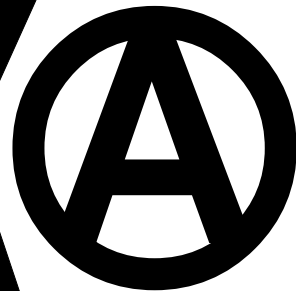


# resistance

## student bulletin

Free/Donation Issue 1  
Autumn/Winter 2002



# Back to college

THE PRINCIPAL OPENS the first session back with congratulations about the 'best yet' exam results. But still there is always 'room for improvement'.

All teachers are required to analyse and analyse and analyse. Why did some students fail? Why did some students not do as well as their 'Minimum Target Grade'? We were sent away to look at all the possible reasons why everyone was not 'successful'. It's the teacher's fault. We must have done something wrong. And of course exam success is all that matters. I felt like a MacDonald's worker who has to explain why a chip didn't turn out according to the standard format. So away I went to look at 'my' results. Some had done better than expected and some worse. I studied all the possible reasons why this might have happened. After hours of work, I think I found the key thing: those who had a pet cat rather than a pet dog did better!

This obsession with results tells us something about the state of education today. Students are like a raw material that need to be turned into a products that have value. When we analyse the results this is what is looked at; how much 'value-added' has been achieved. Education is not about teaching people about how to think or be independent or have confidence in themselves. The

purpose is to create a workforce that has the necessary skills and can be 'flexible'. The measurement of the success in creating this workforce is the exam results. Though it may be hard for many students to believe given their experi-



**For a worthwhile education  
learn the 3 'R's':**

## **Resist, Rebel, Revolt!**

ence of some teachers, many entered the teaching profession because they wanted young people to learn about the world, to think for themselves and to be able to be independent and confident. The last thing on their mind is to produce obedient workers. But the changes that have

been going on in education for many years now have greatly decreased the autonomy of teachers. Successive governments have not trusted teachers to share their goals, so have introduced more and more measures to make sure that teachers will have to fall into line. Tests and exams have been introduced so that teachers have to teach to these exams. There is no time to do anything else. The A-level syllabuses have been so packed full of content that the students are treated like animals being force-fed before the slaughter. If it doesn't relate to the exam, it's not worth doing. So all the discussion and debates and other activities like trips that students found interesting are forgotten about because they take too much time. How many times have I said to the students, 'I'd like to do this but we don't have time'.

The situation is getting worse every year. And both teachers and students are caught in the trap. If a teacher tried to take their time and think of making lessons interesting, the students might fail. The teacher would then be given hell by the school or college. The students too wouldn't be very happy. They also are caught up in the need to stay on the exam treadmill. Exams are said to be crucial to getting to university and getting a 'good job'. How many people really want to spend their lives working in a fast food restaurant or stacking shelves?

The problem is that capitalism has us trapped. Some people try and opt out of the system but living on a commune in the country is not to everyone's taste and scraping around on income support is something most people want to avoid. So what can we do? Obviously getting rid of capitalism will help. But in the meantime we need to get rid of exams. As long as teachers and students are tied to learning a set syllabus and then tested, there will be no freedom to manoeuvre within education. ★

## EXAMS ARE A FAILURE

SO AT LAST the exams issue has blown up in the governments face. Everyone at the top of the examinations tree have been desperate to slag each other off. Why, because the system has been revealed to be a complete mess.

Young people in England and Wales sit more exams in their years at school than in most other countries. They are tested at 7, 11, 14 and 16. If they decide to stay on, they are tested again at 17 and 18! Both students and teachers are fed up with the system. So what is the purpose of having constant exams? Education under capitalism is to prepare people for work. Bosses want workers who not only have the right skills, but who will show 'respect for authority' and have a 'good work ethic'. Teachers used to have more freedom over what they taught. To the state this meant the possibility of teachers 'subverting' their



Exams fail us

students by doing topics that might get people to question society. Constant exams, to a set curriculum, controls what is taught. The government would like to go further in controlling the teachers by introducing performance related pay. Another use of exams is that they force young people to constantly think about 'achievement' and 'success'. They compete with other students, and those who work hardest or are most willing to conform, will be seen as successes. Those who don't, will be "failures". This prepares people to accept what happens at work when some people earn stacks of money and others get the shit jobs and earn peanuts. Exams give the false impression that we live in a society of "equal opportunity" where anyone can rise to the top. Exams are supposed to be an impartial way of judging people. Social

class, gender or ethnicity aren't supposed to matter. Students go along with this because they are worried about what will happen to them if they don't play the game. Teachers go along with it because they are being judged on the exam results so they can't afford to be the odd one out. University students are also under tremendous pressure and most have to do part-time jobs to survive. Teachers are also fed up with the extra work that all the exams have meant.

One of the biggest challenges to capitalism in recent European history happened in Paris in May 1968. It started in the schools and universities with students and teachers rebelling against the latest educational reforms. The rebellion then spread to the streets and the workplaces.

Lets see it happen again! ★

The next student bulletin should be out for the January exams. If you have any stories, articles or insights, please get in touch with us

## CONFESSIONS OF A COLLEGE STUDENT

GETTING BY AS a college student, especially full-time, can be a tricky business. In fact surviving the education system in its entirety is one hell of a task. Us kids deserve a lot more than the useless qualifications they give us anyway.

My memories of school aren't the ones of happy days that too many people claim to have. My memories are of rules, regulations and conformity. Keeping in line, walking on the left, shirts tucked in, ties straight, standing up when a teacher enters the classroom. It was just like a prison. Being bussed in in the mornings, and bussed out later in the day, wearing identical clothing. It really is hard to tell the difference. In fact, some of the stories I've recently heard about my previous school border on unbelievable. They have now brought in regulation length trousers for each year. Teachers have 'walkie talkies' when they're about to report any pupil with their shirt untucked. At one point the only drinks you were allowed were in flasks! Of course, this is the kind of conformity the schools need to instil to produce disciplined workforces.

Compared to that, college seems like a breath of fresh air. Well it did for the

first few days anyway. But all that 'entering a new stage of life' stuff just means is encountering more problems. Money can be a big problem. Being a full time student bizarrely means you can't claim benefits. However, part-time students can! So getting a job is the only option, to most people I know, of making some money. It simply isn't possible to hold a job without affecting your college work, and more importantly your personal life. Yet, these are often the only means of getting by. The stresses can become unbearable, especially if you're thinking of applying to top uni's where good exam grades are a must.

Exams are another problem we face. Some students I know had 9 AS Level exams on the same day! Obviously it was impossible to do them all, so college said these pupils had to stay over with a teacher until they had completed all of them. Filling our heads with all this knowledge also result in boring, featureless lessons. Hours and hours of going through booklets and OHP acetates, without discussion or anything interesting.

And they wonder why we hate school! ★

## Join the resistance

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. Contact us at:

**Anarchist Federation,**  
84B, Whitechapel High Street,  
London, E1 7QX. Tel: 07946 214 590  
Visit: [www.afed.org.uk](http://www.afed.org.uk)  
Email: [anarchistfederation@bigfoot.com](mailto:anarchistfederation@bigfoot.com)