and capital have been abolished. Freedom's editors wish to present a broad range of anarchist thought, and as such the views expressed in the paper are those of the individual contributors and not necessarily those of the editorial collective.

### Summer break

Even your faithful Freedom editors go on holiday sometimes. We're off to the casinos of Monaco to spend your subscription payments, and the next issue will be out on 7th August.

### Questionnaire

Many thanks to everyone for the overwhelming response to our questionnaire. The winner of the forthcoming Tony Allen book is Tim B. from Bristol, whose prize will be despatched as soon as it arrives back from the printers.

### Any old icon

Oops, we forgot to give a credit for the picture we used on the front page of the last issue. Many thanks to the comrades at [www.anyoldicon.com](http://www.anyoldicon.com)

### What's new

The boiler at Freedom Press finally gave up the ghost, so we're having to have an expensive new one installed.

The Freedom mail order section is now back on track, and we should have an online ordering facility shortly. Check out our website for details.

### Contact details

Freedom Press, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX  
Tel/fax: 020 7247 9249  
[www.freedompress.org.uk](http://www.freedompress.org.uk)  
Enquiries: [info@freedompress.org.uk](mailto:info@freedompress.org.uk)  
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[distro@freedompress.org.uk](mailto:distro@freedompress.org.uk)

### Next issue

Contributions are wanted for future Freedoms. The next issue will be dated 7th August 2004 and the last day to get your copy to us will be Thursday 29th July (see contact details above for where to send your letters/articles). If you are interested in writing regularly for Freedom we want to hear from you!

# News from the inside

### Freedom for prisoners

As many of you may know, Freedom provides free subscriptions to anyone in prison. If you have friends or family in prison, or regularly write to a prisoner, if they are interested we will be happy to send them a free sample issue or sub. If you are a prisoner yourself we can provide subs to any of your fellow inmates if they so desire. Please also feel free to write to us with any news about your imprisonment, developments in your case, requests for penpals or anything else!



### Mass prison break-out

Prisoners in the Nelspruit prison in South Africa rioted and eight hundred escaped after being left without food for more than 24 hours during a strike by warders. A rebellion in Barberton penitentiary had to be put down by a well-armed police and army task force, which also had to fight striking warders who refused to permit them to enter the jail.

Nelspruit detainees broke out of their cells and scaled prison walls, as police hastily assembled a riot squad of 150 cops, backed up by paramilitary police and the specialist 'Reaction Unit' flown in from another jail.

They attempted to block escapees into a field outside the walls, using police lines, tear gas and other crowd control techniques. Police claimed that they managed to stop most of them from getting away, and that the following day all the prisoners had been re-captured. Several were reported as injured, but the actual number is suspected to be far higher.

### Toothache riot

Over a hundred prisoners in Lewes rioted in solidarity with another inmate after he was denied painkillers last October, the local Crown Court was told last week. Steven Kelly, 31, had just had 21 teeth removed, and was in agonising pain when he was denied decent painkillers by prison staff.

He and a friend began smashing windows in protest, showering two guards in glass, and defended themselves when another tried to restrain them. As 120 other prisoners started to gather around this third guard he fled the scene, leaving the inmates in control.

They placed blankets over CCTV cameras and went on a rampage

causing tens of thousands of pounds of damage.

Mr Kelly's initial actions however were caught on film and he was jailed (again) for four months.

### Failing prisons

**HMP Dumfries:** Since Dumfries Prison changed from a Young Offenders' Institute to a full adult prison last year conditions have gone from bad to worse, a preliminary inspection has found.

Inmate on inmate violence has risen and prisoner numbers keep increasing, while the number on the methadone programme has skyrocketed 600%. Weekend meal times are irregular and inspector Dr Andrew McLellan noted that prisoners with addiction problems were now being neglected as the Drug Strategy department has been downsized. The prison had not even introduced a basic drug awareness programme.

A full inspection is to be undertaken in December this year, although what effect it will have is doubtful, since recommendations from previous ones have been roundly ignored, as emphasis is not on the welfare of prisoners, or improvement of society but on social control and profits.

**HMP The Mount:** Overcrowding in the UK's dirtiest jail, according to the Independent Monitoring Board (IMB), is increasing as the prison is now 55 over its maximum capacity of 705 inmates.

There is inadequate provision of care for mentally ill prisoners and other inmates are being neglected as times out of cell have been reduced and lunch hours cut.

The training jail has been flooded by high risk offenders, transferred to the low

risk facility to alleviate overcrowding.

Staff have reacted by turning a blind eye to in-house dealers effectively pacifying other prisoners with an illegal chemical cosh.

A watchdog report found that staff at The Mount prison in Hertfordshire have been tolerating widespread drug use by inmates as a way of preventing dissent.



### Rob Los Ricos moved

US Anarchist prisoner Rob Thaxton, otherwise known as Rob Los Ricos, has been transferred. After five years at the Oregon State Penitentiary he was moved in the middle of the night to the following address: MCCF, Robert Thaxton 12112716, 4005 Aumsville Hwy, Salem, OR 97301, USA.

Rob, a long time anarchist organiser, publisher and writer, is one of the few from around the world who faced serious charges for the global day of action on 18th June 1999. When it kicked off in Eugene, Oregon Rob threw a rock at a cop who was charging at him in an effort to escape. He was arrested and sentenced to 88 months in all for Assault and Riot. He was clearly been used as scapegoat – the one that didn't get away. He appreciates 'zines (send individually from a recognised distributor/publisher). Donations to and info from: AAA, PO Box 50634, Eugene, OR 97405, USA.

[www.defenestrator.org/roblosricos](http://www.defenestrator.org/roblosricos)

## LISTINGS

### Bristol

Every Sunday the Kebele Kafe from 6.30pm, cheap vegan nosh, chats and vibes at Kebele, 14 Robertson Road, Easton

### East Midlands

4th to 9th August Earth First! Summer Gathering – come together to learn new skills, discuss ideas and plan for action. Contact Norfolk EF1, c/o PO Box 487, Norwich NR2 3AL, 0845 355 0111 or see [www.earthfirstgathering.org.uk](http://www.earthfirstgathering.org.uk)

### London

10th July Anarchism or Marxism? at 6pm in the Artists Room, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn  
19th to 25th July Disarm Farnborough Airshow. For details [www.dsei.org](http://www.dsei.org) or contact 07817652029 or Disarm DSEi, BM Box 3679, London WC1N 3XX  
29th July Showing of Michael Moore's Fahrenheit 9/11 at 7.30pm, Use Your Loaf, 227 Deptford High Street, SE8. For details call 07984 588807

7th August German punk gig with Sleim and Forced Entry at Chats Palace, 42-44 Brooksby's Walk, Homerton, E9  
28th August Black Cat Book Fayre at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn. See [www.blackcatpress.co.uk](http://www.blackcatpress.co.uk)  
27th November Anarchist Bookfair at

ULU, Malet Street, WC1 from 10am to 7pm. See [www.anarchistbookfair.org](http://www.anarchistbookfair.org)  
Every Wednesday the LARC Library from 1pm at 62 Fieldgate Street, E1.  
Every Friday vegan café at Use Your Loaf, 227 Deptford High Street, SE8

### Scotland

23rd to 24th July The Wickerman Festival, between Dundrennan and Auchencairn. Spiritualized, Levellers Acoustic, dance tents, children's area. [www.thewickermanfestival.co.uk](http://www.thewickermanfestival.co.uk)

### Surrey

16th to 18th July Guilfest. Contact 01483 536270 [info@guildford-live.co.uk](mailto:info@guildford-live.co.uk) or see [www.guilfest.co.uk](http://www.guilfest.co.uk)

### International

31st July to 7th August A-Camp on the Kesselberg near Erkner, 25km east from Alexanderplatz, Berlin. The Kesselberg is a self-managed place in the woods. Contact by mail at A-camp, c/o A-Laden, Rathenower Str 22, D-10559 Berlin. For info see [www.acamp.tk](http://www.acamp.tk) or [www.kesselberg.info](http://www.kesselberg.info)

### Nationwide groups

**Anarchist Federation**  
Box 2, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX

[www.afed.org.uk](http://www.afed.org.uk)

### Antifa

Box 36, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX

[www.antifa.org.uk](http://www.antifa.org.uk)

### Class War Federation

PO Box 467, London E8 3QX

[www.classwaruk.org](http://www.classwaruk.org)

### Earth First!

[www.earthfirst.org.uk](http://www.earthfirst.org.uk)

### Industrial Workers of the World

PO Box 74, Brighton, BN1 4ZQ

[www.iww.org.uk](http://www.iww.org.uk)

### Solidarity Federation

PO Box 469, Preston PR1 8FX

[www.solfed.org.uk](http://www.solfed.org.uk)

For details of smaller and local groups see [www.enrager.net/britain](http://www.enrager.net/britain)

### Social Centres

#### Autonomous Centre of Edinburgh

(ACE)

17 West Montgomery Place, Edinburgh

[www.autonomous.org.uk](http://www.autonomous.org.uk)

#### The Cowley Club

12 London Road, Brighton BN1 4JA

[www.cowleyclub.org.uk](http://www.cowleyclub.org.uk)

#### Freedom

84b Whitechapel High Street, London

E1 7QX

[www.freedompress.org.uk](http://www.freedompress.org.uk)

#### Kebele

14 Robertson Road, Easton, Bristol

BS5 6JY

[www.kebele.org](http://www.kebele.org)

#### Lancaster Resource Centre (LaRC)

The Basement, 78a Penny Street, Lancaster

[www.eco-action.org/lancaster](http://www.eco-action.org/lancaster)

#### London Action Resource Centre

(LARC)

62 Fieldgate Street, London E1

[www.londonlarc.org](http://www.londonlarc.org)

#### Occupied Social Centre

156-158 Fortess Road, London NW5

[www.wombles.org.uk](http://www.wombles.org.uk)

#### Printworks Social Centre

58 Albion Street, Glasgow

[www.glasgow-autonomy.org](http://www.glasgow-autonomy.org)

#### The Rampart

15-17 Rampart Street, London E1

#### SUMAC Centre

245 Gladstone Street, Nottingham

NG7 6HX

[www.veggies.org.uk/rainbow/](http://www.veggies.org.uk/rainbow/)

#### Use Your Loaf

227 Deptford High Street, London SE8

[www.squat.freeserve.co.uk/](http://www.squat.freeserve.co.uk/)

[useyourloaf.html](http://useyourloaf.html)

#### 1in12 Club

21-23 Albion Street, Bradford, West

Yorkshire, BD1 2LY

[www.1in12.com](http://www.1in12.com)

#### 56a Infoshop

56 Crampton Street, London SE17

[www.safetycat.org/56a](http://www.safetycat.org/56a)

# Britain

## IN BRIEF

One step forward ...

A gay couple has the same legal rights as a married couple due to the Human Rights Act. The Law Lords rejected an appeal by a landlord who claimed a gay man could not inherit the tenancy rights of his deceased partner.

While this is a step forward, another section of the population are still subject to inequality: those who live together and refuse to marry. While Lady Hale said she had no difficulty in applying the term "as husband and wife" to persons of the same sex living together in a stable relationship, the state does not offer that perspective on heterosexual couples who reject marriage as an institution.

The government has introduced the Civil Partnership Bill to allow gay and lesbian couples to sign an official document at a registry office. Yet the assumption that you have to let the state (or church) approve your love and living arrangement persists. That you must register with the state before you have next-of-kin rights is a disgrace. So while we should celebrate the fact that gays can marry, we should remember that basic rights should not be tied to marriage and that inequality remains.

### Community action

Residents of Haringey and Walthamstow have been fighting back against the installation of potentially hazardous mobile phone masts in their streets. Members of Haringey Solidarity Group have followed the West Midlands Anarchists in leafleting the stores of legal loan-sharks Brighthouse, arguing for working-class solidarity against debt-collectors and bailiffs.

The latest issue of their newsletter the Independent also reports on residents' campaigns and direct actions against Post Office closures and the destruction of parks and roads. The Haringey Federation of Residents Associations – now incorporate over 100 RAs – has been at the forefront of these campaigns.

HSG is looking to set up a claimants' group. If you or anyone you know are interested, contact them via their website at [www.haringey.org.uk](http://www.haringey.org.uk)

### To the rampARTs!

A new social centre has opened up in East London. Based in Rampart Street, it is one of a number of such centres around London which, like Freedom, aim to provide a space for political and cultural events, meetings, discussions, film screenings, etc., etc.

The rampART project contains a popular free-shop, meeting rooms, IT space and more. See the Listings on page 2 for contact details and address.

### Council strike threat

Threats of industrial action by council workers had already caused bosses to up a three-year pay offer from 7% to 8.9%, but discontented staff are still holding out for a better deal. Unison, the GMB and T&G are balloting members and strike action could follow in the coming months. Anarchists should be pushing for solidarity between members of different unions, encouraging people not to cross picket lines, and arguing for more effective action than one-day walkouts.

Prolonged 'action short of strike' such as working-to-rule and slow-downs can get better results while workers do not lose out on pay.

# FBU severs link with Labour

## The trade unions start to break with New Labour, but that's not enough, argues Iain McKay

The Labour leadership lost the support of another union recently when the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) severed its 85 year link with the party. Intense anger at the government's treatment of them during the recent nine-month dispute resulted in delegates at the union's conference in Southport backing disaffiliation by five to one in a show of hands and 35,105 to 14,611 on a card vote. Delegates also voted for strike action unless the pay row hanging over from the end of the last dispute is settled by the end of July.

The conference rejected calls from the union's executive to remain inside Labour in order to turn it back to its roots. As one firefighter from the Berkshire brigade put it: "Our members are sick and tired of giving their hard-earned cash to the Labour party. I don't believe we have an ounce of influence when it comes to politics."

Faced with the facts, the assistant general secretary conceded that strikers were called "criminals", "wreckers", "fascists" and even worse" but argued it was only a matter of time "before Tony Blair walks into the sunset." He argued that "the government is different from the party" yet the party is not taking Blair to task for his actions. Anarchists are not surprised. A hierarchical organisation operating in a centralised state will always empower the leaders at the top, not the membership at the base. That is why we argue that the labour movement should not have links with political parties and instead fight its own battles by its own weapons of direct action and solidarity.

The union's decision is a blow to a Labour leadership that has seen its party membership plummet and, therefore, increasingly depends on union support for resources. And the FBU is not alone. The Communication Workers Union (CWU) has warned it will suspend its

£300,000 a year funding if the government does not promise to keep the Royal Mail under public ownership. The CWU's position is naïve, given Blair's willingness to violate principles and promises. Which makes the Labour's chairman comment that he was "sorry that the voice of Britain's firefighters will no longer be heard at Labour's annual conference and national policy forum, which will shape Labour's next manifesto" ironic. After all, this (like every other) government has ignored any manifesto promises it wanted. Being able to 'shape' a document which will be ignored is hardly a great loss.

This is all good news. It shows that organised labour is waking up to the fact that the leaders of their so-called party are, in fact, been pursuing an agenda against their interests. It is a step forward towards genuinely independent working class trade unionism, one which relies on its own strength and militancy to get results. However, the danger lies in those who wish to repeat the mistakes of the past and tie the unions to a new party which will 'represent' the interests of labour – the wet dream of numerous Trotskyist sects. Yet while such a position may benefit a minuscule political grouping by infusing it with workers' hard earned wages, it does not get to the heart of the problem. This is the division of economics and politics which results in the unions being represented by politicians rather than fighting for political issues on the economic and social terrain. In other words, a syndicalist approach to political struggles rather than a social democratic one.

Union independence is the way forward, not a new 'workers' party' dedicated to using all the tactics which worked so badly the last time. We



Firefighters picket at Fallings Park, Wolverhampton

should not forget that while the FBU is the first to voluntarily leave the party, the RMT was expelled four months ago for refusing to stop local branches affiliating to other parties. Ironically, the RMT helped form the Labour Party more than a century ago. This suggests that while many union militants see the need to break with Blairism, some have not themselves broken with the ideas and practice which spawned Blair to begin with.

Union independence is the only way forward. That means independence from all political parties and an awareness that real change comes from action outside parliament. It means being aware of the problems of parliamentarianism. It means unions

using their own funds for fighting political issues.

Yet turning our money over to union bureaucrats rather than politicians is not much of a step forward. The labour movement itself needs to be transformed so that the workers actually run it. This implies a decentralised, federal structure based on workplace assemblies to decide how our dues are spent and how our organisations fight. The first steps in creating such a movement would be a rank and file movement within the existing unions. Anarchists are in an ideal position to start such a movement. We have an analysis of what is wrong with the unions and how to fix them. But do we have the will and organisation to do it?

## Fighting Sainsbury's GM food scandal

Christmas-cancelling supermarket group Sainsbury's were in trouble again last week, as protesters closed much of their distribution network. Over a hundred people from across Britain struck five major distribution centres in the early hours of Thursday morning, shutting down 70% of their total capacity.

The troubled corporate giant was targeted over its continued use of overseas dairy farmers who don't adhere to Britain's anti-GM feed policy. A co-ordinated effort saw activists descend on Essex, Liverpool, Birmingham, Bristol and Sheffield. Using steel arm guards to prevent police from removing them from the scene, some demonstrators placed 'tripods' in front of main gates to stop trucks from going through, and locked other gates. The groups demanded

an end to GM dairy in Britain and a fairer deal for local farmers, who are barred from using GM by UK legislation.

Police arrested twenty demonstrators, eight from the demonstration at Walthamstowe. Polly, from Colchester Peace Campaign said: "We cost Sainsbury's a lot of money and the strategic timing meant quite a small group of people could have a big impact. The places where tripods were used were the most successful, as they made people harder to arrest."

UK farmers are currently paid less for their milk than it costs them to produce it. In recent years this has led to a wholesale collapse of the industry – in East Anglia, 90% of cattle farms have closed since the 1980s.

This accompanied an increased use of international farming conglomerates, who

can't be monitored over their use of GM crops, their treatment of the animals or employment rights.

According to Greenpeace, this also means Sainsbury's aren't definitely GM free in any basic product except poultry and eggs.

Sainsbury's, who won the Organic Supermarket of the year award for 2004, issued a statement. They said that "the food standards agency has categorically stated there is no evidence that milk from animals fed on GM crops contains any GM materials."

Freedom notes that this is because no tests have as yet been carried out.

### In other Sainsbury's news ...

Bonus-magnet Sir Peter Davis has been fired from his job as Chairman of Sainsbury's following his disastrous

stint running the company into the ground.

Davis sold Homebase, which was then sold on at vast profit a few months later, reorganised distribution so poorly the company has now re-implemented its old system, and ordered a pricey relocation of the company headquarters to swish new offices. He then cut the 100 staff Christmas bonus while taking a £2.4 million bonus for himself (Freedom, 29th May), and was finally ousted by investors worried about his poor sales figures.

In a neat twist to the tale, he is still in line for a £500,000 golden parachute, which should take the sting out of his dismissal.

If only every incompetent staff member could be so lucky ...

Rob Ray

# Iraq handover special

## One law for them ...

Continuing our Iraqi handover special, Paul Maguire examines the legal process in the new 'free' Iraq

**W**hat a week it's been for the 'defenders of freedom'. Sovereignty has been restored in Iraq. The US Supreme Court has decreed that the Guantanamo Bay detainees are entitled to legal representation. Saddam Hussein was produced in court in Iraq to be tried for crimes of genocide. The war against terror had delivered democracy to the Iraqi people and bourgeois law had prevailed over the will of Bush. All was right with the world.

Except that even a tentative scratch at the surface reveals another picture beneath. Iraqi sovereignty has come to mean the imposition of an unelected civilian administration on the people of Iraq (see front page). The extent of such 'sovereignty' is borne out by the opening of the trial of Saddam. The location of the court was kept secret. The judge insisted his own name be kept secret. There was no defence counsel. The videotaped proceedings were censored by the US military. Saddam was chained throughout, and most of his comments were censored to the media. (Wonder why? See below.) To any impartial observer, justice in the new 'independent' Iraq looked about as impartial as the justice overseen by Saddam.

'Sovereignty' is a slippery concept. International law treats 'sovereignty' as a fundamental. Sovereignty and equality are governing principles in bourgeois law at every level. The legal theorist

Lassa Oppenheim opined as far back as 1920 that the equality of states was "the indispensable foundation" of international society. When the US invaded Afghanistan and then Iraq it put forward its right to 'self-defence' as a justification for intervention. Yet the US was not under attack, as Article 51 of the UN Charter specifies as necessary for armed self defence. Afghanistan and Iraq, it was argued, had supported and harboured Al-Qaeda. Yet when the Nicaraguan government attempted to pursue the US government over its support for the right-wing paramilitary Contras, the World Court held that the US was not responsible for breaches of international humanitarian law committed by the Contras since it had not directed and controlled the individual operations which gave rise to these breaches. "Organising or encouraging the organisation of irregular forces or armed bands ... does not constitute an armed attack sufficient to give rise to a right to exercise self-defence." Under the terms of the Military Assistance Agreement concluded between the International Security Assistance Force and the interim government in Afghanistan, the UK military forces operating in Afghanistan are immune from prosecution for grave breaches of the Geneva Convention. 'Sovereignty' appears to be honoured only in the breach. It is in the gift of some 'Great Power' nations to grant 'sovereignty' to others.

The same is true for the concept of 'human rights'. Behind the rhetoric of formal equality, and immutability of rights



The Iraqi legal system – bugged

lies a social terrain of real inequality and rights instituted or violated at the behest of the state. The detainees at Guantanamo Bay were deemed 'illegal combatants' by the US and hence denied the protections of the laws of war. The intervention of the Supreme Court remedies the situation, but the fact that a legal environment could be created wherein the US could contend that the law of human rights had no applicability goes to suggest that such rights are in any event no more than

gifts of the state. So also the detainees held at HMP Belmarsh in the UK, indefinitely and without trial. The Blair government's vaunted introduction of the Human Rights Act – the recognition of the European Convention on Human Rights within UK law – counts for little given the ease with which the government was able to derogate from its Convention duties in violating the rights of the Belmarsh detainees.

The lesson of all this? 'Sovereignty' and 'equality' are meaningless, the 'rights'

intended to protect us useless, so long as they remain the gifts of the state. The only guarantees of sovereignty and equality can be through the destruction of the state and the system of fundamental inequality of which it is the armed guarantor. Those who argue that the means to equality and justice lie through the state have to explain how 'sovereignty' can be anything other than a game in the courts of international law, if it is something that can be granted or denied by those with the biggest guns.

## Workers against war

Snippets of organised workers' opposition to the war on Iraq, roundly ignored by the mainstream media.

**Italy:** A one-day general strike on 2nd April, 2003 was organised entirely by the rank-and-file 'base' unions and anarchosyndicalist USI. Despite the fact the traditional unions did not back the action, one million workers struck and 250,000 demonstrated across the country. Trains carrying military materials were also stopped.

**USA:** A San Francisco anti-war direct action group picketed the Port of Oakland on the 7th April to stop the transport of war materials. Longshoremen from the militant union the ILWU were discussing what they should do with protesters and their union reps, when police opened fire with 'non-lethal' bullets. Dozens were injured, and 35 port workers and protesters were arrested. Anti-war

feeling and disgust at police violence amongst the dockers saw most of the Port shut down for the day.

**Spain:** The anarchosyndicalist-led call for a general strike was belatedly taken up by the mainstream unions who called a one-day stoppage on April 10th which saw millions of workers walk out and hundreds of thousands take to the streets.

**Britain:** A small number of train drivers refused to transport materials to be used in the war effort, and an estimated several thousand people took up the call to skip work on the day war began. This was mostly atomised, with people pulling sickies instead of organising mass walk-outs.

**Germany:** A largely token ten-minute general strike was called by the reformist trade unions who were keen to deflect public anger into symbolic acts of resistance.

## Iraq: the facts so far

A few things which won't be mentioned in the mass media over the coming weeks.

### Murder

Combining all Saddam's atrocities together still doesn't add up to the number of people estimated dead from UN sanctions, but even ignoring this, the US and UK governments helped him perpetrate most of them.

- Iranian war: one million dead – Saddam was supported by the US throughout.
- Kurdish suppression: 180,000 dead.
- Gassing of Kurds in Halabja: 5,000 dead – immediately after, the US administration authorised a \$400 million emergency loan, then bombed two Iranian oil rigs and a frigate for him.
- Aid continued to be given to Saddam, ignoring his actions in favour of

helping him win against Iran.

- Marsh Arab suppression: 30-60 thousand dead, US/UK imposed a no fly zone following intense international pressure, massacre continued on the ground.
- Crushing of Shia rising in 1991: 100,000 dead – permitted by the US who preferred Saddam to a popular rebellion.
- Estimated dead from UN sanctions: 1.6 million. Sanctions failed to curb military spending, while guaranteeing a lack of food and basic medical supplies to Iraqis.

### Money

Iraqi oil will bring in \$10-15 billion this year, but 25% of all revenue will help pay off a \$150 billion dollar 'debt' to the US based on Saddam's actions in the past, while privatisation – decided without asking Iraqis – means most

state revenue sources will be sold to big corporations and run for shareholders, not the Iraqi people.

So little money has been spent on reconstruction so far that electricity and water production levels are still far below what Saddam managed under UN sanctions.

The total worth of the oil in Iraq is over \$10.5 trillion, with gas being worth a further \$1.7 trillion. To put this into perspective, the Catholic church's total assets in 2003 – everything from font to spire right across the globe – are valued at just over \$1 trillion.

### Memories

Paul Bremer, ex-dictator of Iraq, was hauled away from Viet... (oops) Iraq in an armoured helicopter, as yet another three-hour power outage darkened the homes of Baghdad.

## Feature

# Back in the USSR

**Instead of judging them by their noble intentions, we should assess the Bolsheviks by their actions**

**T**his year marked the 80th anniversary of the death of Lenin. Given that Leninism is still the dominant theory in what passes for a revolutionary movement in Britain, it is useful to discuss the only reason why this authoritarian is still taken seriously. This is the Russian Revolution, held to be the first successful socialist revolution. The fact that it quickly produced a party dictatorship presiding over a state capitalist economy seems irrelevant in Leninist quarters.

For anarchists, the Russian Revolution is seen as a classic example of a social revolution in which the self-activity of working people played a key role. In their soviets, factory committees and other organisations, the Russian masses were trying to transform society from a class-ridden, statist regime into one based on liberty, equality and solidarity. This did not last. The reasons why can be found in Bolshevik ideology and practice.

The initial overthrow of the Tsar came from the direct action of the masses. In February 1917, Petrograd erupted in bread riots as women took to the streets in protest (ignoring instructions from the local Bolsheviks not to). On 18th February, the workers of the Putilov Works went on strike and by the 25th the strike wave was general. The turning point came on the 27th, when some troops went over to the revolutionary masses, sweeping along other units. This left the government without its means of coercion, the Tsar abdicated and a provisional government was formed.

So spontaneous was this movement that all the political parties were left behind. In the workplaces and streets and on the land, more and more people became convinced that the overthrow of the Tsar made little real difference if feudal and capitalist exploitation existed in the economy. Workers started to seize their workplaces and peasants, the land. All across Russia, ordinary people started to build their own class organisations: unions, co-operatives, factory committees and councils (or 'soviets' in Russian).

The anarchists participated in this movement, encouraging all tendencies to self-management and urging the overthrow of the provisional government. They argued that it was necessary to transform the revolution from a purely political one into an economic/social one. Until the return of Lenin from exile, they were the only political tendency who thought along those lines. Lenin convinced his party to adopt the slogan 'All Power to the Soviets' and push the revolution forward. This meant a sharp break with previous Marxist positions, leading one Menshevik to say that Lenin had "made himself a candidate for ... the throne of Bakunin!" The Bolsheviks now championed direct action and

supported the radical actions of the masses, policies in the past associated with anarchism. They soon won more and more votes in the soviet and factory committee elections as the anarchist mottoes proved more popular than orthodox Marxism.

The anarchists were also influential at this time. They argued for workers and peasants to expropriate the owning class, abolish all forms of government and re-organise society from the bottom up using their own class organisations – the soviets, the factory committees, co-operatives and so on. They were particularly active in the factory committee movement for workers' self-management of production. They co-operated with the Bolsheviks during the October Revolution which overthrew the provisional government. But things changed once Lenin's party seized power. For while anarchists and Bolsheviks used many of the same slogans, there were important differences between the two.

Take "workers' control of production." Before the October Revolution Lenin saw "workers' control" purely in terms of the "universal, all-embracing workers' control over the capitalists." He did not see it in terms of workers' management of production itself via federations of factory committees. Anarchists and the factory committees did. Once in power, the Bolsheviks systematically undermined the popular meaning of workers' control and replaced it with their own, statist, conception.

Every time the factory committees tried to bring their form of socialism into being, the party leadership overruled them.

Lenin advocated 'state capitalism' for Russia, incredibly stating that "socialism is merely state-capitalist monopoly which is made to serve the interests of the whole people." It based on the centralised institutions created under the Tsar by capitalists for capitalists and was, unsurprisingly, far less democratic than that proposed by the factory committees and anarchists. Lenin simply handed industry to the state bureaucracy, preferring to vest both managerial and control powers in organs of the central authorities. This process ended in Lenin arguing for, and introducing, appointed "one-man management" armed with "dictatorial" powers in April 1918.

Unaware of the importance of economic power, Lenin considering state ownership rather than workers' control as the key. Deprived of economic power in the workplace, the workers' political power was going to be tenuous at best. Combined with Bolshevik centralism, it was non-existent. For Lenin the "organisational principle" of Bolshevism was "centralism" and "to proceed from the top downward." He stressed that "the principle, 'only

from below' is an anarchist principle." This meant, in practice, that power was held by a few party leaders, not the masses.

This can be seen from the slogan "All power to the Soviets." For anarchists it meant exactly that – the working class running society directly, using councils of mandated, recallable delegates. For the Bolsheviks, that slogan was simply the means to create a Bolshevik government over and above the soviets. The difference is important, for if power really did belong to the soviets, it could not belong to the Bolshevik party. If power belonged to the Party, it could not belong to the soviets.

In practice the Bolsheviks proved the anarchists right, quickly showing that for them "soviet power" equalled party power. If, to stay in power, the Bolsheviks had to destroy the soviets, then they did. In response to massive losses in the provincial soviet elections during the spring and summer of 1918, Bolshevik armed force usually overthrew the results and repressed the subsequent working class protest. In Petrograd and Moscow, the Bolsheviks gerrymandered the soviets making the elections irrelevant as a their victory was assured by the packing of the soviet with organisations in which they had overwhelming strength. They even gerrymandered the fifth All-Russian Congress of Soviets to ensure their power, so provoking the Left-Socialist Revolutionary revolt of early July 1918.

After the October Revolution, anarchists started to denounce the Bolshevik regime and call for a 'Third Revolution' which would finally free the masses from all bosses (capitalist or socialist). They exposed the difference between the rhetoric of Bolshevism (as expressed in Lenin's State and Revolution) with its reality. Bolshevism in power had proved Bakunin's prediction that the "dictatorship of the proletariat" would become the "dictatorship over the proletariat." In April 1918, the Bolsheviks began the physical suppression of their anarchist rivals using the Cheka (Lenin's secret police formed in December, 1917).

All this happened before the start of the Civil War in late May, 1918, which most supporters of Leninism blame for the Bolsheviks' authoritarianism. During the civil war, this process simply accelerated, with the Bolsheviks' systematically repressing opposition from all quarters – including the strikes and protests of the very class who they claimed was exercising its 'dictatorship' while they were in power!

This was because Bolshevism was rooted in Lenin's ideas of the vanguard party. In 1902, Lenin had argued that "there can be no talk of an independent ideology being developed by the masses of the workers in the process of their movement" and so the "spontaneous



The pigeons have got the right idea – time to dump Leninism

development of the labour movement leads to its becoming subordinated to bourgeois ideology." Faced with the working class revolts against them, the Bolsheviks repressed them to remain in power. As only the party could represent socialist consciousness, any deviation in support for it simply meant that the working class was "declassed" (to use Lenin's 1920 expression). So the party, in order to defend the 'the revolution', has to impose its will onto the class, eliminating all means by which the workers could spontaneously express themselves (such as democratic soviets). Given Leninist ideology, the sight of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' repressing the proletariat was to be expected.

So in less than six months Russia was a de facto party dictatorship. From 1919 onwards Lenin, Trotsky and other leading Bolsheviks were admitting as much and, moreover, arguing that such a dictatorship was essential for any revolution. There is no evidence that Lenin or any Bolshevik leader lamented the loss of workers' control or soviet democracy. Nor did they refer to these losses as a retreat or a temporary measure.

The Bolshevik revolution confirmed anarchist theory that a "workers' state" is a contraction in terms. For anarchists, the Bolshevik substitution of party power for workers power (and the conflict between the two) did not come as a surprise. The state is the delegation of power – as such, it means that the

idea of a "workers' state" expressing "workers' power" is a logical impossibility. If workers are running society then power rests in their hands. If a state exists then power rests in the hands of the handful of people at the top, not in the hands of all. The state was designed for minority rule. No state can be an organ of working class self-management due to its basic nature, structure and design. For this reason anarchists have argued for a bottom-up federation of workers' councils as the agent of revolution and the means of managing society after capitalism and the state have been abolished.

The degeneration of the Bolsheviks from a popular working class party into dictators over the working class did not occur by accident. A combination of bad politics and the realities of state power could not help but result in such a degeneration. State power automatically produces a class division into society – those with power and those without.

Only when working people actually run themselves society will a revolution be successful. For anarchists, this means that socialism can be achieved only by working class direct action in their own class organisations organised from the bottom-up in a self-managed way. The task of revolutionaries is to help this process by working within and not above the masses. By substituting party power for working class power, the Russian Revolution had made its first fatal step.

# Editorial

The recent RMT strike was a triumph for rank and file union members, but leaders such as Bob Crowe should be ashamed. Rhetoric was strong, barracking six figure Network Rail payouts to senior execs and promising a powerful defence of 'hard won working conditions'. Yet actions have been systematically undermined by union bosses messing about with half-hearted negotiations, and 'joint' actions stifled by pull-outs.

A Network Rail strike originally planned in support of the Tube workers has been called off, as the unions settled with infrastructure group Metronet for less than proposed in strike ballots. Aslef, the train drivers union urged its members to break ranks for last Tuesday's strike. The RMT have failed to live up to their threats at least as often, but unlike Metronet, London Underground have refused to climb down even a little since the dispute began.

In January there was a walkout, in March an action was called off, and finally, in July, the promised large scale strike. In all it has taken RMT's top brass eight months to organise, having balloted and agreed on action at the end of last year, only to see it put off again, and again, and again. Bob Crowe in particular has been implicated in this lacklustre effort, and is widely believed to have negotiated calling off a proposed election day strike at the last moment with Blue Ken.

As reported in Freedom, under Crowe's leadership a 'sacked while sober' strike involving RMT members was called off for an industrial tribunal, which they lost, and a strike over rail safety with 86% inter-union support was cancelled. Throughout, members have shown their willingness to fight, only to be told to hold on while negotiations continued. On the day, strikers managed to close up to 80% of underground stations, the biggest number in a decade, showing the potential when 'leaders' finally deign to agree to a strike. The fractured and weak semi-actions up until now have given employers plenty of opportunity to just shrug and ignore the situation, or threaten individual troublemakers.

London Underground has said its deal is as good as any in the Rail industry today, that a pay increase would mean higher fares and they can't possibly keep the final pension scheme open for new staff.

Compare this view to the final and most pressing reason for the strike, which has gone ahead in spite of a soft-headed approach from union leaders – rumours of 800 job losses within the industry as part of London Underground's 'improved working conditions'.

The media have blamed the unionists, though the need for action is not their fault, but the companies'. The pension hole and the mishandling of safety and costs is their fault, and they're trying to heap that shame on their employees.

Freedom is totally behind the massed rank of the RMT as they drag their own union bosses away from the vague wishfulness of negotiation with such people.

## Quiz answers

1. An anti-draft movement in the US in 1917.
2. That which governs not at all.
3. An enormous anti-draft riot, which saw blacks lynched, draft offices and police stations burned and 1,200 dead. Not often remembered, unless you've seen 'Gangs of New York'.
4. The Zulus. In 1879 they ambushed a British unit that included the Prince Imperial, son of Louis Napoleon.

# Commentary

## The future

Rather than fill in the questionnaire, permit me to put my thoughts on the future of freedom (ha ha) via e-mail.

When it comes to features, more, more, more of everything. And use the web to create chat rooms for discussions on specific issues, to publish articles, show films and whatever else you can think of. I realise print media as we are accustomed to it is dead. Make it a monthly affair and don't be afraid of raising the price to £2.50. That's still a good price.

What is the purpose of freedom? Tricky question. It was once believed that the working class were not living up to the billing Marx promised – they appeared to have no idea that they were the agent of liberation – because of false consciousness. All the left (used in the widest sense) had to do was reveal to the working class the true nature of their relations with society as a whole. Magazines, newspapers and such like were the tools for lifting the mist from foggy minds. Of course, it has all been to no avail. These tools of consciousness raising (or thought reform) don't work. What works is activity – praxis. Labour.

And that's the trouble. Where is the space to create an anarchist housing coop, or an anarchist school, or an anarchist factory? The temporary autonomous zones I've participated in are a lot of fun. But so what? They're temporary.

My politics? Black and red (and green). But with the feeling that traditional class-based politics is dead. There are a whole host of new forms of identification (religious, ethnic) which could be articulated towards a counter-hegemony but they're off our radar because they don't fit the class model. If you're interested, check out the writings of the Argentine political scientist, Ernesto Laclau. He's not an anarchist, but he's very smart and knows a thing or two.

Good luck with the changes, and I hope you get a decent response to your questions. My subscription cheque is in the post so please don't stall in sending me the next issue.

Paul-François Tremlett

## Even more GM

So far I've kept out of the GM debate, but I'd like to make a few observations after reading the last few exchanges. Donald Rooum still takes the line that Anarchists should not be trying to ban GM unless they are proven to cause harm.

Well, recent independent research would seem to indicate just that. A study by a Dr Pusztai, a very respected nutritional scientist, has shown that rats fed on a GM diet developed problems – as opposed to a group that didn't. This study was peer-reviewed by the Biological and Biological Sciences Research Council.

Whilst there appears to be a dearth of 'research' into the direct affect on health of GM food, over half of those that have been done, have been undertaken in collaboration with the bio tech industry and so it is perhaps unsurprising that no ill-effects have been found. Several independent studies though have found evidence of harm.

Further, as regards indirect 'harm', surely the fact that GM material can and has been found to transfer between crops (including organic) over fairly wide areas also not reason enough to 'ban' it? Farmers who have been sued by the likes of Monsanto for unknowingly infringing their 'property rights' because of contamination, may well feel that

there has been 'direct harm' to them from GM.

In Argentina, the GM soya crop has achieved monoculture status, as reported in a recent New Scientist mag, and superweeds are resulting along with unexpected fungal growth and lowering of yields. Further 'harm' in my view.

GM has also invaded the world of pets with 'glowing fish' in the US, and is also used in the cotton industry especially in South Africa. The latter, along with other non-edible GM crops, are being touted as a solution to the production of materials for clothes, plastics, paper and much else. Yet, most of these could be achieved by substituting the various types of hemp, which has always been more versatile and better for the environment.

GM crops have and are being shown to be both harmful and unnecessary and so anarchists should be quite happy about supporting a ban.

Pirate Ray

I have to admit to be amazed by Donald Rooum's seemingly inexhaustible ability not only to ignore key parts of my argument but also to move the goal posts in our debate on GM crops. I'm starting to think Donald has a spook in his head about GM and no amount of reasoned discussion or evidence will dislodge him from his position.

He seems intent on rewriting history, stating that he made no claim that the test of the GM maize proved its safety. His first letter (3rd April) saw him state that the test proved "there was no reason ... not to issue a licence" for it. Later he stated that "urging the state to ban something not known to be harmful is incompatible with anarchism" (1st May). Now, apparently, Donald says he means something else by his comments.

Quite amazingly, he reiterates the validity of the flawed test. Ignoring the fact that the test results were invalid as it used a soon to be banned pesticide, he repeats the claim that they "left the government with no reason not to grant a license." He also (yet again!) conveniently ignores the fact that even if the tests were valid, they would be meaningless as the biotech company will only sell its product if the test conditions are not enforced.

Apparently, according to Donald, I am not defending "an anarchist attitude" by being concerned about valid scientific analysis and testing. Ironically, in his Wildcat comic of that issue, Donald has 'Free-Range Egg-Head' stating "anarchists choose between theories on the basis of evidence, not wishful thinking." I quite agree. Yet this does not seem to be Donald's position, as he continually asks us to accept as valid the results of flawed tests which will not be repeated in practice as the conditions which produced them would be ignored. So much for "the basis of evidence"!

To justify his position, Donald compares GM crops to "a machine, rockpile." Yet neither machines nor rockpiles cross pollinate with other plants. They do not contaminate surrounding organisms or evolve. But contamination is one of the many issues related to GM. Donald is silent about. He has never answered my question why his support for GM is not authoritarian, given its tendency to spread and contaminate other plants and, therefore, to eliminate my freedom not have a GM environment?

Donald says that "we can't be sure" is "of no practical value." Sorry, but when we are talking of turning our planet's ecology into a big laboratory for an unproven technology whose

impact is non-reversible, I say that it is the only sensible position to hold. Particularly given the weakness of the evidence of its safety.

Let us have it out in the open, is Donald really asking us to join his worship of GM crops regardless of the evidence? Or their social and ecological consequences? On the evidence so far, the answer must be 'Yes'.

As always, I will look forward to Donald ignoring my points and repeating exactly the same comments on tests which were flawed and whose results are, ultimately, meaningless as the testing conditions will be ignored if this crop is ever grown commercially.

Iain McKay

## Mikhail's hand

It was good to read Paul-François Tremlett's critique (12th June) of Bakunin's nineteenth century materialist fundamentalism, which as he and Alfred Todd (26th June) would surely agree is often held as an arrogant front or comfort-blanket against the uncertainty and openness of life.

However before focusing on the pluses and minuses of religion let me seize a chance to loosen the informal hegemony of Bakuninism in contemporary Western anarchism with reference to another matter, which is extensively documented by Eugene Pyziur in The Doctrine of Anarchism of Michael Bakunin. If I hadn't donated it to Edinburgh libraries fifteen years back I would be able to quote passage after passage from Bakunin's unpublished fantasies and letters to his closest collaborators which reveal the nihilistic and authoritarian 'shadow' side of "anarchism's virile champion" (Guy Aldred).

Parallel with his public doctrine of spontaneous mass self-activity and organisation from the bottom up, Bakunin tried to recruit into a hierarchical secret society which would play on 'evil passions' and push every conflict situation to the max with the insane hope of being able to secretly lead the masses in the desired direction. Of course, here too we must situate Bakunin in the context of his times: Baboef's 'Conspiracy of Equals' in revolutionary France, freemasonry and Blanquism as a major strands in Western European radicalism and Russia's home-grown equivalents, leading through to the Bolshevik capture of Marxism and the double-entry book-keeping of 'freely federating Soviet Socialist Republics' on the one hand, and the pitiless Moscow-directed centralism of the real organs of power, the Party and the secret police.

As a soggy-liberal anarchist possibilist I would like to suggest that it isn't good enough for us to suppress this side of Bakunin's work and just concentrate on the positive bits. Perhaps the same psyche which indulges such fantasies as secretly guiding World Revolution is construing life equally awry in his public utterances about never compromising with intermediate forms such as constituent assemblies and aiming 'to create a people's force capable of crushing the military and civil force of the State' (quoted without any visible eyebrow raising by Iain Mackay in his initial feature of 29th May).

It is true that Bakunin could claim that his bohemian secret society was really defensive and trying to prevent the posher German lot (organised by Marx with finance from Engels) gaining control of the First International. Yet none of these 'great men' would have been able to dominate if Marx hadn't

first defeated the French tradesmen, influenced by Proudhon, who in the mid-sixties had argued that only bona fide working men (sic) who worked with their hands should be able to be congress delegates – or even branch and section members, many argued.

How different history might have turned out if workers, productive tradespeople and Proudhon-style (fairtrade, open-books) shopkeepers had been able to keep control of their own organisational spaces instead of being swamped by ideology-drunk upper-class men who had never made a loom, grown potatoes or changed a nappy in their lives!

This leads me back to religion because for centuries now many of the peoples of the global South have been trying to tell Western fundamentalists – scientific positivists, Materialist Marxists and Anarchists, patriarchal Catholic dogmatists and 'born-again' Protestants alike – to get off their backs and listen! For them their religion is central to their culture and way of life and thus their power to resist the ongoing imperialist enclosure of their land and world.

Of course Bakunin's 'God and the State' makes some valid points about the way in which a particular literalist and externalistic notion of God-Above can be seen to reflect and in turn strengthen popular fatalism, clerical domination and politics organised through force and fraud from the Centre. But even within the history of Western Christianity there have also been recurrent resistance movements which have stressed the importance of immanence, mutual solidarity, the priesthood of all believers, etc. – see for example the work of 'Creation spirituality' advocate, Matthew Fox, and the Theology of Liberation of Rosemary Reuther and many others who are creatively re-interpreting Christianity to meet the needs of women and the oppressed masses in 'base groups' throughout South America, Africa and many other parts of the world.

Les Ismore

## Well respected

I'll turn a blind eye to the personal abuse (I've never heard of him, he's never heard of me – big deal) but I wonder at the reason for David Quick's misrepresentation of my position re RESPECT (Letters, 26th June) I did not endorse their electoral strategy – I simply suggested that given the forces involved included a number of Muslim youth politicised by the second Gulf War, it deserved a more sophisticated critique than the tongue-poking in 29th May front page. In the election results, it was only the inner-city Muslim turnout that saved RESPECT from complete disaster. My point was that what was 'progressive' about RESPECT was its attempt to engage politicised Muslims in non-faith based politics. That this was done via a cynical SWP front didn't absolve us of the need to provide a more substantial critique than 'yah boo-elections suck, and Galloway's a wanker'.

I get tired of the holier-than-thou purism of the likes of Quick, who think any discussion of tactics and strategy by anarchists is a betrayal of principle. For the record, I don't believe in parliamentary politics or in voting for any electoral party. I do, though, think it is possible, as for instance in the Euro Referendum, for anarchists to vote and fight for a vote against something

# REVIEW

## Despite their reputation, Edward Hopper's bleak depictions of everyday alienation are far from apolitical, finds Richard Griffin

In 1949 one of Edward Hopper's clients returned a painting he had bought the previous day from the artist. Asked by Hopper what was wrong with 'Conference at Night' the client told him that his wife had thought that the picture "too communist". This was an odd comment to make. Hopper was not a communist; in fact he wasn't even particularly interested in politics. As the programme to the Tate's exhibition notes "there is no political message, no hint of class conflict" in Hopper's pictures, even 'Pennsylvania Coal Town' which explicitly depicts an industrial worker. What the artist, who was born in a small town north of New York did do was paint everyday lives in offices, apartment rooms, hotels, diners, motels, brownstones, theatres. Referring to his most famous picture, 'Nighthawks', Hopper said "I was painting the loneliness of a large city."

Isolation and alienation, prevailing features of modern life, are recurring themes in many of the pictures in the Tate's exhibition of Hopper's work. Lonely figures pervade the scenes. In 'Sunday' a man sits on a pavement totally alone. In 'Automat' a woman sits at a table again alone nursing a cup of coffee. These are scenes bled dry of humanity and social warmth, stripped down to the basics. Figures in many of the paintings look outwards through windows, through doors, across landscapes – you cannot help thinking that they are looking for a better life, a life with meaning. In his own words

Hopper tried to capture the "sad desolation of our suburban landscape."

In the Surrealist Manifesto (1924) Breton wrote that the aim of art should be "to deepen the foundations of the real, to bring about an ever clearer and at the same time ever more passionate consciousness of the world perceived by the senses." This is what I think Hopper's paintings do. They shine a light at modern city living and expose the lack of connectivity between people that exists. Most of the pictures have just a single person in them. In those with more there is little or no contact between the people. In 'Office at Night' a man sits at a desk and a woman stands by a filing cabinet. They look very apart, almost as if they are avoiding each other. In 'Hotel by a Railroad' this time a woman sits in a chair while a man looks out of the window. You can almost feel the awkward silence between the two, both asking 'why am I here?'

When not painting city life Hopper was painting houses in the countryside. But like his people these houses are also isolated. They seem to have been dropped into the landscape.

In one of his last works painted four years before his death 'Sun in an Empty Room' a room is devoid of furniture, of people, light comes through an open window. This painting seems to sum Hopper up – the room is solitary, silent and empty.

The Edward Hopper exhibition is at Tate Modern in London, until 5th September



Detail from Edward Hopper's 'Automat'

## BOOKS

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by Colin Ward  
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William Blake was a poet, painter, engraver and visionary. Considered eccentric, if not mad, in his own time, he now appears as a key figure in English romanticism. This study offers a lively and perceptive account of Blake's thought and presents him as a

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that it should culminate in the satisfaction of personal needs and the establishment of complete liberty and equality.

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# Commentary

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which is not in working class interests. Quick seems to think that every issue can be resolved by setting out our principles and sitting back in our saintly armchairs. We have to intervene in the world as it is, and base our propaganda on what happens in that world. I don't actually disagree with what Quick says about RESPECT - my letter said the same thing - that it was an attempt to divert the most active elements within the coalition down a parliamentary road. That doesn't mean we have nothing to say to those who honestly worked within it.

I don't think either that its enough to denounce militant Islam as mediaevalism without understanding why it is that, faced with a barely-existent, redundant left and a resurgent imperialism, a substantial minority of Asian youth are drawn to the apparent possibility of resistance it offers. The only way to build a secular anti-imperialist current within communities where the various militant Islamic groups have a presence is by being more consistent and more effective anti-imperialists than they are, and by being able, for instance, to defend both women's right to live outside Islam and their right to an Islamic identity if they so choose. Following Quick's route of divorcing defence of principle from principled practice will leave us only where we are already - nowhere!

Paul Maguire

## Uniting?

"The anarchist movement needs to unite nationally" (Richard Griffin, 26th June). A laudable aim. Anarcho-communists becoming anarcho-syndicalists, or vice versa seems unlikely and synthesis has been mooted in the past without bearing fruit.

The 'anarchist movement' in this country is but sporadically influential, possibly because we seem unable or unwilling to get our collective act together and act as something resembling a movement: we rarely even march together on national demos. It seems theoretical divisions are more satisfying than solidarity.

Not much can be done without organisation and there are a lot of anarchists who for unspecified reasons do not belong to one. Perhaps they are waiting for Bakunin to return and start one that has no faults whatsoever. The Anarchist Workers' Network seems to have folded yet industry remains the most vulnerable element of the capitalist state. The national federations struggle to retain a physical and propaganda presence; bodies are required.

Unite under which banner?

Roy Emery

## Catty

In response to Stevey R's ranting reply to my article I am not sure if he is agreeing or disagreeing me! He does

not seem to know himself, or have read the article carefully, which simply attempts to examine the drugs issue "without knowing all the answers" myself. I agree with him as he points out in one moment clarity of the whole debate is a "bit of a minefield" but was examining some of the contradictions which muddy the waters.

Prohibition did and does nothing to help the problems caused by drug and alcohol addiction according to all the available research I have looked at, showing that things have not moved on that much since Malatesta's analysis. As I also pointed out Malatesta's view would need updating in the modern context, with more progressive and realistic drug treatment programmes than are available in the UK. Methadone programmes have a low success rate and do little to combat the terrible cycle of drug addiction, crime and violence that are part of modern day society in our towns and cities.

He also ignores the main point of the article which was to take a political overview of the 'war on drugs' in relation to the 'war on terror'. Drugs are another commodity on the global market along with weapons of mass destruction, both controlled by international governments - drugs are illegal yet weapons are not. Why? Are drugs more harmful than dirty bombs?

Stevy could, as most contributors to Freedom try to do, discuss anarchism in the modern world, and the kind of questions and answers it raises to deal with current day problems, e.g. GM foods. Instead he resorts to some kind of muddled attack on anarchism with childish insults which get none of us anywhere without even understanding what he is supposedly criticising. Very clever to him, no doubt, but a waste of space to others.

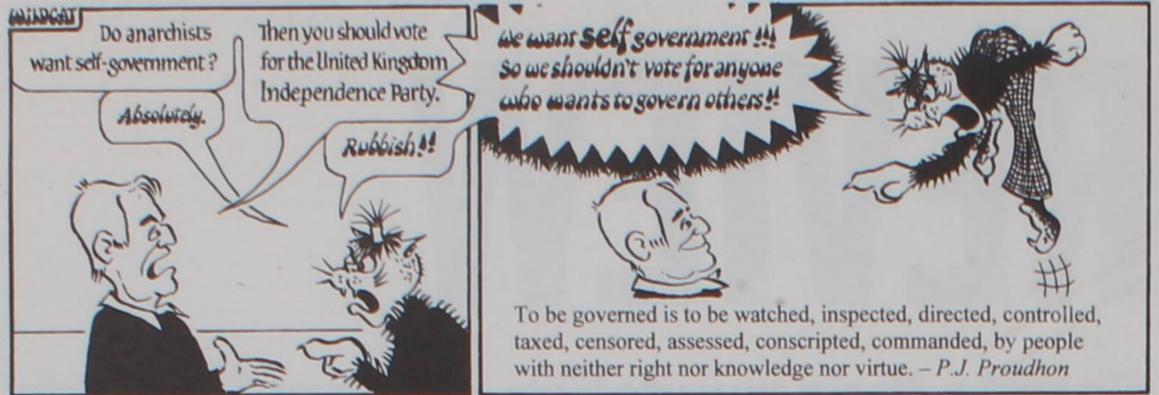
I would also suggest to the editors of Freedom that they print and edit letters that show some respect for freedom of speech rather than those that simply try to trade insults.

Marie J. Fagin

I would like to point out to Stevey R. that as Marie Jean mentioned in her article the illegal drugs industry is already controlled by huge multinational enterprises. Also, drugs and food have very different impacts on society - for example, 70% of crime in Britain is not perpetrated by people addicted to probiotic yoghurt, nor are millions of people across the Western world imprisoned for possessing kumquats. You can hardly compare the two.

As for the more pressing issue of what to do with everyone's favourite "No I won't tidy my bedroom!" fad-rebel topper, Kat 'Kitten' Pinder, I think the best thing to do is to denounce her as the Trotskyist that she is - she was a member of the Alliance for Workers' Liberty from 2000-2002, and was speaking at their conference last weekend.

If your understanding of anarchism has come from this paper, Stevey, it's



To be governed is to be watched, inspected, directed, controlled, taxed, censored, assessed, conscripted, commanded, by people with neither right nor knowledge nor virtue. - P.J. Proudhon



worth learning the simple general rule - if something goes wrong, blame the Trots!

Alex Allison

## Anti-fascist?

I'm writing in response to 'Irving done' (29th May). I fail to see the difference between Antifa smashing Irving and the State/police smashing political dissidents. Irving is no threat, he wasn't oppressing anyone. Antifa did not achieve any great victory against 'fascism' or state repression. They did succeed in depriving Irving of his basic freedom and human dignity and potentially inspiring more militant fascists to fight back in self-defence.

Antifa are not anarchists, they are Bolsheviks. You should bump Antifa from the paper to freed up space for more of 'Bakunin's ideas' which by the way was most excellent!

Johnny Gann #E-23852

Pelican Bay State Prison, PO Box 7500, Crescent City, CA 95531, USA

Dear Johnny, firstly we would like to correct a factual error in your letter - Antifa are by no means a Bolshevik group. They come from an anarchist background and will work with any militant anti-fascists in a non-hierarchical way. Secondly, attacking fascists will not inspire them to fight back - they will attack progressive working class organisations as soon as they become powerful enough, since that is their very purpose. From Mussolini's fascists seizing power after the factory occupations of 1920, to Hitler's imprisonment of communists (which happened before the Jews were targeted) and even neo-Nazi rabble Combat 18's attack and firebombing of our offices and bookshop in 1993.

If we crush them while they are small, they will never gain the confidence and power to attack ethnic and sexual minorities, and workers' organisations and never again will they plunge the whole world into bloody conflict. Freedom Editors.

## A sideways look

This week I went along to a local political meeting. And when I say local, it was a ward-level forum convened by the local Labour councillors. I spent an hour and a half in a room with about 35 other people. The meeting was advertised as being about transport, graffiti and traffic, though traffic had dropped off the agenda by the time it happened.

Transport is a hot issue for a lot of people where I live. Since Connex were kicked off their franchise last year, the trains have been effectively re-nationalised under SE Trains. Obviously this state of affairs can't happen in modern Britain so it will be re-privatised in 2005, by the Strategic Rail Authority (SRA). They want to make big changes to the timetable as part of this process. At present trains from our local station run both to the City and Charing Cross. The SRA want to change it so that trains only go to Cannon Street. My former neighbours were there - they found out about the 'consultation' on this by the SRA the day after it closed. The SRA refused to send someone to the local forum meeting to explain what they were doing. Their argument was that they'd told the local council and put it on their website. All very well if you know you should be looking for it there, but hopeless otherwise. One resident complained that they didn't get any of the local free papers and hadn't seen it there. Well, I do and it made it into them the day before consultation closed. The politicians stressed that the inadequate consultation and poor proposals were a cross-party issue - which translated means it's been such a cock-up even the Tories are against it.

A manager from SE Trains did attend. It was clear from his speech that there was a lot of resentment on the railways against the crazy system that privatisation had set up. One person at the meeting mentioned how a contract cleaner had been sweeping rubbish from the platform onto the track. Bad from a health and safety point of view, yes, but it when Network Rail clean the track and the train company the station, you can see the logic. You couldn't make it up. (Well, someone who'd obviously spent too much time with a train set in their youth obviously did when it was privatised).

The politician who talked about graffiti wasn't as interesting or funny. He looked like a career-builder, while the local councillors came across as just that - local people who wanted to play a part in their local communities - an erroneous part in my opinion, but a sincere one. He did manage to spark an intervention from the SWP/Respect guy,

linking the causes of graffiti to the Iraq War. Well, yes, the money wasted on invading Iraq would be better spent on youth clubs for bored teenage taggers, but is it really that simple? If that £7 billion was available to Blair or Brown, aren't there other things they'd spend it on, like more prisons or the Eurofighter? There was a brief discussion about diverting graffiti artists into something more constructive and the council promised to clean it off quicker. If only they'd done that thirty years ago we'd have been spared at least one Dire Straits album.

By this point I'd worked out that the people in-between me and the guy with the East End Offset accent were the local Green Party and the rather quiet people on the right of the hall were what passed for Labour activists (i.e. councillors in other wards). And of course the meeting had no power, which explained why only people really pissed off about the trains turned out apart from the activists. Even where sincere local councillors try to get things to happen (and by the end I was sick of the phrase 'multi-agency approach') they don't have the power and are ignored by those who do. All advocated letter-writing, without really having any faith in it as a tactic. Need I say more?

Svartfrosk

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## The quiz

1. What was the Green Corn Rebellion?
2. What government was best, according to the American philosopher Henry David Thoreau?
3. What happened when the US imposed a draft and allowed 'True Americans' to make a cash payment to avoid it in 1863?
4. Who, according to Disraeli, settled the fate of a great European dynasty?

Answers on page 6

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FREEDOM fortnightly ISSN 0016 0504