

BROWN FEEDS THE FAT CATS

Tax and debts set for private coffers

Much of the huge sum being borrowed and taxed for the budget could go into bailing out the private sector in faltering PFI projects, it has been revealed.

The Treasury is considering releasing the funds to replace 'senior debt' in the initiative, in which the government signs up to 30-year mortgage deals with the private sector to build major infrastructure projects.

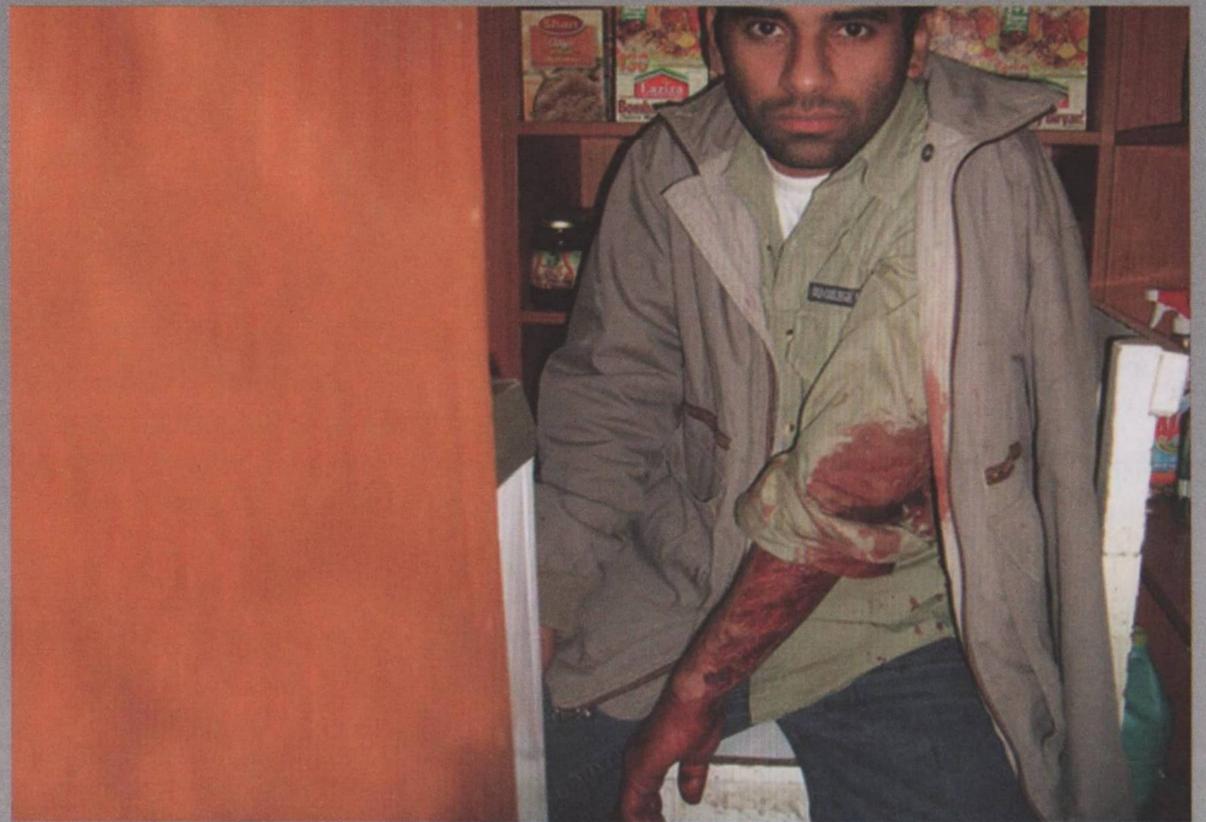
A mainstay argument for PFI is that the private sector is the best source of 'senior debt' – where startup capital for major projects is provided, along with backup cash and expertise in case things start to go wrong – by various major lenders through private concerns.

In theory, this allows the government to spread out small regular payments across the financial sector, while allowing major improvement works to get the go-ahead.

However as the financial crisis continues, many major PFI projects have stalled both due to an initial government withdrawal of spending in those areas and a lack of confidence from lenders that the companies involved, particularly in construction, are reliable.

page 3 ►►

LENS CAP GREECE



Atzaz Ahmed, from Pakistan, holds his injured arm after he was beaten by riot police in Greece while waiting in line for a hearing on the status of his asylum application. Atzaz had been at the front of the queue when police decided the line should be broken up, and rushed it with batons raised. Atzaz's beating follows the killing by police in October of a Pakistani man who had also been waiting in line, which sparked a major demonstration against their brutal treatment of asylum applicants. Campaigners say procedure changed for about two weeks after the killing, but have now reverted back to type.

BRITAIN'S YOUNGEST PRISONERS

As *Freedom* goes to press, five children, including what may be Britain's youngest ever prisoner, are being held in the notorious Yarl's Wood immigration detention centre.

Six-year-old twins Ziyad and Bahabga Zighem, Rahima, aged four, Hani, aged three, and two-year-old Zinedine have spent over a month in the building, which has seen several hunger strikes in the last two years over living conditions, and administrators Group 4 severely reprimanded for their handling of the facility.

Arrested in a dawn raid on Sunday 26th October, at first the entire family had been incarcerated at the facility, but mum Akila Lazazi has now lost the presence of her partner Mestah Zighem after he was moved to Harmondsworth.

Mestah Zighem was picked up at his children's school, where he had been working as a caretaker, and accused of being a foreign criminal, which he believes to be a case of mistaken identity.

When they arrived at Yarl's Wood they were put into separate rooms. Mestah said the mattresses were badly stained with blood and urine and both his wife and their children have very itchy dry red spots. When they asked for medication it took three days to arrive.

Akila said they were expecting their sixth child and she believes that because of the distress with her husband being separated from her and the children being in detention at Yarl's Wood, she has miscarried.

INSIDE ►►

Ex-miners left in the cold page 3

Mining in Tanzania pages 6 and 7

Eating paradise pages 8–9

Letters and comment page 11

Cornelius Castoriadis page 13

Reviews pages 14 and 15

ISSN 0016-0504



NEWS

IN BRIEF

DISCRIMINATION: Disabled people and those with long term ill-health are facing higher levels of hostility and negative treatment in the workplace according to new research published by the Equality and Human Rights Commission. In a survey of nearly 4,000 workers, those with a disability or long-term illness reported they were more likely to experience bullying and humiliation.

EDUCATION: Kent University students have passed a motion stating that "British troops should be withdrawn immediately from Iraq and Afghanistan" and that "the OTC, RAF, Royal Navy, TA, and Army are not allowed promotion or recruiting stalls at our freshers' fair and on the Kingston University campuses". This means the university is to be a Military-Free Zone for the next three years.

EMPLOYMENT: The 'headline' unemployment figure – which includes all people out of work and not just those claiming job-seeker's allowance – is likely to rise from 1.82 million at the end of September to more than two million by the end of the year, according to recent reports.

FAR-RIGHT: The British National Party claims it is gearing up to open its first branch in Sevenoaks. The precise location of the office is being kept a closely-guarded secret, but South East regional spokesman Andy McBride has confirmed it will be in the town and is to be spearheaded by party activist Paul Golding.

POLICING: The government will fund 10,000 Tasers for police officers in England and Wales, now that a controversial pilot scheme has ended. The weapons have been heavily criticised by human rights groups, who point to hundreds of deaths in the US which have occurred as a result of Taser use.

SURVEILLANCE: A young couple living in a 'residential assessment centre' to monitor their 'suitability' as parents, in which all the rooms are monitored by CCTV, have invoked the Human Rights Act to have the camera in their bedroom switched off at night. The cameras are installed for the 'protection' of their baby, which sleeps in a separate, monitored nursery from the bedroom.

TRANSPORT: After a complex legal fight, Law Lords have ruled that Critical Mass, the monthly celebration of cycling, is not subject to police rules on organised demonstrations, as it has no defined demands or leadership.

On Monday 20th October 2008 an appeal by Des Kay and Friends of the Earth, against the Commissioner of Metropolitan Police, was heard by five Law Lords and their decision is that the appeal is allowed and Critical Mass is a commonly or customarily held procession without organisers and therefore does not need to inform the police of each ride.

LENS CAP THE MEMBERSHIP LIST LEAK



Following the leak of the BNP's membership list, Nick Griffin and his party have become the subject of dozens of lolcat-style jokes, as well as a full video subtitle piece of Hitler expressing outrage that his details were leaked. A list of some of the best can be found at lolgriffin.blogspot.com

Embarrassment piles up for BNP

Nick Griffin has been caught out after he promised his membership that a 'highly experienced team' of lawyers would be set to protecting their privacy and employment rights following the leaking of the BNP membership lists late last month.

Instead, online newswire Indymedia found themselves being threatened by Lee John Barnes, who isn't even a lawyer. They noted: "Mr Barnes's threat [in his email to the group] to post personal information about Indymedia participants may in itself be illegal – it certainly would cause a registered legal practitioner to lose his credentials."

The BNP have been attempting damage control as more statistical analysis comes out about the group, including the highly embarrassing revelation that they may have been doubling their numbers by including

lapsed members – one estimate from far-right sources suggested that the actual membership figure could be as low as 6,000.

Among the information gathered from the leak is that Leeds and Bradford between them may have up to 400 members, placing the anarchist 1 in 12 club and Leeds antifa right in the centre of the far-right heartland.

Among the geographical centres for the BNP are Lancashire, Yorkshire, Essex and Leicestershire, with Birmingham and Manchester both harbouring large numbers.

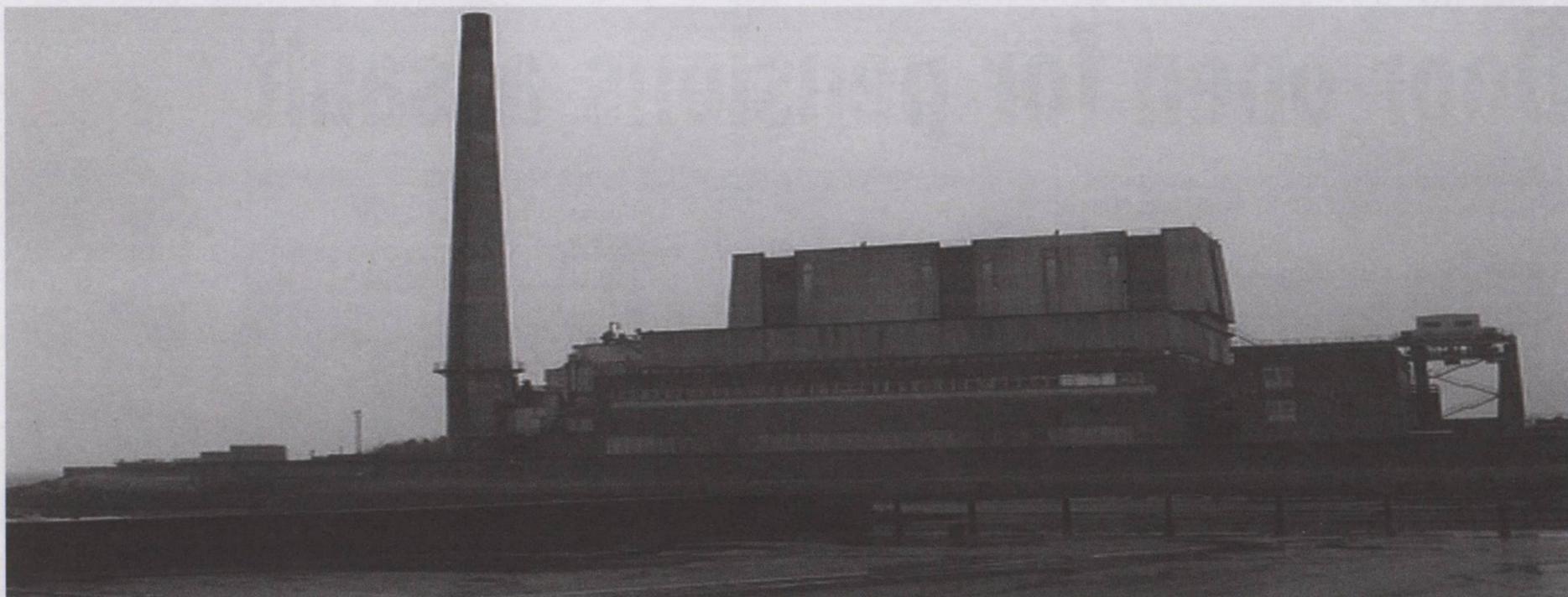
In terms of demographics, it appears that, largely true to existing anarchist estimates, the larger part of support for the BNP comes from the skilled working class and lower middle class, but with a not inconsiderable number of people living in wealthier areas as well (some 16%).

ABOUT ANARCHISM

Nicolas Walter with an introduction by Natasha Walter

The case for anarchism as a pragmatic political philosophy is explained in this new edition of the classic work by Nicolas Walter, who was a writer, journalist and active protester against the power of the state. It has often been reprinted and translated into many languages, including French, Spanish, Japanese, Serbo-Croat, Chinese, Polish and Russian.

available at £4.20 (post free) from
Freedom Press, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX



Picture: 'blawjaws' (flickr.com)

EMPTY: Methil Power Station in Fife, Scotland, which has been shut and is due for demolition and regeneration. The station closed after clearing out the last of the waste of the old Fife mines, and was an early research site for clean coal technologies.

Regeneration, but not for miners

Funding for the coalfields has been pocketed as ex-miners left in cold

Despite massive investment in mining communities damaged by Thatcher's victory in 1984 and with winding down of coal mining in the 1990s, the money has gone not to local workers but to regeneration groups and businesses, according to a new report.

Analysis by the Audit Commission of the old coalfields has found that while construction work and job numbers have risen in these areas at faster rates than the national average, local people have not significantly benefitted from the changes.

While the report praised an influx of national and European money which has poured into the areas over the last ten years, halving the amount of derelict land and

improving employment rates, as well as significantly improving local housing stock, it noted: "Absolute levels of educational attainment, adult skills, life expectancy, income deprivation and crime have improved, but inequalities persist.

"The gap between these areas and the rest of the country widened and many coalfields remain among the most deprived areas in England.

"Jobs have been created but are increasingly being taken by people moving or travelling into coalfield areas, while unemployment persists in local communities.

"Many coalfield residents are jobless and face significant barriers to returning to work. These include health problems, poor skills and lack of motivation. This is no longer restricted to the older generations who were originally affected by pit closures.

"Jobs continue to be created but councils face diminishing returns for their efforts as these jobs are increasingly taken by new people

moving or travelling into the area to work."

As the economy falters, the Commission has warned that funding is likely to fall for the old coal-mining fields, ending the public spending bonanza which many companies have taken advantage of, but leaving the towns' working classes no better off than before.

Between 1981 and 1993, 135,000 manufacturing and 170,000 mining jobs were lost, offset only to a limited extent by growth in services and public sector employment. Overall there were 150,000 fewer jobs in 1993 than in 1981.

As a result, there was a large-scale exodus of people under the age of 45 out of the coalfields looking for work. However as funding in construction and the public sector in particular rose, an influx of new workers has left unemployment of the ex-miners in dire straits, with many being moved 'off the books' into incapacity benefits and unemployment still some 2.8% below national rates.

Brown feeds the fat cats

◀ page 1

Although the Treasury has pledged to put pressure on the lenders to release funds, it is rapidly becoming clear that this is unlikely to happen, leaving future PFI projects in a potentially long-term limbo.

As a result, to keep PFI moving, the government may step in with its own funds, meaning that construction companies would be loaned money by the government to do their projects for them, with a guarantee should their mismanagement cause financial problems that the same government would bail them out.

As limited companies, they would be liable for minimal sums in the event of total failure, having already taken home the profits.

It will come as a blow to anti-PFI campaign groups, which have pointed to a litany of problems with the initiative which have seen massive cost overruns, wastages and the misplacing of public money, while huge profits are being made by the stock holders and bosses of the companies involved.

The news comes as an investigation by the SNP in Scotland found that existing PFI project costs between now and 2032 have already risen in recent projections from £188.6bn to £216.1bn, a whopping £27bn in total.

The potential state re-invigoration of PFI is set to be financed by the announced 'Loan

Ranger' budget of Alistair Darling, in which £118bn is to be levered onto the national debt, some of which is then to be clawed back by taxes on the assumption that the recession will end quickly.

Among the measures used to recoup the funds will be a raised flat tax on alcohol and cigarettes, an increase to National Insurance payments of 0.5%, and cuts to the public sector workforce amounting to £5bn a year, along with an increase on the top rate of tax.

The upshot of such measures is that the working class will be expected to pay for more than three-quarters of the expected tax rises.

PUBLIC SECTOR

Door open for pensions assault

Public sector pensions may be the next target for government attacks on the living standards of their workforce after a series of attempts to paint them as 'unfairly gold plated' have emerged following the budget.

When unions signed up to the current deal in 2006, a caveat was included which would allow Gordon Brown to rethink public sector pensions "should the fiscal position change" – potentially opening the way for the ending of final-salary pensions as the credit crunch gives Brown an excuse to act.

Older workers in the public sector are currently entitled to the same types of pension as they originally signed up for, known as final salary pensions, whereas these have largely disappeared in the private sector after businesses stripped them away following the last economic downturn.

As a result of weak resistance to pension changes in the private sector, a gap has temporarily opened up with most now working with 'working life' pensions worth tens of thousands of pounds less than were originally signed up for.

These attacks in the private sector came after the bursting of the dot com bubble in 2001, in which company pension pots, usually administered by senior management, had large high-risk investments. As a result, across industry tens of billions were lost when the market collapsed.

State pensions meanwhile had not been invested in the dot com market, being drawn directly from state coffers – public sector employees do not pay into a specific 'pot' as would be the case for most private sector staff. As a result, they remained unaffected.

Nevertheless, the government took the



Picture: FreeFoto.com

PENSIONS FIGHT: Following the last public sector pension clash in 2006, the door was left open for Brown to attack them again in an economic downturn.

opportunity to launch a widespread assault on pension conditions, negotiating a deal with existing workforces which would see only new workers having working-life pensions imposed on them.

As such, it is expected that within the next 15 years, regardless of other changes, the retirement age will have raised to 65, and most of the workforce will no longer be on final-salary.

Criticism was raised at the time by groups such as the anarcho-syndicalist Solidarity Federation and Anarchist Federation that such a move would effectively isolate older workers in years to come, as it would create a divide within the public sector between the haves and

have-nots, which could be exploited if the state ever came back to finish the job.

Initially, workers' pensions remained unaffected by the changes, but as, unlike with working-life pensions, they are also index-linked to the Retail Price Index, an inflationary spike in the last year has led to speculation that the cost to the exchequer could temporarily rise to £4bn annually.

This figure has seen widespread condemnation as being an unacceptable drain on the economy – as a comparison it would amount to around one eighth of the defence budget – and could lead to the remaining, much-weakened final-salary workforce being singled out for further attacks by the government.

Learning dictated by class

A new study has found that a child's early levels of learning, social behaviour and ability to cope in later educational years is heavily influenced by their parents' social class – to the extent that a child with a university-educated parent will progress nearly twice as quickly in school.

The paper, published jointly by Oxford, Birbeck, London and Nottingham universities, surveyed around 2,800 children in England between the ages of 3 and 11. It noted: "The mother's highest qualification level and the early years home learning environment are still among the strongest predictors of better academic and social-behavioural outcomes at age 10 and 11, in line with findings at younger ages."

The report from the department for school, children and families found that while high-quality pre-school was highly beneficial for academic learning in later years, a poor pre-school environment had no significant impact on a child's academic skills by age 11 –

effectively leaving children in areas with low-quality pre-schools at a significant disadvantage.

The writers said: "If a child experiences no, or poor quality, preschool and then moves to a less academically effective primary school their prospects of good outcomes are significantly reduced. This is of particular concern for those already experiencing other disadvantages and who are already at higher risk of poor outcomes.

"Thus educational influences, and early learning experiences, have the capacity to mitigate or further exacerbate inequalities. It is particularly important therefore to ensure that the most disadvantaged groups have access to high quality educational experiences from pre-school up."

Effectively the research makes a strong case that class background has a strongly detrimental affect on future learning regardless of the talent of pupils. The study also found that feelings of self-worth were a major influence,

with academic self-image playing a strong role in learning outcomes.

Where pupils succeeded 'against the odds' and achieved despite a working-class background, the report found that the single most important factor was strong family ties and high levels of support from the child's immediate community.

They wrote: "What they had in common was a high early years home learning environment. Interviews with parents and pupils to explore what might account for a pupil's success revealed: a) a range of family members provided support for the pupil's learning, b) pupils themselves were active in maintaining these practices and c) education was valued highly by the family as a means of improving life chances."

The news comes on the back of studies showing that working class children with high levels of promise at a young age are routinely overtaken by wealthier children starting from lower attainment levels by age 11.

IN BRIEF

CHEMICALS: 263 employees at Budelpack COSiCORR cosmetics factory in Maesteg, which has gone into administration, have been told they are redundant and were sent home. They have not been offered any redundancy money and were given a pack by the administrator which shows them how to claim redundancy pay from the state.

ENERGY: Shut Oldbury campaigners are angry with Government plans to sell off land at Oldbury to build a second nuclear reactor. The state-owned Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) today set in motion the auction of land adjacent to Oldbury and two other UK nuclear power stations.

Campaigners say a new reactor could be dangerous and harmful to people's health. They add that the NDA is jumping the gun as the results of a consultation on potential nuclear sites have not yet been announced.

MANUFACTURING: Workers at Campsie manufacturing plant Calcast have ended their sit-in protest. A dispute at the factory had centred on redundancy conditions for 90 workers. The firm announced that the plant was closing down, ending weeks of speculation that this was the case.

The workers had rejected the offer of one month's statutory redundancy notice, rather than the expected three. Calcast was owned by French company Montupet. Under the new deal, they will still leave after 30 days, but with an enhanced redundancy package.

TRANSPORT: First Bus staff in Aberdeen are planning strike action for the three busy weekends leading up to Christmas, it has been announced. Hundreds of members of the Unite T&G union have voted for action over pay. A 24-hour strike is planned from 0300 GMT on Saturday 6th December, with 48-hour stoppages planned to start on the following two Fridays. The company's offer of 3.7% to drivers, cleaning staff and engineering staff has been rejected.

TRANSPORT: Over one hundred Unite members working for Stagecoach in Worthing are to go ahead with a series of four one-day stoppages starting on December 5th in a dispute over disparities in pay. Unite is angry that its 120 members earn only £8.03 per hour while their local counterparts at Brighton Buses, Metrobus and National Express are on at least £10 per hour.

UTILITIES: A 24-hour walkout by hundreds of Scottish Water employees has ended. The action was staged following a dispute over pay levels. It involved members of the Unite, GMB and Unison unions and saw pickets set up outside several of the utility company's offices and depots. The company said it had made a pay award within public sector guidelines, but unions said it represented a pay cut because of the rate of inflation, and have warned the action could escalate.

Regulators promise change

Following months of prevarication the regulators for gas and water utilities have said they will be taking measures to make suppliers cut prices and fulfil pledges to maintain and upgrade their systems.

Ofgem and Ofwat have come under increasing pressure to impose changes after years of steadily rising prices and poor delivery from private companies given control of the monopolistic market.

Ofwat say they are going to crack down heavily on water companies over their 'lacklustre' performance in replacing and maintaining the pipes to reduce leakage, despite having raised their prices repeatedly on the back of promises to do so. They will not be allowed to raise prices to achieve these targets, the regulator said.

Ofwat has been repeatedly accused of being toothless after it imposed minimal fines on most of the largest water companies which had mis-reported their costs, leakage figures

and likely future outlays. Severn Water was fined £35m earlier this year, around half of what analysts said it had actually made from misreporting leakage figures. Tendring Water meanwhile was fined just £46,000 for similar practices. Thames Water, Southern Water, Three Valleys Water, and United Utilities have all been fined in the last two years for malpractice.

Ofgem meanwhile have come in for criticism after it allowed a series of huge price rises across the gas industry, and there is widespread scepticism that it will be able to force companies to pass on recent gas price falls to customers.

The regulator said it would be 'putting on the regulatory hobnails' and would 'tighten the laces' unless major companies cut their prices. British Gas have so far said they will reduce annual prices by £22 on average, but have remained silent on quarterly and metered rates – despite these being heavily criticised for financially penalising the poorest.



Insurers lose asbestos case

An attempt by insurers to dodge payments to people affected by mesothelioma, which is caused by asbestos, have been beaten in court.

Several major insurers backed a plea to the High Court in which they argued people who were exposed to asbestos while insured with them should not get payouts, on the grounds their conditions didn't manifest until much later on when they were no longer insured.

In the majority of cases mesothelioma and other conditions relating to exposure to asbestos take over 30 years to develop. By this time many workers will have retired. If the insurance industry had been successful they would have saved billions in compensation payments. Asbestos victims and their

families would have been left destitute.

Construction union UCATT has welcomed the verdict. Alan Ritchie, General Secretary of UCATT, said: "I am delighted with today's High Court judgement, it is a victory for common sense, I hope that the insurance industry will now withdraw gracefully and not pursue this case any further. Already a number of very sick people have had their compensation delayed by these proceedings. Some have sadly died."

UCATT and other asbestos campaigners are concerned that the insurance industry will not accept the decision and will attempt to take their case to the Court of Appeal and possibly to the House of Lords.

INTERNATIONAL

IN BRIEF

CHILE: The Senate unanimously approved a 10% wage increase for public workers on Thursday, ending a strike by 400,000 state employees that had halted garbage collection, and affected health and school services.

After the unanimous 32-0 vote in the Senate, union leaders announced the end of the four day-strike.

GERMANY: Staff at three Airbus plants in Germany have staged wildcat strikes over plans by the European jet maker to spin off the factories into a new subsidiary.

The work stoppages hit the Varel and Nordenham facilities in northern Germany, coming on the same day as industrial action at a plant in the southern city of Augsburg belonging to the parent company EADS. Airbus sought a court injunction against the strikes in Varel and Nordenham.

GREECE: November 17th saw the student revolt against the dictatorship in Athens in 1973 commemorated. Three days of festivities lead to a march at the streets of every city in Greece but mainly in central Athens.

GUINEA: Guinea is ranked as the second worst trade union oppressor in the world under President Lansana Conte, the International Trade Union Confederation Annual Survey has revealed. President Conte regime is directly linked to the killing of 30 unionists during brutal repression of union-organised public demonstrations against corruption and violations of fundamental rights.

The Survey, which covers worker rights violations in 138 countries, has revealed a number of disturbing violation trends, saying workers have been seriously deprived of their rights in 63 countries.

IRAQ: Iraqi army bulldozers roared into a squatters' camp in Baghdad on Thursday, witnesses said, ignoring protests by people who have lived in the abandoned arms depot for the past five years.

Dozens of soldiers backed by Iraqi police began dismantling the camp in the city's mostly Shiite Hurriyah neighbourhood where some 675 families – around 4,000 people – have lived since they fled from Sunni insurgents in late 2003.

ITALY: Students keep on demonstrating against the recent reforms supported by the Ministry of Education.

'We will not pay for this crisis' is the slogan of the Wave, the nickname used by students in Italy for their movement against the recent education reforms put forward by the Minister of Education, Gelmini.

The Wave is a students' movement against the idea of university as a place of reproduction of precariousness, disqualification of knowledge and subordination to the baronial power.

LENS CAP NEW YORK



A guard lifts a human rights activist out of a public gathering of the Ethical Culture Society in New York after he had asked an unwelcome question of speaker Larry Cox, the head of Amnesty International. The activist was there to draw attention to Amnesty International's support of the Merida Initiative, aka, Plan Mexico, a military aid package that arms the Mexican army and police who are involved in the murder and arrest of activists in Oaxaca and Chiapas and the massacres in Atenco. As the activist was dragged away, Larry Cox, who had refused to answer the question, said "We believe very strongly in freedom of speech".

Murder of Indymedia reporter

"I'm innocent" – Brad Will accused speaks

In an interview with a Mexican newspaper, the man who supposedly murdered the US Indymedia reporter Brad Will, an action which sparked a brutal police crackdown on the APPO movement in Oaxaca in 2006, says that he participated in APPO protests, but maintains that he never met the journalist.

Juan Manuel Martinez, who was officially arrested and accused recently of the murder by the state attorney, said: "It doesn't matter how much they pressure me; I'll never agree to the lie that they want me to agree to. I never even had the privilege of meeting him

[Brad] and I wasn't even in the place where they killed him."

From his jail cell in Santa Maria Ixcotel Penitentiary in Oaxaca where he awaits trial, he stressed: "They're telling all lies. There are a number of people who saw me that day in another place; I was not in the street where what happened happened. There isn't even one video or photo of me in which I am there when they shot at Brad. I don't know how they can get away with this injustice if it's very clear that it's all lies. Like my lawyer says, I am the scapegoat.

"Furthermore, the man that is accusing me [Alfredo Feria] says that he knew I was the killer because that's what a voice said – that's how it's written in his statement – that a voice told him that I was the assassin!"

Notes from the United States

Just before the Thanksgiving holiday the Federal Reserve and Treasury announced plans to create what will be, in effect, a government bank; \$800 billion (£500 billion) will be injected into new lending projects – lending to the rich who have caused the present 'crisis'. That will make a total of nearly eight trillion dollars (£5 trillion) in direct and indirect financial obligations which the US government has assumed in the past year. It is also thought that 170 banks face failure.

Obama, meanwhile, promises spending

cuts; he said recently, in what sounds very much like a coded message: "... if we are going to make the investments we need, we also have to be willing to shed the spending that we don't need ... We cannot sustain a system that bleeds billions of taxpayer dollars on programs that have outlived their usefulness, or exist solely because of the power of a politician, lobbyist, or interest groups. We simply can't afford it."

Again just before the Thanksgiving holiday, the number of Americans on food

Digging their own graves

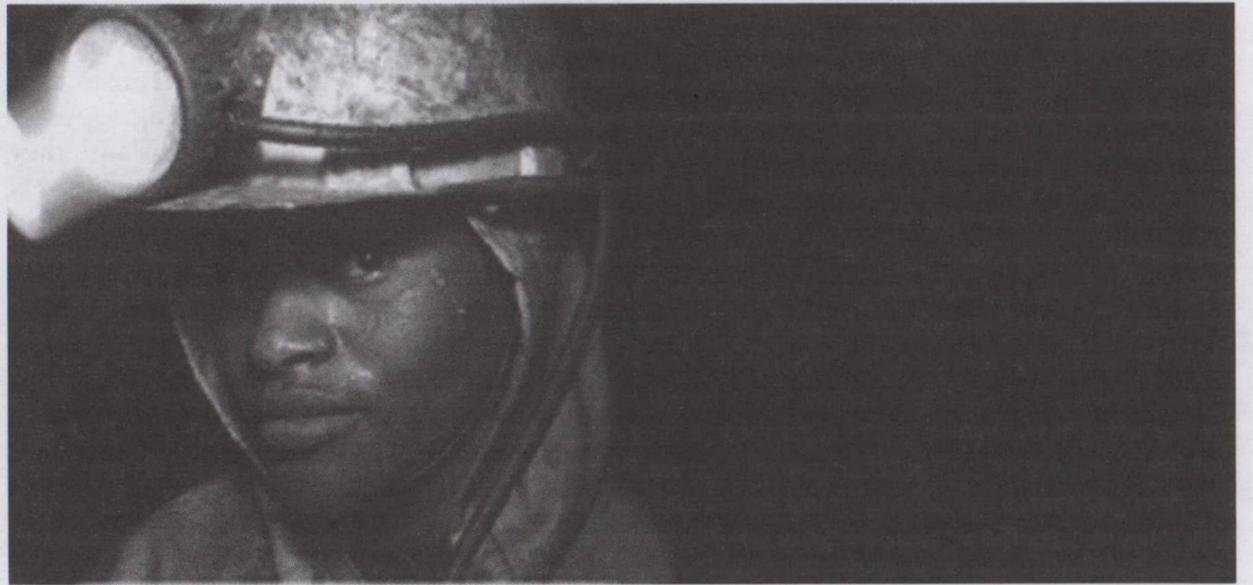
New report exposes Tanzanian mining

A new report on mining practices in Tanzania has highlighted huge profits being made by international companies at the expense of the environment and people of the impoverished African state. The report found that in particular two companies in particular, Canadian group Barrick and the South African firm AngloGold Ashanti, which between them hold the vast majority of the mining rights and operating facilities in Africa, have been systematically cutting local communities out of the decision-making process, manipulating state and national politics and mistreating workers as they haul in huge profits.

The news undermines predictions made in the early part of this century that Tanzania, which has had substantial economic problems leading to a 67% unemployment rate at slack points in the agricultural season, would see major benefits from the extraction of its substantial gold and other mineral reserves.

Rural communities, unable to make headway against the legally-savvy companies, are being thrown off their land with little support, according to the Bomani Commission report: "Basically, the real situation shows that the whole compensation process is not clear and not fair. Many people have been displaced without being paid the compensation or being allocated alternative places."

The government has also come in for severe criticism, after parliamentary sources confirmed that a Canadian delegation had been doing deals in private talks with influential legislators from both the ruling Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) party and



the Opposition. As a result, deals have gone through which see substantial tax breaks for the multinationals, and a blind eye turned to unpaid corporation tax, according to several church groups including Christian Aid – amounting to around \$265.5 million in lost revenues, according to one estimate.

The government have also been blamed for giving "big portions of land to multinational mining companies without considering the real use of it by those who owned the place".

Furthermore, the mining companies have been accused by local communities of polluting the environment in the localities where they conduct operations, subsequently endangering the lives of local people. In North Mara where Barrick has a mining site, the tailings dam is freely running into the pastures and fields, and the heavily contaminated waters from the processing plant adversely affect the local people by leaking into their water sources.

Large scale mining may even be depressing employment, according to some sources. A report authored by Tunde Lissu and Mark Curtin, *A Golden Opportunity*, found that large-scale mining had thrown around 400,000 small-scale miners out of work, while employing just 10,000 in the six major companies involved.

Within these companies, it has been found that employees' rights and treatment have been amongst the worst in the country. In October of last year, 1,370 workers for the Barrick Gold Corporation were sacked *en masse* for demanding that the company honour their rights to medical insurance and other benefits which are company policy in other countries, but not in the dangerous tunnels.

The concluding comment of the Bomani Commission's report says: "It is in the mining zones where locals have remained poor instead of being economically stable after the coming of foreign large scale mining companies."

Notes from the Unites States

◀ page 6

stamps (a form of welfare for the poorest sector of society) was expected to exceed 30 million for the first time ever. Food banks and the like are also reporting greater requests by those in need. In Washington DC, for instance, calls to the Capital Area Food Bank's hunger hotline have jumped by 250%.

One of the people likely (at press time) to be appointed by Obama is Arizona Governor Janet Napolitano; she would head the Department of Homeland Security. She is an advocate of harsh immigration 'control'; and an associate of one Joe Arpaio, Sheriff of of Maricopa County (Arizona). Arpaio is on record as saying "if we have to, we'll build jails from here down to Mexico to hold the immigrants you want to pick up".

Sued left and right for running prisons with female labour gangs and degrading and

brutalising prisoners with food and dress 'irregularities', he is well-known as a vicious reactionary. If Napolitano is appointed, it seems reasonable to expect federal policy in line with such an approach.

- Meanwhile in Maryland, new details were released of the extent to which state police spy on peace groups and anti-death penalty activists. In July, officials in Maryland were forced to admit that their agents infiltrated meetings and events of the Baltimore Pledge of Resistance and the Baltimore Coalition Against the Death Penalty. In November, Maryland's top police chief admitted that 53 non-violent activists, as well as several protest groups, were classified as terrorists and entered onto a federal database that tracks terrorism suspects.

Louis Further

French anarchists arrested

French police have arrested ten people who they allege to have been involved in the sabotage of high-speed rail lines going in and out of Paris.

Police moved in across three cities and have said the activities of the alleged conspirators include jamming steel rods across overhead power cables, forcing trains to stop while they blockage was cleared, and conspiring with German anti-nuclear activists over waste transports between the two countries. In the largest operation, 150 officers surrounded a village of 350 inhabitants on the Millevaches plateau before raiding a nearby farm.

Supporters of the arrested activists said: "The only possible conclusion to this shadowy affair is that those engaged in activism against the (in any case debatable) way social and economic problems are managed today are considered *ipso facto* as potential terrorists, when not even one act can justify this accusation".

Eating paradise: the story of The Grove

On sun-drenched Florianópolis, a battle for dignity is raging...

Behind the splendour of a Brazilian tourist idyll, working people are being abandoned to the encroaching sand dunes by an uncaring state.

The island resort of Florianópolis, state capital of Santa Catalina in Southern Brazil, is one of the country's hottest destinations for wealthy tourists, boasting historic and natural attractions which draw people from all over the world.

Yet just to the north of the island, nestled at the edge of its habitable area, next to the bronzed travellers' sand-surfing spots, internal migrants have been fighting a long and difficult battle against prejudice and indifference to try and save their homes and their lives from rising desert sands.

As in many other communities in the city, the 260 families that make up The Grove mostly arrived over the last few decades in search of a better life, which they thought they would find in Florianópolis. Many of its residents work as masons, janitors, nurses, among many other occupations.

As latecomers, and poor ones at that, they ended up living on the margins of the grand old city, making a life in the north until, in 1999, they found that respiratory sickness was beginning to afflict their children.

The danger came from the desert, which is inexorably claiming more and more land around them – 200 metres over the last eight years. Within the next decade, it will claim their shacks and huts, and if they have not found somewhere else to live they will be forced into the streets, a mass of new homeless to add to the legions of dispossessed across Brazil.



DESERT: The sand dunes, which are bearing down on the homes of The Grove.

They have been at the heart of Florianópolis's boom times, cleaning its streets, nursing its sick, building the huge mega-enterprises now spattered across the up-and-coming region.

Yet to the wealthy elites of the island, they remain an embarrassment, crouched in hovels under the shadow of shiny new apartment blocks. So when they began to ask for help, to be moved away from the dangerous sands which were hurting their children, from the shacks which at first seemed a gift and now were a trap, the mighty who had been happy to exploit their strength turned away in disgust.

They offered kind words, assurances that things would change, and yet for years nothing has happened, the offers have come to little more than a token payment to assuage their guilt.

The residents of Grove town have been at it for nearly a decade now, fighting to get the help they need despite the handicaps of a precarious legal position, few resources and continuous unthinking prejudice from their wealthy neighbours.

One resident said: "The community has been there some ten or fifteen years. We want good housing. We want a home, but there is no use because of our background – we come from other states. We are told to buy new places ourselves or 'go back home'. I thought a Brazilian citizen was one wherever they went, but they just offer us a little compensation, more than that they will not pay for.

"They say none of us has any land here. Each has his shed where he lives, but he does not own it, it is just the place where he lives. The homes are shacks.

"I work in construction, I have caught a job here, a job there. At a certain time of the season I will work at the beach. But this year, I am barred from working there. Why? We live in the dunes and have no proof of residence."



LUSH: Florianópolis has become one of the great resort cities of the Brazilian coast

For the last four years the governor's office has been promising new municipal housing will be built for them, yet residents of other areas have blocked them with planning objections, the mayor's office has put up bureaucratic obstacles and ferreted away the money for other projects.

The Grove resident said: "We're working on it, fighting for this, not by choice, but by necessity. I worked in the countryside, in the fields, was brought up in the fields. We were thrown out of work by new machines, and we had to come to the city. My father suffered much, we have always been poor. But we are fighting for dignity, for honesty. My whole life I have been honest and I will fight for it."

They are not without friends. The city has a shortage of some 36,000 homes and the costs of living on 'the island of magic' are very high.

Citing such figures, in April last year, the community's plight came into sharp focus in Brazil when militants from the National Union for Popular Housing symbolically

protection in exchange for their vote. Yet post-election, these promises came to nothing.

Faced with such lack of action, The Grove residents began to see that a solution could only emerge from within their community. In 2004 new representatives for the association of residents started seeking solutions, making a diagnosis from the socio-economic survey.

The community could not remain in place, so a request was put to the mayor, saying it would be a waste of public money to try and keep them there and putting up four experts to back their case.

The mayor had the money available to move them, and everyone was mobilised to search for a suitable area for their new homes. Several areas were looked at, but time and again residents in these wealthier areas put forward objections, tying the process up for weeks.

The funds were lost as the delays stretched out.

In 2005, the community was hit by another major blow, as a strong wind pushed sand from the dunes right over their houses, burying several. Panicked, and with no government support, some families finally gave in, packed up, and left.

Many residents lost hope. The association all but fell apart, and in 2006 further injury was added, in the form of a tornado which destroyed several more homes. With the aid of volunteer firefighters and civil defence teams, they rebuilt once more.

It was a terminal night for the residents' association, which finally collapsed. But they were not broken.

In July 2007, a new group was formed to represent the now 800-strong Grove, which aimed to change the way people saw them. Attending community meetings across the city, they have aimed to win the hearts and support of the people of Florianópolis.

In that first battle, they believe they have won.

An organiser for the current group said: "We said what we felt: that the community was not marginalized as everyone thought, that we had people working, fathers of families struggling every day, facing sun and rain in search of food for their children and deserving of respect.

"Transmitting this message was not easy, most of the meetings saw participants standing up to declare their bias against us. But with time we were conquering space and respect. Today, we are viewed with other eyes. We cannot have everyone but we won there.

"Now the next step is winning our homes, but we can only achieve this goal if we are very united. We are a population with about 800 people, we can do it!

"It's time to wake and stop being used by opportunists, who exploit the situation to profit from us and use us as they want. Let's turn the page, while we have dignity and strength to fight."

occupied the metal skeleton of a half-completed building owned by agriculture giant Encol.

With the help of social movements like the Federal Free Pass university student movement (UFSC), and leaders of communities like The Grove and Santa Rosa, the Union for Popular Housing denounced the neglect of public housing by the Florianópolis authorities.

However The Grove's fight has mostly depended on the community's own activity. The families have become more politically savvy as time has gone on, originally thinking that their rights under the Brazilian Constitution would be upheld before realising that it would not be that simple.

Initially, as it became clear that the houses were falling into disrepair and the dunes were moving closer, the residents began making inquiries of the local authorities. The response was quick. In 1998, they suffered denunciations as rich neighbours began to claim that not only were they not entitled to help, they were sitting in an area of conservation,

muddying the pristine landscape and hurting the environment.

They sent a letter to the director of the department of social development for the city, asking for help. In June of that year their request reached the ears of governor Paulo Afonso Vieira, in the form of a suggestion for their removal to an area on the nearby site of Charlbury.

The governor promised to take action. Yet as the year passed, none was taken. In April of 1999, some progress was made when the Municipal Department of Social Development carried out a socio-economic survey in the community.

Then nothing was heard for two years until, in December 2001, the socio-economic survey was dispatched by the then manager of housing 'for later forwarding'.

As this bureaucratic goose-chase continued, by 2003 the community had grown to 210 families. Suddenly as a cohesive community their vote had become worth courting. In that year, several candidates promised them

COMMENT

ABOUT FREEDOM

ANGEL ALLEY

Well here we are at the penultimate issue of the year! *Freedom* is (just about) continuing to survive as a fortnightly paper, albeit without much backup for the news part of it. If you're interested in writing news in, or getting in touch to volunteer, do so to the address below.

Meanwhile at the press, the stocktake is being done for the first time for a while and the newly revamped shop is now open. I have been reliably informed it looks good apart from a couple of wonky shelves, and with any luck there should be some new content coming in once the stocktake is finished. There's also an experiment with Sunday opening from 12 noon until 4pm – watch this space to see if it becomes a permanent feature.

On the subject of bookshops, Housman's, one of London's great leftie institutions, is in financial trouble as the credit crunch starts to bite, and is shouting out for some help. While *Freedom* is also always in need of your patronage, we're fans of the folk over there, so any help you can give would be welcomed.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Quite a lot of your subscriptions are up for renewal at this time of year, and it would really help us if you could renew early. If the four-digit number above your name on the address label starts with 69, then your sub is either due for renewal, or will be very soon. See page 16 for the subscription rates and renewal form or, if you don't want to worry in future about renewing your subscription to *Freedom*, ask us to send you a standing order form either by email at subs@freedompress.org.uk, or you can write to us at 'Subscriptions', Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

CONTACT DETAILS

Freedom Press, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX
Tel/fax: 020 7247 9249

www.freedompress.org.uk

Enquiries: info@freedompress.org.uk

Copy/Letters: copy@freedompress.org.uk

Subscriptions: subs@freedompress.org.uk

Bookshop: shop@freedompress.org.uk

Freedom Press Distribution (books):
distro@freedompress.org.uk

NEXT ISSUE

The next issue will be a double issue dated 20th December 2008 and the last day to get copy to us for that issue will be Thursday 11th December. You can send your articles to us by email to copy@freedompress.org.uk or by post addressed to 'The Editors', Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

A sideways look

by SVARTFROSK

Much column ink has already been spilled in the tragic case of Baby P, the child killed by his mother, her cruelty-obsessed boyfriend and a sadistic fascist called Jason Owen. While adults kill children all the time, this case is particularly notorious because of the brutality involved and the fact that the social services knew the boy was at risk.

The boyfriend had a history of extreme cruelty to animals; he was described in court as "fascinated with pain" and he collected knives and SS and Nazi memorabilia. He can't be named, though I found his name, and the mother's, easily enough in a quick trawl of the internet. The lodger Owen was a member of the NF.

Social services had visited, along with other agencies such as the police and health service, sixty times in the child's short life. They failed to take him into care, a doctor failed to spot his broken spine, in all there was a trail of mistakes and errors that led to the adults in his home being able to kill him. What makes it worse is that the council concerned is Haringey, where Victoria Climbié was killed eight years ago. An Enquiry was set up after her murder, and junior social workers sacked or disciplined. Presumably there will be another enquiry, though so far no one has been sacked.

However, this won't continue, as there is enormous pressure on the government and the council that someone responsible be held to account. A particular hate figure has emerged in the person of Sharon Shoesmith, Haringey's Director of Social Services, who has defended her service and pointed to

statistics and pie charts to back it up. Haringey increased pay for social workers after the Climbié Enquiry identified its vacancy rate (approaching 40% at the time) as a contributory factor in her death. However, social services is always the most stressed part of any council and cuts followed a few years later. It's been reported that the vacancy rate was back up to one in four – the chief reasons for that have to be the stress involved rather than the money. And with the bile being directed at them again from the media, it's fair to ask: who would be a social worker?

One thing to ask is why no one who wasn't professionally involved didn't do anything? His father said that the mother conspired to hide what was going on, and the one time he tried to keep the child, she called the police and he had to give him back. But were they hiding what was going on from everyone?

It's easy in these cases to blame social workers for not taking kids into care; but there are plenty of other occasions when people scream about them being over-zealous in doing so. It strikes me that this is similar to the police function in society. By delegating that function to a professional body, we are absolved as a whole from any responsibility. By doing the same with children at risk, we can blame social services and not think about our own actions. How many of us would stand up to adults treating kids like dirt? And how many kids who are being treated like dirt would trust their plight to any adult, professional or not?

Blog Bites

(from ianbone.wordpress.com)

9th November

Anyone who's read Nick Davies excellent book *Flat Earth News* will recognise today's *Observer* piece by Nick Denning and Mark Townsend for exactly what it is – a knowing conduit for police disinformation from NECTU.* The piece talks of plans by Earth First/The ELF to reduce the human population of the world by 80% by terrorism! Oh my aching sides. NECTU desperately talking up Earth First to justify future funding has found two more willing *Observer* patsies – David Rose school of state agency – to feed a total load of risible bollocks too.

10th November

Curiouser and curiouser ... I'm checking for Nick Denning. He doesn't appear to have any previous as a journalist. But what's this? A piece written by Townsend in Afghanistan in August 2007 where he's embedded with the Royal Anglian Regiment in Sangin ... and sharing a helicopter ride with Nick Denning – Commander of 1 Platoon A Company in the Royal Anglian regiment!

And less than a year later this Denning is providing intelligence to his mate on *The Guardian* on eco-terrorism! Some explanations from the *Guardian* required on this one methinks!

11th November

Responding to my simple request as to how the *Observer* was employing non-journalist Lieutenant Nick Denning of the Royal Anglian Regiment to write pieces on eco-terrorism alongside their 'environmental journalist of the year' the *Observer* finally puts up senior journalist and 'security expert' David Rose to reply ... "God, Bone, you're a cunt" he says.

The *Observer's* 'left of centre' leanings have made it the principal source of state disinformation through willing patsies like Rose who, unaccountably, remains on the payroll masquerading as a journalist. Let's ask again. Why is the *Observer* employing an army intelligence officer to write mendacious pieces on eco-terrorism?

Private profits social losses

As the world financial/economic system convulses into meltdown, the resulting Shockwaves will no doubt be felt far and wide for many a year to come. With the free-market dream having been well and truly brought crashing to its knees, on both sides of the Atlantic astronomical sums of public money are being lined-up to fund what could become the biggest bail-out in history.

The roots of the present credit crunch lie in the greed of the US sub-prime mortgage companies, who knowingly sold mortgages to those on low incomes with poor credit ratings, in the hope of cashing in big style with heavily-inflated interest rates. Then, rather than holding debts and collecting interest payments themselves, many banks then sold them on as bonds. Other institutions took out insurance on the value of these bonds in the form of 'credit default swaps'.

When it became clear that large numbers of lenders were defaulting on their repayments, the speculative cash that many mortgage companies relied on dried up as house prices – used as security for loans – nosedived. Multi-million payments were demanded from insurers from those holding debt-bonds. The net result of the subsequent domino effect is the recession and the knock-on effects will continue to rumble on.

The retracting economy will be further weakened because banks are (understandably) now far less willing to give credit to customers, meaning less investment in industry and less spending on consumer goods.

In the wake of this turmoil, some banks have collapsed, others absorbed by bigger fish. Some hedge-fund managers notoriously exploited the situation, making millions by 'short-selling'. Meanwhile the Bush/Brown juntas both announced their intent to spend millions of taxpayers' money on buying up

Blog bites

◀ page 10

23rd November

The *Observer* has unreservedly withdrawn its eco-terrorism story written by Nick Denning and Mark Townsend two weeks ago. I am fucking chuffed as fuck!

This is a severe blow to Townsend and his security service mentor at the *Observer* David Rose, and a humiliation for the newspaper. Who's a cunt now Rose? It also shows what a bit of proper investigative journalism can achieve. Congratulations to everyone who engaged in a collective fight to get this dross withdrawn. NECTU – Go fuck yourselves! The *Observer* – your boys have taken a helluva beating! Excuse me while I dance a jig!

• The National Extremism Tactical Coordination Unit

toxic debt in a desperate bid to keep shareholders happy and the ailing economy afloat. The actions of the Brown, Bush and their cronies, amount to nothing more than protecting the interests of their friends in the City and on Wall Street – whose very greed contributed to the recession in the first place.

The current economic downturn is just another in a long cycle of many, and further evidence of the injustice and failure of capitalism. In recent times, the confluence of burgeoning speculation (which now massively outweighs Year investment capital), easy credit and unfettered neo-liberalism have compounded the perennial crisis in profitability that has historically afflicted the global economy. For years we have been told, in the words of Madame Thatcher, "the business of government is not the government of business". But here we see, left right and centre, the wholesale nationalisation of much of the banking sector. Lest anyone be fooled that this is the first step on the road to socialism, in effect all the world's two foremost pro-market governments have done is privatised profits and socialised losses.

Again, the spiralling cost of the latest recession – in the form of rising prices, unemployment, public service cuts, pay cuts and increased taxation – will be borne by ordinary people.

More than ever, the impending attacks on our living standards underline the need for solidarity and mass collective action. In the long term, these tactics can also enable us to develop the confidence to transcend both the corruption of the state and the chaos of the market, and consign them to the annals of history where they so rightly belong.

D.H.

Benefitting no-one

Having been a male single parent, I believe I'm right in saying the child/children of single parents receive universal child allowance and if the parent is unemployed, income support, which is slightly higher than jobseeker's allowance.

The may also receive housing benefits, so that their state benefits amount to over £200 per week where there is only one child. To remove the pressure, more benefit could be given.

However under Gordon Brown's New Labour 'workhouse' regime the single parent is now expected to find work and this expectation can amount to coercion for some. To facilitate this, considerable expense is required, not just from a coercive bureaucracy but from the cost of child care which could amount to over £200 per week and may require government subsidies.

What has happened to the middle class concept of looking after the house as a job – we also know that the workhouse/grad-grind mentality of New Labour extends to the disabled and the excessive exam load on children and teachers.

New Labour's wars increased bureaucracy and PFI scheme are creating financial black

holes. Face-to-face involvement with the bureaucracy is limited to the coercive job centre. To gain justice with the CSA, tax credit and pension credit, a massive burden is placed on the voluntary sector and Citizens' Advice Bureaus.

Many of those facing poverty will also be on high rate-metered electricity. They will also find problems with housing benefit frequently occurring, as well as with council tax, water bills, requiring considerable time and effort to fix. They will be forced to buy the cheapest food, and drinks containing additives.

New Labour's treadmill policies towards the deprived are worthy of a modern Dickens. If you haven't read it, try *Hard Times*.

The fact is that under British capitalism even those who can find work from the poverty trap are still having to be subsidised from state benefits. It doesn't pay to work in Britain today!

There is a crisis facing our society from the sink scheme halls to the burgeoning prisons, overworked courts and low incomes, pensions and social insecurity extending to the previously secure elements within the middle class. It can only get worse.

'Scotland'

Failure to recognise limits to growth

'Global warming' and environmental catastrophes like tsunamis, hurricanes and flash flooding is a by-product of capitalism. Capitalism has embraced a wrong idea that there are no limits to growth even though capitalism is a philosophical idea operating in a finite world?

There is/are limits to growth, this is a proven fact and therefore capitalism is on a one-way road to ultimate failure or destruction increasingly apparent in the examples of global warming.

Capitalism's avoidance mechanisms like the use of warfare for example are also evidence of failure of a social doctrine or philosophical idea, i.e. capitalism. As are other more fascistic avoidance mechanisms suggested by capitalism. Anarchism as a doctrine has been erroneously likened to capitalism by 'some' when in fact it is an exceptionally different philosophical idea – which embraces the notion of finite resources.

C.A.

FREEDOM BOOKSHOP
84B WHITECHAPEL HIGH STREET
LONDON E1 7QX
TEL/FAX 020 7247 9249

OPEN MONDAY TO SATURDAY
FROM 12 NOON UNTIL 6PM

IF YOU CAN'T GET TO THE SHOP, WHY NOT USE OUR MAIL ORDER SERVICE OR ORDER BOOKS VIA OUR WEBSITE

WWW.FREEDOMPRESS.ORG.UK

GETTING ACTIVE

PRISON NEWS

Aleksey Bychin remanded
Aleksey Bychin is still waiting court in St Petersburg remand prison in Russia, accused of attacking a known fascist policeman last June. Court has been postponed, and this is a difficult time for him, and supporters are asking for letters of encouragement to be sent.

• Aleksey Bychin, SIZO 47/2, ul. Akademika Lebedeva, dom. 39, 195005 St Peterburg, Russia

Kazan needs a lawyer

On the 12th October a confrontation between Nazis and anarchist anti-fascists took place in Kazan. The Kazan anarchists said: "At around 6pm two antifascists were hanging at the 'Koltso' mall. They were suddenly approached and menaced by 12 nazi boneheads. After a short conversation the Antifa guys stood up and left the mall. They moved about 500 meters away from the mall to a park, where they were confronted with the same boneheads and fascists from the mall. After the confrontation the fascists remained lying on the ground. Eventually one nazi was hospitalised with his lung and liver pierced. One of Antifa guys has been caught by cops. Now he is remanded.

"We really need your help. We are the antifascists of Kazan and we're trying to gather a sum of money sufficient to hire a proper lawyer. Support the efforts of your comrades!"

You may donate through ABC-Moscow. They can be reached at avtonom.org/index.php?nid=1912. ABC-Moscow request notification if you make a donation: abc-msk@riseup.net

Fears over Aleksey

Aleksey Olesinov been held incommunicado by authorities. As *Freedom* goes to press, his lawyer, Stanislav Markelov, has still not been allowed to meet with him. His health and conditions in which he is kept are not known. Friends of Olesinov are certain he is being persecuted due to participation to anti-fascist activities.

Aleksey was arrested 6th November, and accused of 'hooliganism'. Although he has never before faced criminal charges, he was remanded. The formal pretext for arrest is a fight which took place 30th August at a Moscow club. Nobody was wounded but Aleksey was arrested that same night close to the club, but police did not press even misdemeanor charges. For reasons that are unclear, Aleksey's case is tied up with two felony investigations, including the murder case of anti-fascist activist Fyodor Filatov – possibly an attempt by police to hide the fact that investigations are going nowhere by arresting an anti-fascist activist.

Anti-fascists in the area are demanding that Aleksey be granted access to lawyer, and that the murder of Fyodor Filatov be withdrawn from the case.

Contact telephone: +7-985-997-05-24

Moscow ABC contact and donation details, as above.



● On the weekend of 8th and 9th November a gathering of No Borders activists was held in Newcastle with groups and individuals from Brighton, Bristol, South Wales, London, Oxford, Manchester, Leeds, Newcastle, Edinburgh and Glasgow taking part.

Saturday began with report backs from local groups. Opposition against ID cards and the IOM (International Organisation for Migration), and actions against deportation airlines and immigration snatch squads, are as much part of the No Borders agenda as solidarity with detainees, deportees and migrant workers.

The international dimension of the network was stressed when people told of large-scale blockades of a detention centre in Belgium, of Hamburg airport to stop deportations, and of the attempt to dismantle a detention centre in Denmark. People felt it is increasingly important to continue developing info and action-sharing networks with people across Europe and elsewhere. UK No Borders activists are making connections with campaigners in Northern France to highlight the situation of hundreds of refugees trapped in Calais.

Discussions also developed around the idea of organising a bigger No Borders event in the future that would include actions and info-sharing.

On Sunday, the need to develop No Borders politics was stressed in a discussion on 'who are our allies'. At a local level, whilst working on some issues in coalition with groups and organisations that differ in character, No Borders has a firmly anti-capitalist and anti-authoritarian stance.

www.noborders.org.uk

● There was a spirited, 25-strong march through Bath city centre on 22nd November against bank bail outs and cuts due to the financial crisis (pictured above). Protesters with red and black flags followed the banner 'Bankers, Politicians, Fat Cats: We Won't Pay for their Crisis. Capitalism is War on the Poor'. There was a picket and leafleting outside the National Westminster and Lloyds banks in Milsom Street before the procession moved on to the Guildhall. The marchers called for direct action and community solidarity in the face of rising prices, repossessions and unemployment.

myspace.com/bathactivistnetwork

● Corporate Watch has just launched a new report, *Technofixes: A Critical Guide to Climate Change Technologies*. It investigates the large scale technologies that corporations and governments are putting on the table, including hydrogen, agrofuels, carbon capture, biomass, electricity from nuclear, solar, wind and water, as well as a range of ideas to reflect the sun's energy or remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

Order a paper copy from babyloniantimes.co.uk/07/supportframeset.html. or download from corporatewatch.org.uk/?lid=3126.

● Agitational newspaper *Class War* will be published monthly from February 2009, in new A3 four-page format intended to give it more of a newspaper feel than is allowed by twice-yearly production.

The group hopes that the new format will allow it to quickly grow sales as it is more timely and relevant to changing events.

Cornelius Castoriadis

A short account of the life and politics of Greek libertarian socialist Cornelius Castoriadis

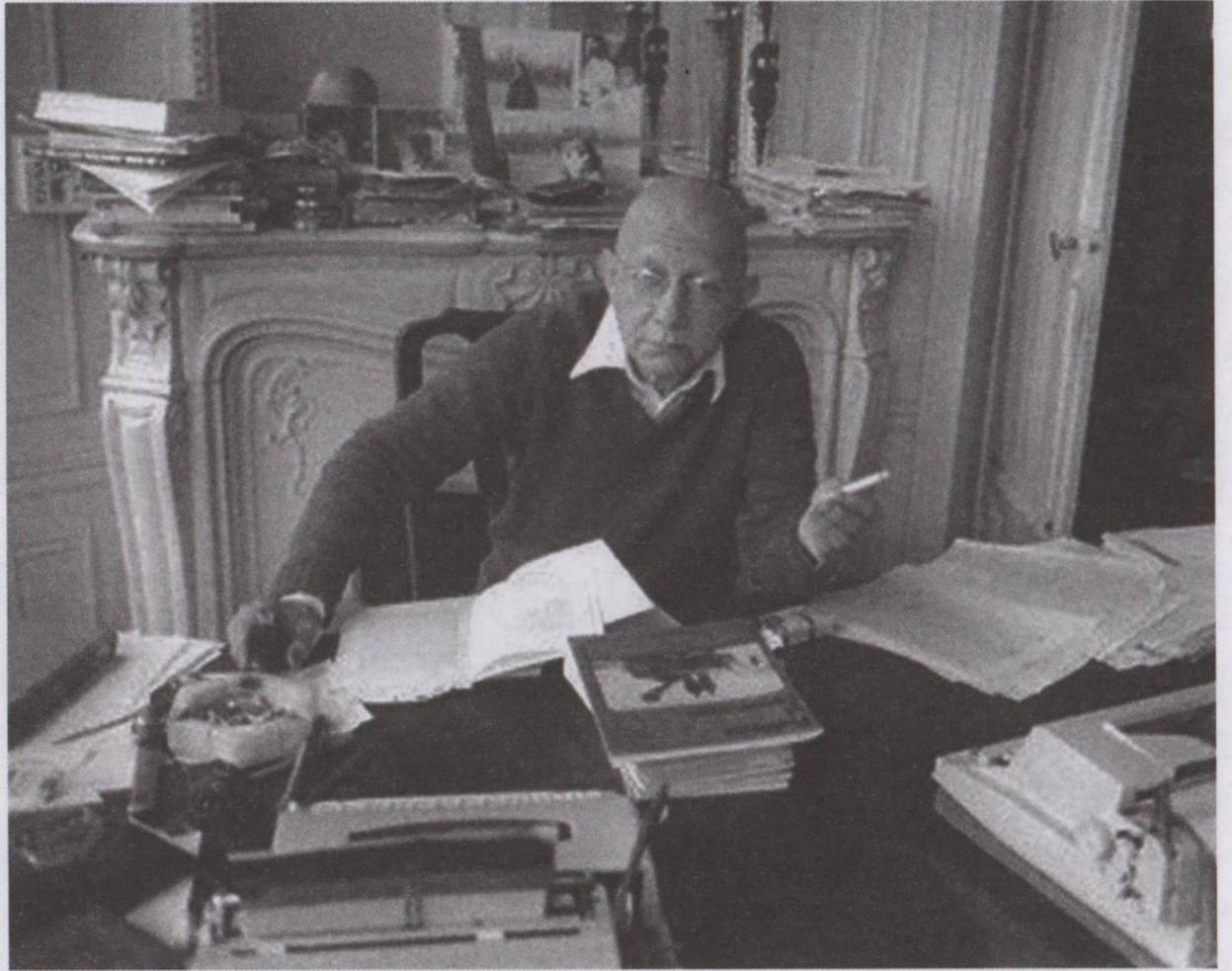
Cornelius Castoriadis was born in Istanbul to a Greek family. His family moved soon after to Athens where Castoriadis would spend his childhood. He developed an interest in politics after coming into contact with Marxist philosophy at the age of 13. His first active involvement in politics occurred during the Metaxas regime (1937), when he joined the Athenian Communist Youth (Kommounistike Neolaia). In 1941 he joined the Communist Party (KKE) only to leave one year later in order to become an active Trotskyist.

Castoriadis' involvement in Trotskyist circles resulted in his persecution by both the Germans and the Communist Party. In 1944 he wrote his first essays on social science and Max Weber, which he published in a magazine named *Archive of Sociology and Ethics* (*Archeion Koinoniologias kai Ethikes*). During the violent episodes between ELAS and the Athenian people against the British troops and the Papandreou government in December 1944, Castoriadis heavily criticised the actions of the KKE. At the end of the war, by which time he had earned degrees in political science, economics and law from the University of Athens, he was physically threatened by both fascists and Stalinists, forcing him to leave for France, where he remained permanently, to continue his studies under a scholarship offered by the French Institute in Paris.

Here Castoriadis joined the French section of the Trotskyist Fourth International, but broke with it in 1948. Along with Lefort and Lyotard, he helped set up the *Socialisme ou Barbarie* group, initially made up of ex-Trotskyists and ex-Bordigists, often writing in its paper of the same name under the pen names of Pierre Chaulieu or Paul Cardan.

Shortly afterwards Castoriadis broke with Leninism, believing that the revolution could be made only by the workers themselves, not by the party, through the establishment of workers' councils in the early stages of the revolution. He did think that some form of revolutionary organisation would be essential, uniting the revolutionary forces, and that once the revolution began, the revolutionary organisation would have to fight inside the organisation of councils to stop possible Leninist takeovers. Similar ideas are expressed by anarchist-communists.

In the first issue of *Socialisme ou Barbarie*, the group denounced the Trotskyist characterisation of the Soviet Union as a "degenerate workers' state". They developed this in Nos 2 and 4, applying a Marxist critique to the



Soviet Union itself, saying that the Party bureaucracy had collectively taken over the means of production and surplus of labour. By 1960 they were saying that the fundamental contradiction of capitalism, defined as the need to reduce workers to simple order-takers opens a crisis which touches every aspect of life. From 1964, in No 36 up to the last issue of the paper, Castoriadis definitively broke with Marxism.

The *Socialisme ou Barbarie* group exerted their influence outside France with *Correspondence* in the USA, *Unita Proletaria* in Italy, and the *Solidarity* group in this country. Indeed, *Solidarity* published many works by Castoriadis under the name of Cardan, and he influenced many libertarian socialists and anarchists. The influence of the group was apparent also in May 1968 in France, even though the *Socialisme ou Barbarie* group had dissolved two years before. As D. Blanchard, a former member wrote in *Courant Alternatif*, paper of the *Organisation Communiste Libertaire*: "The activity of the group was not limited either to a critique of Stalinism or the publication of a review. On the theoretical level, the analysis of the bureaucratic phenomenon in Eastern Europe found its echo in that of the bureaucratisation of workers organisations – unions, parties – and in the bureaucratisation of the vital organs of capitalism, the State, business corporations. To this study largely contributed ... the daily experience of comrades in the workplaces. Finally, very consciously, we were preoccupied with enlarging the field of political analysis in

extending it, as had already been done by the workers movement in its most fertile moments, to the situation of women, of youth, the content of work, education, urbanism, leisure, consumerism, cinema etc."

In his last period, Castoriadis directed himself towards philosophical investigations, to psychoanalysis. During this time, his lack of knowledge of current social events and movements led him towards a tentative defence of the west – because struggle still remained possible within it – against Stalinist imperialism.

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union Castoriadis revised his ideas, returning to a critique of market capitalism and globalisation. However, whilst he was full of sarcasm for the bosses and the madness of the system, there was a distinct streak of superficial sociology in his writings. When asked whether the work abandoned by *Socialisme ou Barbarie* should be taken up again, he replied that, in the absence of a social movement that took on the critique of capitalism in its most modern forms, this was not possible!

The best of Castoriadis' thought arguably lies in his radical libertarian vision, which puts at the centre of a critique of capitalism not economic laws or a fatal contradiction leading to its collapse, but the action of people attempting to take back their lives at every level. As he himself said, "Revolution does not mean torrents of blood, the taking of the Winter Palace, and so on. Revolution means a radical transformation of society's institutions. In this sense, I certainly am a revolutionary".

Anarchist Federation

REVIEWS

WHAT'S ON

DECEMBER

6th National Climate March, part of the Global Day of Climate Protest halfway through the UN Climate Talks in Poznan, an important chance to influence decision makers before the Copenhagen talks in 2009 – assemble Grosvenor Square, London W1 at 12 noon, for details call 020 7833 9311 or see www.campaigncc.org

6th Climate Camp Cymru 2009, following the success of the camps at Drax, Heathrow and Kingsnorth, so is it time for an event in Wales? Come along and help us decide what it should be, Glyndur University, Room B33, Wreccsam, from 1pm until 5pm, call 07886 719 873 or subscribe to wreccsam@lists.riseup.net for more.

6th Glasgow Radical Independent Bookfair from 12 noon until 8pm at STUC, Woodlands Road, Glasgow, with launch of *Anarchist FAQ* by Iain McKay from 4pm until 5.30pm.

7th No Sweat Annual Gathering 2008, looking at issues around sweatshops and the exploitation of cheap foreign labour and featuring Mark Thomas exposing the truth about Coca Cola, plus workshops, films and much more, all at Queen Mary, University of London, Mile End Road, London, E1 4NS, from 10.30am until 5.30pm, £6/£4 (concs), call 07904431959 or see nosweat.org.uk.

7th 'The Biggest Mistakes in Modern Cell Biology' by Dr Harold Hillman at 11am and 'On Human Rights' by Mazin Zeki at 3pm, talks presented by South Place Ethical Society (SPES) at Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL.

10th Socialist History Society with South Place Ethical Society, public meeting with Professor Thomas Corns on Milton's Radicalism, a talk to mark the 400th anniversary of John Milton's birth, at Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London WC1 at 7pm, email spesevents@yahoo.co.uk, call 020 7242 8031 or see socialhistory.co.uk for more.

17th London launch of Iain McKay's *Anarchist FAQ* at Housmans Bookshop, 5 Caledonian Road, London N1 9DX, from 7pm, see housmans.com for more.

FREEDOM PARTY

SATURDAY
13TH DECEMBER
FROM 7PM

FILM

The Baader Meinhof Complex

directed by Uli Edel

Uli Edel's return to European cinema gives an impressively even-handed visualisation of ten years of escalating bank raids, bombings and assassinations of the West German ruling classes by the Red Army Fraction (RAF), until the founding members' deaths at Stammheim prison in 1977. Producer/screenwriter Bernd Eichinger whittles down Stefan Aust's 1985 factual account – flirting with action-thriller glamour and 'radical chic' (e.g. 'Prada Meinhof' high-fashion and other pop trivia) but avoiding the historical dishonesty of high-profile German revisionisms like *Goodbye Lenin*, *The Lives of Others* and *Downfall*. So, besides Oedipus and military-industrial connotations, 'complex' mainly implies 'complexity' – both in the wider phenomenon of the era's Western urban guerillas, and the personal nuances of leadership, inspiration and motivation in non-hierarchical affinity groups. The admittedly futile and deluded armed struggle in this case nonetheless required a discipline which was consistently eroded by nihilistic impulsiveness and gross ideological stupidity amid a Maoist, Marxist-Leninist and (purportedly) anarchist mish-mash. But while the individuals were fatally flawed (aren't we all?), they're clearly only meaningful collectively. Thus Andreas Baader's regressive macho narcissism and resourceful charismatic panache contrast with Ulrike Meinhof's conflicted empathetic seriousness and Gudrun Ensslin's reckless determined passion – all inexorably shading via progressive isolation and adversity into paranoia, cruelty and depression.

Propaganda of the Oedipal deed

Unlike with the Weather Underground and SLA (USA), Direct Action (Canada), Angry Brigade (UK), Action Directe (France) or Red Brigades (Italy), numerous films have covered the RAF – who enjoyed widespread domestic sympathy – most, however, employing decidedly philosophical approaches. Their arthouse intellectualism misses the visceral populist appeal to disaffected middle-class youth, awoken from stultifying post-war conformism by the 1960s counterculture yet



enraged by imperialist carnages abroad, especially in Vietnam. Meanwhile, consumerist saturation at home complemented bureaucratic banality and brutality, with dissent suppressed and moderate liberal-lefties and revolutionary firebrands murdered alike. Conversely, perhaps only the complacency born of aspiring families and affluent backgrounds could have inculcated the grandiose arrogance of these specific class fractions imagining their gestures could kickstart changing the world.

Moreover, their revulsion at their parents' apathy had special resonance in Germany, where 'denazification' mostly entailed a disavowed rehabilitation. So Ensslin (the real driving force of the first generation RAF – and note how many strong young women led these units) berates her liberal pastor father's inability to act in the face of injustice. Yet her parents comprehend – and even appreciate and identify with – the liberation afforded her by wholesale rejection, through action, of their failed moral codes. Throughout the film, an almost documentarian focus on the physical reality of violence is peppered with such telling moments – cumulatively suggesting the utter bankruptcy both of mainstream institutions and their erstwhile implacable post-hippie antithesis. That the most sympathetic character is the social-democrat counter-terrorism police chief – fretting about 'understanding' the terrorists while prototyping sophisticated surveillance networks designed to trump repressive tactics – speaks volumes about *The Baader Meinhof Complex's* success in raising so many appropriate, and timely, questions while refusing pat answers or naff judgements either way.

www.tomjennings.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk

QUIZ ANSWERS

1. Malaysia. Apparently, its Hindu elements may corrupt Muslims. Previous fatwas from Malaysia's religious scholars have included a ban on the use of the word 'Allah' by non-Muslims and a ban on tomboys.
2. The Channel Island of Sark, where the first elections will be held in December 2008.
3. Yamoussoukro, the capital of Ivory Coast. The town was designated capital as the birthplace of the first president of the country, Félix Houphouët-Boigny. As

befits a president-for-life, friend of the west, etc., he wanted it built to aggrandise his memory. In the catholic basilica there is a stained glass window showing him as one of the magi at Jesus' feet.

4. A hospital. When Pope John Paul II agreed to consecrate the basilica, he insisted that a hospital be built there as well. The pope laid the foundation stone, but it stands there, all alone in a field, while other vital buildings are put up in the city, such as the Senate, even though the country doesn't have any senators.

Disaster capitalism

Naomi Klein is one of the iconic figures of the anti-globalisation movement. Along with Susan George and George Monbiot she is a harsh critic of neo-liberal free-market capitalism. Widely acclaimed as a radical journalist, Klein's book *No Logo* was a wonderful exposé of consumer capitalism. It highlighted especially the devious politics of brand names and the machinations of multinational corporations like Wal-Mart, Nike, Shell, McDonalds and Microsoft. Impassioned, impressive, enlightening, full of facts and arguments, *No Logo* was described as the 'Bible' of anti-corporate militants, and Klein herself viewed as a young funky radical, a worthy successor to Noam Chomsky.

Naomi Klein's most recent book *The Shock Doctrine* continues her assault on free market capitalism. Written with the same verve, it is equally readable and informative, completely free of academic jargon. Even so, it is well researched, as Klein, like many contemporary academics, seems to have had a team of researchers working diligently on her behalf. Whereas *No Logo* was focused on brand names, this present book is focused on disasters, whether natural (like hurricane Katrina or the tsunami, pictured right) or the economic crises deliberately induced by the crusaders for the free-market. What she argues is that such disasters or the economic 'shock therapy' advocated by the World Bank or the IMF have been events that have always heralded an expansion of free-market capitalism. For example, after the tsunami disaster in Sri Lanka, in which around 35,000 people lost their lives, and nearly a million were displaced from their homes, the cleared beaches have been reclaimed not by local fishing communities but by the tourist industry. The beaches have essentially been privatised to cater for the expanding leisure needs of a rich overseas clientele. Likewise, the war in Iraq – a different kind of disaster – has essentially led to American companies appropriating Iraqi oil.

The central figure in Naomi Klein's chronicle of free-market capitalism is the economist Milton Friedman. Surprisingly, she makes no



mention of Ayn Rand, who inspired both Margaret Thatcher and the young Alan Greenspan, whom Klein describes as probably the most powerful economic policy maker in the world today (page 268). Both Friedman and Ayn Rand shared a common vision, a vision that has literally become an economic reality since Friedman wrote *Capitalism and Freedom* way back in 1962.

According to Klein the main tenets of the fundamentalist version of capitalism are the following: a minimal state and the deregulation of the economy, freeing capitalists from state control; the privatization of all aspects of social life, bringing health care, education, retirement pensions, communication networks and the postal services within the capitalist system as sources of profit; and, finally, the cutting back on all social welfare programmes. Through the IMF and the World Bank this vision of free-market capitalism has been implemented throughout the world with devastating consequences. For example, Klein indicates the intimate links between Milton Friedman and his Chicago School of free-market economists and the Latin American dictatorships of the 1970s. Thus, when applied to the real world, Friedman's vision led not to democracy but to increasing social inequalities, to dictatorships and to the murder and torture of tens of thousands of

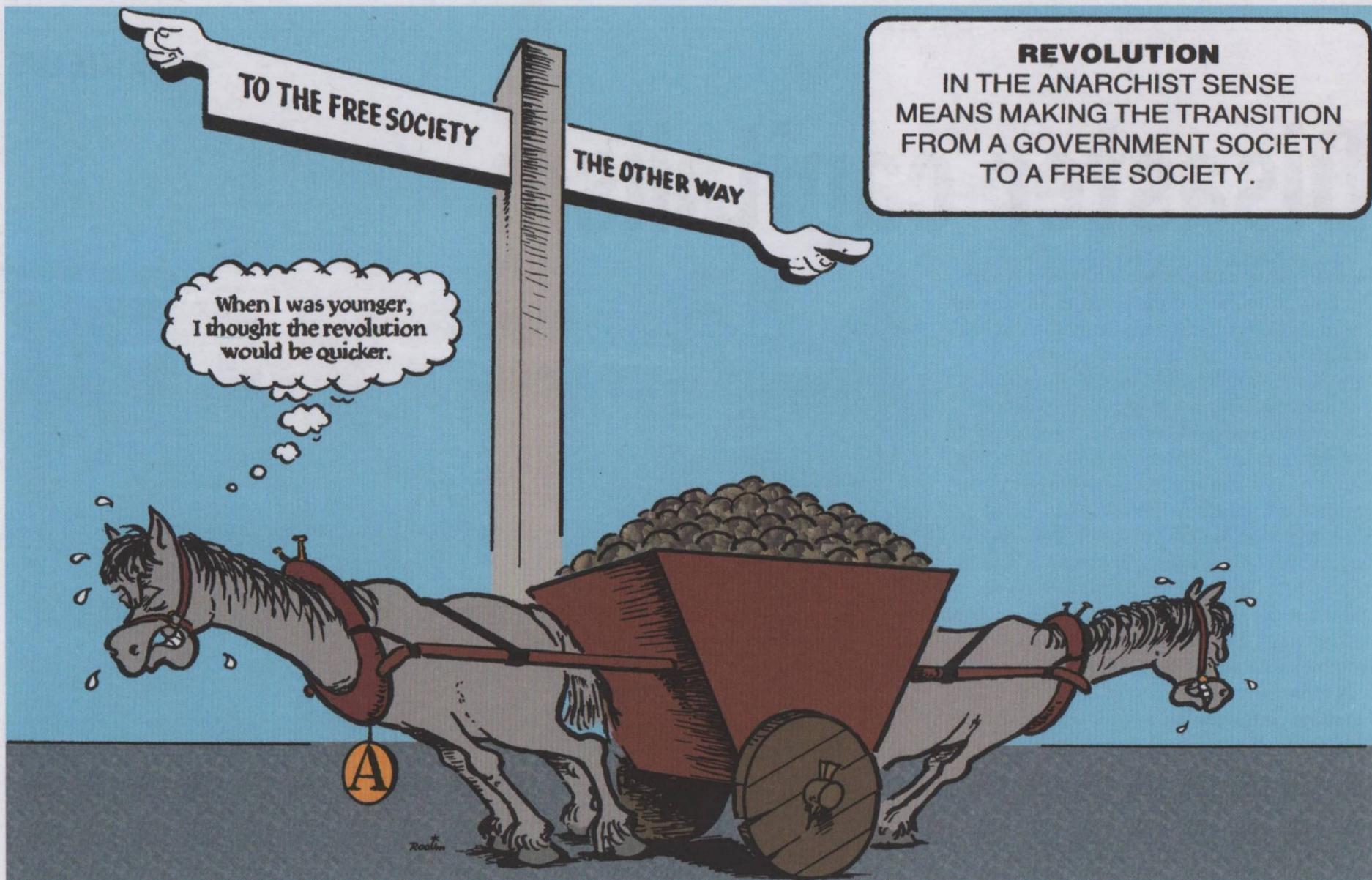
people in what amounted to a form of political genocide (page 102). Klein also writes insightfully on how 'disaster capitalism', as she describes it, is being implemented in China and Russia.

Klein's main thesis is thus that authoritarian conditions are required for the implementation of free-market capitalism, and that what has emerged in recent years – particularly in the United States – is an unholy alliance between the state and big business. This she describes as a 'corporatist' system. None of this will be news to anarchists. Indeed the radical sociologist C. Wright Mills some fifty years ago was describing the American political system as entailing a cohesive 'power elite'. Kropotkin and other class struggle anarchists long ago emphasised, of course, the symbiotic relationship between capitalism and state power.

Naomi Klein's book provides a very useful and impassioned critique of free-market capitalism. But like George Monbiot and other anti-globalisation protestors, she is not in fact 'anti-capitalist'! Thus to equate anarchism with the anti-globalisation movement, as do many academics, is quite misleading. For what Klein yearns for is a 'decent' form of capitalism, one which allows a mixed economy of the Keynesian variety, and a 'benign' state which serves not capitalist

page 16 ►►





Review

◀ page 15

interests but the general good, and requires corporations to pay decent wages, that respects workers' rights to form trade unions, and which provides public health care, state schooling and basic social security for all members of society. Unfortunately for Klein no such 'decent' capitalism or benign state has ever existed. Her book clearly illustrates in fact the real nature of capitalism. For capitalism, in essence, is an exploitative system, and always has been; it is a form of economic domination, completely undemocratic, and is throughout the world ravaging the environment in the pursuit of profit. Klein has nothing to say on the ecological impact of capitalism; but it is, as Joel Kovel argued, the

enemy of nature. Likewise, no state has ever existed whose *raison d'être* is the welfare and well being of its citizens: its function has always been to uphold systems of inequality and exploitation, or as the old liberal Adam Smith put it, the state is instituted for the defence of the rich against the poor, for those who have property against those who have none. Indeed Kropotkin long ago argued that capitalism would cease to exist without state support, or in the present context, without also private security firms.

Thus, despite her radical rhetoric, as well as providing us with a valuable critique of free-market capitalism, Naomi Klein remains at heart – like George Monbiot and a host of other radicals – just an old fashioned Keynesian liberal with socialist aspirations.

Brian Morris

Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, Penguin, paperback, £8.99. (Note: references to page numbers in text from Allen Lane edition)

THE QUIZ

1. Where has there been a fatwa against yoga?
2. Which British territory is about to embrace democracy and leave feudalism behind?
3. Where is the largest church in the world and why is it there?
4. What wasn't built alongside the largest church?

Answers on page 14

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

	inland	Europe	outside Europe (surface)	outside Europe (airmail)
Freedom (24 issues) half price for 12 issues				
Claimants	16.00	–	–	–
Regular	20.00	29.00	29.00	41.00
Institutions	28.00	36.00	36.00	46.00
Supporter	48.00	60.00	60.00	72.00

Get in touch with us for details of bundle rates. Note that we have a new 'supporter' sub rate. You can also use the Standing Order form to ensure that your subscription always gets paid on time, or if you want to make a regular donation to *Freedom*. All prices are in £ sterling.

You can also subscribe online at www.freedompress.org.uk

FREEDOM fortnightly ISSN 0016 0504

✂

Please return completed form to: Freedom Subscriptions, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX

Please start a NEW subscription / RENEW my subscription to Freedom (to avoid errors, please circle required subscription rate, see right)

I enclose a donation

I'd like to pay by Standing Order, please send me details

I enclose £ payment (cheques payable to Freedom Press please)

Name

Address

.....

..... Postcode