

# resistance

anarchist bulletin

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## CAMPAIGNERS SAVE LIBRARY

**EAST LONDON'S WORKING CLASS has moved one step closer to taking control of their community after defeating Tower Hamlets council's opportunistic bid to flog Bancroft Library.**

The historic record and archive library, open to all, was saved by a coalition of no fewer than 35 east London local groups, including the Ocean Estate Tenants and Leaseholders Association and East of London Family History Society.

The Library was due to be sold to Queen Mary University of London. If the sale proceeded as planned, the historic working class library would have been converted into a post-graduate research centre. Queen Mary University would have had the 'choice cut' of the archive, with the rest being reunited at some arbitrary point in the future in an undetermined venue; in other words, not gonna happen!

Bancroft Library has played a pivotal role in recording the extraordinary history of east London. The local history library holds over

20,000 printed books and pamphlets dating from the 17th century to the present day. Recording the resistance of working people against feudal lords and even royalty, the library holds records on the peasant revolt 'led' by Wat Tyler in 1381 ending at east London's Mile End, accounts of the birth of the industrial working class and events leading to the 1936 battle of Cable Street, when local working class folk defeated Oswald Mosley's attempt to lead fascists in a march through what was then a largely Jewish working class Whitechapel.

The campaign is now pushing to establish the Tower Hamlets Local History Centre, which must be planned in partnership with the borough's local history librarian and the borough's archivist, the borough's primary and secondary schools and Tower Hamlets College, historians and geographers, local residents and others.

To find out more please visit the campaigns website: [www.savebancroftlibrary.org.uk](http://www.savebancroftlibrary.org.uk)

## The economy: an anarchist response

ALTHOUGH THE ECONOMY is only beginning to slide into an official recession, we've been experiencing the effects of the credit crisis for over a year.

As has happened every time that capitalism has entered its inevitable crises, it has been workers who have paid for it in attacks on pay and working conditions, and in declining standards of life. This has prompted a wave of defensive struggles as workers seek to defend their own interests against those of their bosses.

We have seen large strikes across several sectors: the royal mail, local government, the NHS, the civil service, teachers, oil workers, tanker drivers, coastguard, transport, retail and manufacturing staff. The increasing willingness of workers to defend themselves after years of attacks should be welcomed. However, the unions have repeatedly behaved as you would expect organisations integrated into the state and the ruling party to; ineffectualness ranging from meekness to outright sabotage.

We have seen the union bosses call off mandated strikes at the slightest whiff of negotiations, sapping the will of their members as they drag out discussions and eventually capitulate, watering down demands that workers were willing to fight for. We have seen majority votes rejected by officials as not enough of a mandate, and unions witch-hunting their own members to ensure a good relationship with the Labour Party. We have seen them instructing their members to scab on other workers in different unions, and undermining attempts at co-ordination, splitting workers and rendering their actions ineffectual. We have seen them sell pay cuts to workers on behalf of the government as a 'good deal'. But nonetheless, some workers have fought for their collective interests irrespective of unions. On the 21st October, workers at the Ford plant in Southampton walked out in protest at the imposition of a four day week. August saw wildcats by council workers in London, manufacturing workers in Falkirk, and by workers at a nuclear power station in Plymouth. The Plymouth strike saw Polish and British strikers picketing together, despite the media's attempts to blame the dispute on the Poles – against the explicit statements of the strikers. Wildcat strikes were frequent throughout the Royal Mail dispute last year, and have recurred this year too.

All this shows that workers must fight in their interests across the divisions of union membership, nationality, and workplace. We must struggle together despite what union bosses have to say.

## On the frontline

● Five thousand London bus workers with Metroline and First Group walked out in October over equal pay causing massive disruption across the capital, on a 24 hour strike to protest at the huge pay difference between the 18 London bus companies.

Several sources reported solid support for the action, with very few drivers crossing picket lines with many routes completely cancelled.

A thousand workers at Metrobus were due to join the strike, but the employers were granted an injunction against the stoppage at the last minute.

Currently the 18 London bus companies all operate with different pay structures, with pay inequalities of up to £7,000 a year.

● Members of the National Union of Journalists working at Trinity Mirror's newspapers in Birmingham have shown an imaginative way of getting around the government's anti-union laws. The paper had sought to sack all its 295 journalists and make them reapply for just 235 jobs. Following a successful industrial action ballot the union won reassurances off of management only to find the bosses trying to wriggle out of them. In response the union has called a mandatory meeting of all its members during the day which meaning that no one will be available to write the paper!

● Some 270,000 members of the PCS civil service workers' union are set for a national strike after voting for action over pay.

Fifty four percent of members voted to take action over below-inflation pay. While the vote was close, the anger among PCS members about low pay runs deep and members are serious about fighting for the six demands of our national pay campaign. Twenty five per cent of civil service workers earn less than £16,500.

● Unite members at the University of Sussex have been on the picket line fighting attempts to close the university's pension scheme to new employees. Outragously the pension arrangements for management are not being changed – just those for workers. Elsewhere in the university sector UCU members at Nottingham Trent University have taken industrial action following management's derecognition of the union. The university has formally terminated recognition of UCU.

Meanwhile teachers are being balloted on further industrial action on their pay dispute – six months after their one day strike!

● Over in the NHS thousands of health workers including health visitors, mental health nurses, laboratory staff and community nurses are being balloted to take industrial action in response to the government's imposition of a pay deal that will cut the living standards of health workers. Earlier this year 95% of Unite members rejected the deal.

● As the economy goes into recession bosses try to make workers pay – through redundancies and below inflation pay rises. But workers are fighting back. Unison are balloting Scottish Water workers on industrial action following the imposition of a pay deal worth just 2.4%. Inflation is 5.3% and rising.

# DEMONSTRATION FOR SACKED CLEANERS

More than forty people demonstrated outside the Institute of Engineering and Technology in London in support of Colombian cleaners unfairly dismissed by employers Amey. There was also a simultaneous demonstration outside Amey's Bristol offices.

One of the sacked cleaners and a former trade unionist in Colombia, Julio Mayor, said: "We were sacked for trying to communicate with the other staff at the National Physical Laboratory about Amey's violation of the employment rights of cleaners there. We are protesting here to publicly request the National Physical Laboratory to take action against Amey to stop victimising cleaners."

They were suspended for criticising the company for putting an excessive workload onto ever fewer staff, for changing working terms and conditions and for disrespecting grievance procedures. The five were sacked on 14th September 2008.

The cleaners were charged with bringing the company into disrepute after they sent a leaflet to other NPL staff explaining what was going on in the cleaning department and asking for their support, especially against the victimisation and bullying they were facing from their manager.

Since Amey took over the contract in 2006 the number of cleaners has been reduced from 36 to 10 as the company has looked to cut costs wherever possible, and in the process virtually getting rid of the living wage won by the original workforce.

In May 2007 two workers were deported to Brazil and one to Colombia after Amey called



in the Home Office to check the immigration status of workers who were active in the cleaners' union.

Amey, which posted a £75 million net annual profit, is a majority shareholder in Tubelines, which cleans parts of the Underground. Tube cleaners who went on strike for a living wage this summer were faced with paper checks, immigration raids and deportations to countries including Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The action was organised by several solidarity groups including the Trade Union and Community Campaign Against Immigration Controls the Latin American Workers Association, London Coalition Against Poverty, Industrial Workers of the World, Colombia Solidarity Campaign, Unite-Justice for Cleaners activists at Schroders investment bank and others.

There will be further demonstrations outside other Amey offices in London. For more information visit: [www.caic.org.uk](http://www.caic.org.uk)



## Colombians demonstrate for justice

More than 30 people demonstrated their support for the Colombian social justice movement and striking sugar cane cutters in London recently on the same day as a general strike had been called in Colombia.

Sugar cane cutters have been on strike for over six weeks to protest against working conditions—described as modern slavery. The government has arrested six of their leaders.

On 23rd October 2008, the Colombian Central Workers Union organised a general strike bringing out many public sector workers to protest about pay and other issues.

The Colombian government's response to all demands for social justice seems to be to blame the activity on 'terrorists' and to further step up repression, both by the police and army and also through covert groups.



**GOING NOWHERE FAST:** A surrounded copper in Liverpool

## ARRESTS IN LIVERPOOL SPARK PUBLIC PROTESTS

Merseyside Police prompted public outrage when they raided stalls, confiscated materials and arrested activists at a peaceful demonstration on the right to protest freely in the city centre.

The protest, which took place on 11th October 2008, had been arranged by the Liverpool Freedom of Expression group, a diverse collection of campaigners, from Liverpool Anarchist Federation (AF) to the Socialist Party.

The groups were holding stalls together in solidarity against a prolonged campaign of police harassment and intimidation, which has included arrests, that these groups have frequently faced on peaceful and legal city centre protests in the past.

Refusing to give explanations or quote any valid law, Merseyside Police seized pamphlets, broke up stalls and demanded names and addresses of activists. An AF member who refused to give his name and address was arrested and now faces a summons for 'wilful obstruction', whilst a woman who protested at his arrest was dragged inside the van for 'criminal damage'. With a lack of any damage in the vicinity, police have subsequently

changed the charge to 'causing alarm and distress' – they do not specify to whom.

Outraged by these arrests, campaigners and supporters, along with members of the public, gathered around the police van that held the two arrested and began a chant of "let them go". Police vehicles were prevented from leaving by the crowd, who refused to move and continued their chants as the police radioed for reinforcements.

When backup arrived, their tactics in clearing a path for the van included pushing a disabled woman with a walking stick out of their way and hitting a young woman of 17 in the chest.

It appears that the police are now trying to take the position that they were caught in the middle of a dispute between political groups and shopkeepers, which does not explain why they refused to engage with one side of that dispute on the day, only wishing to appear reasonable after public humiliation that they feared would be repeated.

Our city centre is for everybody, not just those who use it to make money, and we will continue the fight to use it for free speech as long as there are people willing to listen.

## 'Smash the miners'

The British National Party show their true colours

"Barnsley is going to become a leftist no go area so I'm warning you and your leftist mates in the town to leave NOW ... because no one is going to f\*\*k with me," writes BNP thug Simon Goodricke in a letter received by the Anarchist Federation this month.

Goodricke, a one-time detective who lost his job after conning a pensioner out of £1,000, stood in this year's local elections just days after being arrested for brandishing a gun at his front door.

After continuing with more insults and threats, Goodricke signs the letter off: **"Smash the miners! (ohhh I forgot that lovely Thatcher bird already did). Victory to the police!"**

Had he drank one too many cans of cheap lager or was he just fed up with maintaining the 'respectable' face of the BNP? Either way it's nice to have it in writing that when thousands of miners were fighting for their jobs in the 1980s the BNP would've been firmly on the side of the police, and Thatcher, giving the miners a kicking.

He goes on: "Victory to Capitalism!" That's it Simon, let it all out.

Posing as some sort of 'radical alternative', it is pretty clear that when you scratch beneath the surface, ignoring all the bigots, nutters and football thugs, that the BNP are really just soldiers for the rich and privileged ... and the enemies of all working class people.

## Families march against police violence

Several hundred people, including many family members and friends of those who have died in suspicious circumstances in police custody, prison and 'secure' mental health facilities, marched at an appropriately funereal pace through the centre of London in October.

For many people at this annual event, there was this year an added sadness and grief in the absence of a dedicated campaigner on this issue, Pauline Campbell, who devoted herself to the cause after her daughter died because of the neglect of the authorities in Styal prison in 2003

Many of us heard Pauline speak at previous annual marches organised by the United Families and Friends of those who have died in custody and had come to know and respect Pauline through her single-minded campaigning.

News of her suicide at her daughter's grave this May came as a shock and it was appropriate that she was remembered at the start of the march in Trafalgar Square

Pauline was one of many whose name was not listed among the over 2,500 people who have died in care of police and prison staff, either through violence or neglect, but her and many other deaths are also very much a result of their actions.

Despite the publicity achieved by this campaign, and various investigations by the media, inquest verdicts and other enquiries that have made the damning evidence crystal clear, nothing seems to have changed. Racism, the lack of a proper culture of care and an almost complete lack of accountability mean that healthy people, mainly but not all black, continue to die in police and psychiatric custody as well as prisons. In the past year there were 182 such deaths recorded, and the banner carried in the march listed over 2,500 who have died.

The march made its way in silence down Whitehall to Downing Street where, after the bouquets had been subjected to a police examination, family members were allowed to come forward and fix them to the gates in front of Downing St, where police had agreed they would be allowed to stay until the end of the protest.

Outside Downing St the marchers were encouraged to give vent to their feelings and make a great noise, before continuing to march, now chanting, to Parliament Square where there was a rally at which a number of people whose family members had been killed made pleas for justice to be done.



# 'Not one Euro to support the capitalists'

A 24-hour general strike in Greece shut down much of the country's industry on 21st October. The industrial action was in protest at the neo-liberal measures of the government and plans to reform pensions and social security.

During the main trade union march protesters criticised the £22bn government rescue package to banks hit by the international credit crisis.

Clashes between demonstrating strikers and riot police occurred in Athens. This was followed by a 24-hour strike of all shop workers on the following day.

Strikers and students attacked banks and one bookshop that was operating on scab-labour, forcing them to close down.

## 'School is not a prison'

Meanwhile in Greece, the tide of secondary and high-school squats rises again across the country.

More than 300 high schools (a sixth of the national total) were occupied by their pupils demanding the reversal of several articles of the conservative educational reform that caused widespread revolt by students and university staff during the academic years of 2005–2007.

The renewed resistance to the law, which has been rejected by the entire school and academic community, is being faced with unprecedented



measures of repression. There have been consistent efforts by the government and the local authorities to criminalise the school squats. Neo-Nazi attacks against squatted schools in Athens have also been reported.

More recently, on the 17th October, the president of the pupils' council and another pupil at a high-school in Karditsa were arrested after the pupils of the squatted school staged a protest against the installation of a fence around the premises, with the slogan 'school is not a prison'. After protests from the teachers' union the pupils were released.

While the repression escalates, several schools in Athens and Thessaloniki opposed the annual election of representatives, opting for mass assemblies instead.



The Anarchist Federation is an organisation of **class struggle** anarchists which aims to abolish Capitalism and all oppression to create a free and equal society. This is **Anarchist Communism**.

We see today's society as being divided into two main opposing classes: the **ruling class** which controls all the power and wealth, and the **working class** which the rulers exploit to maintain this. By racism, sexism and other forms of oppression, as well as war and environmental destruction the rulers weaken and divide us. Only the **direct action** of working class people can defeat these attacks and ultimately overthrow capitalism.

As the capitalist system rules the whole world its destruction must be complete and world wide. We reject attempts to reform it such as working through parliament and national liberation movements as they fail to challenge capitalism itself. Unions also work as a part of the capitalist system, so although workers struggle within them, they will be unable to bring about capitalism's destruction unless they go beyond these limits.

**Organisation** is vital if we're to beat the bosses, so we work for a united anarchist movement and are affiliated to the International of Anarchist Federations.

The Anarchist Federation has members across the British Isles fighting for the kind of world outlined above. Contact us at—

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## RESISTANCE PIC OF THE MONTH

### W.

Oliver Stone entertains us this month with a portrait of the rise to power of the most dangerous man on the planet. That's right, a 'warts and all' treatment of the man we have all come to know as 'Dubya' (and as the big man would say, this is not a tale to be 'misunderestimated'). Stone leaves no stone (... ahem) unturned as the man's relationship with daddy Bush, his drink and drugs issues, being 'chosen' by God to be president and his general linguistic buffonery are all exposed in a brutally honest fashion. Based entirely on biographical accounts of George's early life and transcripts from inside the Whitehouse, treat yourself to some real 'shock and awe' and witness the sheer insanity of a system where enough money, influence and power can put you in the driving seat of the most powerful nation on the planet.



Cinema Syndicate – Sheffield