



Pensions Massacre!

EVERYBODY KNOWS BY now that the pensions system is in crisis. Major employers such as the Co-op, Provident Financial, Rentokil, Arcadia and now IBM have cut back on their pensions schemes. Final salary schemes, which guarantee a proportion of workers' income as a pension have been replaced by much less "generous" schemes which will leave us much worse off.

According to a BBC source a 30 year old aiming to retire at 65 will need to save £260 a month in order to live reasonably well. A man aged 40 would have to save £450 a month. How many can afford that? Women, who are more likely to take breaks in their employment will need to save even more.

It's not as if the state will step in to help. At the moment the basic state pension is a miserly £86.50 per week and £131.20 for a couple. Now the government is about to make us work a lot longer before we can get a state pension. You know the thinking behind that: make 'em work till they drop.

What has brought this about? The media will tell you it's due to an ageing population living too long and so making too heavy demands on both the state and private pension schemes. The reality is however, that this likelihood was known decades ago and nothing was done to avoid the problem which is now hitting us. Successive governments could have taxed firms more heavily to meet state pension requirements but nothing was done. Rather, from Thatcher onwards governments have



reduced taxes on the rich at the expense of the rest of us.

Another argument regarding company pensions is that since these pensions depend on stock market returns, with falls in share prices the money is no longer available. This of course is rubbish. Companies exist to benefit the shareholders and not their workers. So, when the stock market was booming in the nineties, what did these companies who are now pleading pensions poverty, do? They took so-called "pensions holidays". In other words, they stopped paying into pension funds or drastically reduced the amount they paid in. According to one source between 1997 and 2002, employers running final salary schemes grabbed back over a billion pounds. This of course was then given to shareholders.

So, the picture is clear, once again the workers get screwed to benefit the rich.

This crisis is not going to go away. Without a widespread, prolonged and determined fightback we can look forward to an old age either being stuck in the workplace or living in poverty. We must make the pensions issue Labour's poll tax. The war starts now! ★

ID CARD PLANS STALLING

THE HOUSE OF LORDS has dealt a blow to Labour's ID Card Bill, criticising the enormous cost, the obvious insecurity of personal information in a centralised database, the way the government wants cards to be used for accessing public services, and attacking compulsion partly as a result of it not being in the Labour manifesto.

In February we are expected to see the start of biometric passports - starting with a chip that stores your digital photo and, we assume, with future capacity for fingerprints or eye-scans - and driving licences are also due to be enhanced with biometrics. These are seen as a back-door to a wider spread of compulsory ID, and could still be, even though the Lords appear to have voted down this kind of coupling last week.

The government is also creating a separate database for all children in the UK, to be up and running by 2008. It will contain name, address, gender, date of birth and ID number, information about the child's parent or carer, and contact details for their school, doctor and other services. It will also allow 'practitioners' (social workers etc.) to "indicate to others that they have information to share, are taking action, or have undertaken an assessment in relation to a child". This is being promoted for child protection, but in reality means another vast identity database that could easily feed into the adult National Identity Register (NIR), which is the major component of Labour's ID Card Bill.

More info:

Corporate Identity: a report which digs up more dirt on the companies who are developing and cashing in on ID card and database technology for the UK scheme. Available from Corporate Watch, 16B Cherwell St. Oxford, Oxfordshire OX4 1BG or visit www.corporatewatch.org

Defending Anonymity: thoughts for struggle against identity cards. Get this free pamphlet from the Anarchist Federation *contact detail on the back page.*

Defy-ID: Find out about groups in your area. Visit: www.defy-id.org.uk ★

ON THE FRONTLINE

Our monthly look at workplace struggles:

IT'S NOT OFTEN that we can bring you news of a Europe-wide militant protest that ends in almost total success, but this month just happens to be one of those rare times. January 16th saw over 10 thousand dockers from every country in the EU gathering in Strasbourg at the European Parliament to protest the proposed introduction of Port Package 2 - a plan to 'liberalise' EU docks and associated labour that amounts to a full frontal attack on wages, safety conditions and workers rights.

Tens of thousands also gathered across other cities in Europe or shut down ports in solidarity with those gathered at Strasbourg

The main demo was loudly and aggressively militant from the start and became more vocal as the day wore on - eventually culminating in a mass stoning of the Parliament itself where 100 square metres of glass was broken and MEPs harangued. The police turned their water cannons on the protesters and when this failed the tear gas was brought out. Too late though - the dockers had made their mark. And the proposal was thrown out by a massive margin of 532 against 120.

The lesson here is that European wide working class co-ordination is not only possible but that it can be carried out on a very militant basis and very importantly, win. It can achieve its aims far better than months of lobbying with the states bureaucrats and their mirror image amongst the union tops ever will. Of course, there will be attempts to smuggle this proposal through again - when capital can't get in the front door it goes straight round the back, but with the lessons learnt from this victory it's going to have another fight on its hands.

Closer to home we just have space to report that strikes by tube station staff have been continuing and that drivers are now also likely to initiate strike action in their long running dispute with TFL as well.

The transport network has also been hit by a wildcat strike on London busses over management spying on drivers, whilst train drivers have also been striking in the midlands. Heathrow Terminal 5 is also looking like it will face another new round of walkouts by building workers as Laing O'Rourke are up to their normal penny pinching tricks again. Work And Pensions staff are also considering whether to take 48 hour action in the coming weeks. ★

CHARIDEE!!!

I HAVE A big respect for anyone who volunteers to do work for a charity. After all, charities cater for the needs of people let down by the "welfare" state. And there are a lot.

But one thing puzzles me. How is it that some people seem to be making big money out of aid. And, I'm not talking about corrupt politicians in the third world or companies profiting from hidden clauses in aid bills. I'm talking about those working in the top jobs in charities.

Take a look at the jobs section in a recent issue of the Guardian. A charity which aims to provide drinking water in developing countries is looking for a regional manager at £27,000 plus. A UK manager gets up to £40,000 plus. That's a lot more than my wages mate!

It is particularly galling that their webpage states that "a gift of just £2 a month can help bring a child safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene educa-

tion. Your donations could help make the difference between life and death."

It works out that these two posts are taking safe drinking water away from around 30,000 kids! It seems also that the charity spends nearly £6 million on administration, fund-raising and publicity.

But the big prize goes to another charity which is looking for an International Programme Director at a pittance of a mere £67,000. Mind you, they request volunteers to work for nothing.

Don't get me wrong. I'm not trying to discourage people from giving to charity or volunteering. It do it too, every now and again. What I'm saying is these bodies aren't going to change the world and neither will Sir Bob Geldof. If you are trying to change the world (and it badly needs it) it will take a lot more than charity. It actually needs a revolution, nothing less, and anyone who says otherwise is wishing for the stars. ★

ACTION ROUND UP



Rosport Solidarity Camp

ROSSPORT SOLIDARITY CAMP is set to re-open on the 25th of February. The camp is part of a community based struggle against Shell, Statoil and the Irish State's plans to build a high pressure raw gas pipeline and refinery in a rural part of the West of Ireland. The camp was closed over winter as building work cannot be carried on then. Last summer a variety of mass direct actions shut down construction, and inspired people facing similarly unwanted developments around the island. The re-opening of the camp is to be preceded by solidarity actions, targeting Shell, Statoil, or the Norwegian state (part owners of Statoil).

These are happening on Friday the 17th and Saturday the 18th of February, confirmed locations for actions include Clare, London, Sweden, Kerry, Dublin, and Nottingham. The camp has a website with basic information about how to get there and what to expect, it's at www.struggle.ws/rsc/ and the camp can

also be contacted at 00353 9720944. More people are very welcome, for a short or long stay.

Reclaim our lives - No WTO!

LOCAL GRASSROOTS ACTIVISTS, from Reading, Berks, came together on the 17th, in opposition to the corrupt and undemocratic World Trade Organisation (WTO) and in solidarity with all those struggling against it's policies World-wide. The various groups, fighting poverty, climate change, capitalism and more, spent several weeks discussing their plans in co-ordination with each other, and from very early on decided to hold this demonstration on commercial land owned by the Oracle shopping centre, a place where there is no legal right to protest. This was to highlight the privatisation, commercialisation and loss of open, public spaces across the UK.

Court Victory for Protesters

A judge has ruled that seven anti-apartheid protesters who had blockaded the Israeli agricultural export company, Agrexco UK, had no case to answer and the case was dismissed. On November 11th 2004 the seven protesters succeeded in shutting down the UK distribution centre of Israel's biggest state owned agricultural export company for over eight hours, blocking both the entrance and exit to the Agrexco UK distribution centre, near Swallowfield Way, Hayes, Middlesex.

Info from: uxbridge7@riseup.net ★

SCAB FERRY OPERATOR SHOWS ITS TRUE COLOURS

THE IRISH FERRIES dispute is over but the threat of summary sackings and casualisation remains. Dozens of workers occupied two ferries for more than three weeks in appalling conditions, locking themselves in engine and control rooms below the water line, with little food and the lights on twenty-four hours a day. The MVs Isle of Inishmore and Ulysses were occupied when they docked in Wales and it became apparent that their employer, Irish Ferries, had secretly imported replacement crews from the Baltic states to replace 540 unionised seafarers with agency workers on 3.60 Euros (about £2.80) an hour. The crews were offered immediate dismissal, 'voluntary' redundancy worth half their entitlement or re-employment at 3.60 Euros (the Irish minimum wage is 7.65 Euros). Some choice!

The scab crew came aboard incognito with security guards who then changed into uniforms and riot gear, ready to summarily sack and expel the Irish crew from the ships. The company says that the security presence was "necessary" to ensure access by safety and maintenance personnel while at the same time illegally denying the trade unions access to their members; another example of how private property allows bosses to ignore the law when it suits them. "We have a duty and responsibility to protect our assets", said a company spokesman – quite. The Irish courts ruled after the 2004 dispute that terms and conditions previously agreed should stay in place until 2007. How do you get round this inconvenient little problem? Sack the workers and replace them with new ones employed on a different basis. Some courts, some justice...

Widespread support

The dispute has attracted widespread support. The MV Normandy had to dock in Dublin after being 'locked out' by workers at Rosslare. A crew of eastern European workers, ready to be put aboard had to be driven away in taxis after the SIPTU union said it would not work with the company if it persisted in trying to put scab crews onto Irish ships. An unofficial lock-out of Irish Ferries ships across Ireland soon developed and all sailings cancelled. A demonstration at Holyhead on December 6th in support of the crew occupying the MV Ulysses drew 60+ demonstrators of whom 25 came from Liverpool. Not many you might think but more than made up for by 100,000 who attended rallies in Dublin and other cities on December 9th to demand government action to combat exploitation of migrant workers and the dis-



placement of jobs. However SIPTU leaders could not and would not go beyond these half day actions rather than calling for all-out solidarity strikes.

The company has a long history of acrid labour relations and on at least one occasion previously had allegedly threatened to use tear gas on strikers. In this dispute they have – because the law allows them to – threatened to withdraw redundancy offers by going into (temporary) liquidation, no doubt emerging later under a Cypriot flag and registered office in Belize. Crew member Gary Jones on the Isle of Inishmore, said: "We've given a lot of things away to Irish Ferries over the last two years. They've made savings of £3.5m by taking away conditions from us. We've only our jobs left and that's what we're trying to secure." Although Irish Ferries says cost-cutting is necessary, its local competitor, Stena Lines, says it has no similar plans and will continue to use local crews.

On December 14th the three week dispute at Irish Ferries came to an end. SIPTU claimed that the deal protects a "threshold of decency". The deal means a two-tier workforce with those staff who reject redundancy keeping their old wages and conditions but all new staff being paid just 7.65 Euros an hour and having longer working hours and fewer holidays. Irish Ferries can re-flag its ships; a three year no-strike agreement and all disputes to be settled by binding arbitration. However the Latvian workers have seen their pay doubled; they also have gained a month's paid leave for every two months they work, originally the company wanted one month's leave for every three months worked.

Everyone close to the dispute recognizes that the replacement crews were duped by the company and are as much victims of Irish Ferries duplicity as anyone. People all over the world should be able to have a decent living.

Globalization and the spread of rampant free-market capitalism is not a far-away problem of peasants driven from their land or bulldozed shantytowns but here and now. ★

TIME
BOMB



Our regular look at history:

ON APRIL 25TH 1974 a radical faction within the Portuguese Armed Forces, the MFA, revolted against the 50 year old fascist dictatorship.

Left-wing activists began returning from exile, and new political parties sprouted up. The parties all used the situation to gain political power in the government. Ordinary folk, in contrast, used the situation to improve social conditions in their communities and workplaces through new autonomous organisations. This month we'll look at some of the workplace struggles.

Workers immediately began struggling against the harsh economic conditions. Strikes had been met by brutal force under the fascist regime but lack of experience proved no deterrent to the Portuguese working class. During the summer of 1974 over 400 companies registered strikes. One of the most significant was within the TAP airline. An assembly, held without union officials, drew up a list of demands including the purging of staff who showed "anti-working class attitudes", wage increases and the right to reconsider collective contracts whenever the workers pleased. The demands were not accepted by the government, so in response the workers declared a strike, elected a strike committee and posted pickets. All international flights were halted. The new Minister for Labour, a Communist Party member, called on the workers to resume work. Eventually the government sent the military to occupy the airport and arrest the strike committee. Two hundred workers were sacked but were reinstated after mass demonstrations and threats of further strikes. A shorter working week was gradually introduced.

It had become common for assemblies of workers to elect delegates to the committees. These committees were normally elected annually and were subject to recall. By the end of October 1974 there was about 2,000 of these committees. In the summer of 1975 the movement began to develop further. Frequently, when demands were ignored by management, workers would occupy their places of employment and in many cases set up systems of self-management. Workers would take to running the businesses themselves. In one factory 1,100 textile workers rid themselves of the management and elected a workers' committee to run things.

To be continued next month... ★

Prison abolition seminar

OVER FIFTY PEOPLE met in London on Jan 29th to discuss the abolition of prisons, with two speakers and a discussion.

Reference was made to the old Radical Alternatives to Prison and a decision was made to found a new group which would both discuss the abolition of prison and involve itself in activity around things like new prisons being built etc. For more information visit: www.alternatives2prison.ik.com

Anti-militarist jailed

Dutch Ploughshares activist Turi Vaccaro was sentenced to six months following his disarming of two F16 bombers. His action was carried out to remember the 60th anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima. He also has to either pay 750,000 Euro compensation for the damage he caused or spend a further year in prison.

Write to:

Turi Vaccaro, HvB De Boschpoort, Nassausingel 26, 4811 DG Breda, The Netherlands

Writing to prisoners

Prison is isolation, so contact with the outside world, letting a prisoner know s/he is not forgotten, helps break this down. Sometimes just a friendly card can boost their morale. Writing for the first time to a complete stranger can be awkward. A card with some well wishes, a bit about who you are and asking what you can do to help is often enough. Don't expect prisoners to write back. Sometimes, the number of letters they can receive/write is restricted, or they just might not be very good at writing back. To help, include a couple of stamps or, if writing abroad, International Reply Coupons (IRC's) that you can get from any post office. Write on clean paper and don't re-use envelopes. Remember a return address, also on the envelope. Ask what the prisoner can have sent to them, as this varies from prison to prison. Books and pamphlets usually have to be sent from a recognised distributor/bookshop/publisher. Tapes, videos, writing pads, zines, toiletries and postal orders are some of the things you might be able to send.

More info at: www.brightonabc.org.uk ★

SUBVERT!

When going on demonstrations stay sober, don't talk to the police and if you're arrested give only your name and address then say 'no comment' to any other questions. For more info visit: www.ldmg.org.uk

FEBRUARY:

3 – Peace Not War Live Music Room At The Synergy Project. A five-room spectacular at SeOne Club, with a diverse showcase of positive anti-war musicians. Contact sarah@peace.fm or 07905 514049. See also www.peace-not-war.org

4 – Northern Anarchist Network Conference. Speakers will include Dennis Pye on history of syndicalism with special reference to Tom Mann and Bolton. There will also be a discussion on the 70th anniversary commemoration in Manchester of the Spanish Revolution. Wood Street Socialist Club, Bolton 10am- 5pm.

4 – Justice for Nuur Saeed. Demonstrate at 2pm, Plumstead Police Station, London SE18. This Saturday will see a picket of Plumstead Police Station, South East London, to protest at the tragic and suspicious death of 22 year old Somali man Nuur Saeed as a result of a police operation.

For more info Email: justicefornuurcampaign@googlemail.com

8 – Save Council housing - Mass Lobby and rally 12 noon Central Hall, Westminster 020 7987 9989 www.defendcouncilhousing.org.uk

14 – Bell-ringing demo at EDO arms factory, 4-6pm at EDO MBM, Home Farm Rd, Moulsecoomb, Brighton. Bring bells to toll. Call 07891405923 or email

smashedo@hotmail.com for more details. www.smashedo.org.uk

18 – London Anti-war Action Forum - a space where groups and individuals can come together to talk about and plan actions (forming ad hoc coalitions where appropriate).

2-5pm, London Action Resource Centre, 62 Fieldgate Street, Whitechapel, London E1 1ES (nearest tube Aldgate East). www.londonarc.org

For more info 0845 458 2564, e-mail voices@voicesuk.org www.voicesuk.org

22 – March 20 It will be ten years from the first eviction of the No M66 Campaign in February 2006. There will be an exhibition about the No M66 Campaign, at the Basement Social Center, Lever Street, Manchester.

23 – Film: The Battle of Algiers - with many contemporary resonances, this rarely shown black and white film from the 60's has become something of a classic, with beautiful cinematography and a wonderful musical score to go with it.

Haringey Independent Cinema will be showing this. The cinema is on the last Thursday of each month and presently at the West Green Learning Centre in West Green Road, N15. Doors open 7.15, film starts at 7.30. Tickets are £3/£2 (low or unwaged). They will be going to the Fountain pub afterwards to chat about the films, socialise and have a drink.

23 – London Radical History Group presents The Radical History of Cycling. The subversive nature of bikes, trikes and penny farthings revealed. 56a INFO SHOP 56 Crampton St, London, SE17 (Elephant & Castle tube)

For more info email: mudlark@macunlimited.net ★



The **Anarchist Federation** is an organisation of **class struggle** anarchists aiming 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 Britain and Ireland fighting for the kind of world outlined above.

If you're interesting in joining contact us at:

Anarchist Federation,
BM Anarfed, London,
WC1N 3XX
Email: info@afed.org.uk
Also visit: www.afed.org.uk
and www.iaf-ifa.org

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