

# RESISTANCE



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## JOBS MASSACRE WORKERS PAY FOR BOSSES' CRISIS



**A**s the recession bites, bosses have been trying to keep their profits up as demand falls by slashing staff and pay, and attacking conditions.

The attack has been particularly brutal in the car industry. The axing of 850 agency workers from the BMW factory at Cowley, Oxfordshire, has made the headlines recently. The unions stood by and did nothing as the workers – whose agency contracts afford them few rights – were culled with an hour's

notice. Officials were pelted with the contents of lunchboxes, and cars were scratched and damaged by workers.

Aside from the highly publicised cuts at BMW, workers in the car industry across the UK have been hit hard. Ford is looking to axe 7% of its workforce, with half of the staff at its Southampton Transit factory lined up to go. Bosses are also looking to go back on agreed pay deals. The factory saw wildcat strikes last October over cuts, and

the workforce being shifted onto a four day week. Nissan cut 1,200 jobs last year at its factory in Sunderland, its most productive site in Europe. Workers at a car parts factory in Liverpool recently launched wildcat action for two days over redundancies, pay and conditions.

These have been high profile cases, but the picture for workers is bleak all over. This year has seen unemployment bite as the recession intensifies. Official unemployment is at 2 million, with 4 million un

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## CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

employed forecast for the end of the year. The high number of claimants – 1.2 million – is causing headaches for a government desperately trying to finance the banking bailout. The national debt of the UK now stands to reach a staggering £2.2 trillion. A ballooning bill for keeping the millions of workers surplus to the economy alive is a serious inconvenience for the government. That's why they - like the bosses at work - are trying to make us pay for the cost of the recession. They are trying to slim the budget of the NHS - which is vital to ordinary people's quality of life and a concession to past workers' struggles - in order to pay for the banking collapse. Though spending is set for the next two years, failure to adjust it for high inflation and spending austerity after that will mean a real terms cut.

The future is only bleak if we let it be. Though crises like this are part and parcel of a system as irrational as capitalism, which isn't based on human needs, we can defend ourselves against these attacks. We make up society, it's us who make the economy work, and it stops if we want it to. We have the power to defend ourselves if

we act together. The refinery workers who fought for access to jobs are one example (see our analysis of this struggle on page 6). When workers were laid off at a factory in Northern Ireland recently they occupied the plant for 48 hours demanding improved redundancy terms. They won. By acting together they turned the tables on the bosses, who expected them to go home alone and 'think things over.' Instead they showed the inevitable wasn't so inevitable. It isn't always easy to take collective action, but it starts from realising what we have in common with other workers, and what we don't have in common with the politicians and bosses trying to shift the costs of the crisis onto us. We can't fight back on our own, but together we have a chance.



This article uses parts of the *Teabreak* workers bulletin. See it along with other resources at [www.libcom.org](http://www.libcom.org)

## Looking out for No.1 - Together

**Talk to your workmates.** We're all in the same boat, just realising this is a step towards doing something about it. When you realise your problems aren't personal but social, all sorts of possibilities open up. Beware bosses claiming they're in the same boat too; who do you think they'd throw overboard first?

**Network with other workers** - in your area or sector. Do you have friends or friends-of-friends working locally in the same sector as you? Consider going for a coffee or a pint to swap experiences and find out if there's anything you can learn from each other, or ways to help each other out.

**Consider collective action.** Examples include going in a group to the manager's office to support colleagues being made redundant or pressured into working longer or harder. There's safety in numbers. Or deciding with your workmates to take your breaks and leave on time in response to pressure to do more work. It's easier to say no to the boss when you know your workmates are doing the same.

## PHOTOGRAPHING COPS COULD MAKE YOU A "TERRORIST"

Taking photos of someone without their permission has always been legal in this country and that's why the police were never able to legally interfere with people taking photos of cops on demonstrations, or arrest them. Not anymore.

The government has amended the Counter Terrorism Act to stop anyone taking pictures of police, if they might use them for "terrorist purposes." No-one really knows what that means and it has no established legal interpretation. In the last few years police Forward Intelligence Teams (FIT) have increased their activity at demonstrations, intimidating peaceful protestors and recording their activities. The stated aim of FIT is to have high visibility in order to prevent crime, although their actual purpose is to intimidate people who are getting involved in political activism by following and photographing them. The FITwatch group was set up in an effort to deter their heavy handed methods of surveillance and due to the fact that many police officers remove their shoulder numbers making it difficult to identify individu-

al coppers who rough up protestors. Now it seems that the police have got wise to this, and if convicted under this new amendment you could spend up to ten years in prison.

The National Union of Journalists has already been demonstrating, worried that the law could be used to target and intimidate journalists. 150 photographers staged a protest outside of New Scotland Yard on Monday 16th February. The NUJ had already complained to the home secretary about police FIT teams being used to harass journalists doing their jobs.

FIT teams have recently started being deployed on "problem estates" to intimidate young people going about their lawful business. Though they are only supposed to follow "antisocial" teenagers known to the police, an investigation by *the Guardian* newspaper filmed them harassing any young people they came across.

While it's pretty unlikely that this new law will interfere with news coverage; the efforts of the protest movement to protect themselves against police harassment have now been criminalised, giving the

state yet more opportunities to crack down on dissent. It's pretty likely that this new amendment will be used to round up FIT-watchers on demos, if not to charge them.



## PUBLIC SECTOR PAY: UNIONS BEG FOR SCRAPS, SABOTAGE COUNCIL WORKERS



Unison, Unite and GMB have requested a pathetic pay increase of just 0.9% for council workers in 2009-10.

Using a complex system for monitoring inflation the government determines what they consider to be an 'appropriate' pay increase. Usually they refuse to pay according to a system called retail price inflation (RPI) because it's linked in with housing costs. Instead they base it on consumer price inflation (CPI) because it is usually lower. But now that the housing market has collapsed, RPI is the lower of the two and the government are now saying they are going to convert to using that system instead, reducing the outcome from 3.3% to 0.9%.

Typically, the unions caved in and agreed to the government's measly concession selling out the million workers they "represent" across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. This includes all levels of council staff from librarians to park rangers to bin men. The three unions are not interested in getting a fair deal for workers and why would they; they clearly don't care what happens to us. With inflation increasing the prices of vital goods disproportionately we are going to need everything we can get and 0.9% just isn't going to cut it!

## ON THE FRONTLINE WORKPLACE ROUNDUP

•**150 Factory workers at Waterford Crystal in Ireland have occupied the site** after threatened layoffs without redundancies, which could see their pensions scrapped. The company, which is in receivership, is looking to close the factory as buyers are only interested in the brand name, not the workforce. Following this sudden announcement, which contradicted previous guarantees, the workers took direct action to defend their livelihoods. The situation is ongoing.

•**Wildcat strike on Arriva trains.** Train drivers on Arriva trains in Wales took action over pay in February in a strike which the drivers' union, Aslef, refused to back. Workers defending themselves without legal permission is illegal, but the strike shows that the wildcat walkouts utilised by refinery, power and steel workers recently are spreading as a tactic among workers hit during the recession (see analysis of the strikes "over foreign workers" on page 6).

•**Meanwhile, other rail workers facing cuts look to strike.** 3,500 Workers on the railways are being balloting for strike action over cuts. Staff at First Capital Connect, National Express East Anglia and South

West trains face redundancies despite the rail companies seeing healthy profits.

•**Journalists strike for jobs.** Journalists at the Yorkshire Post are to launch two four-day strikes against job cuts. The NUJ industrial action ballot passed by 109 votes to 3. Meanwhile, journalists working for magazine publisher Reed Business Information are being balloted for strike action against redundancies, and tensions are rising at The Guardian newspaper after Guardian Group bosses announced a pay freeze for 2009.

•**London cleaners fight sackings.** Cleaners working for the Mitie company launched protests after being sacked by the company. Bosses had forced them onto full-time hours at night without any consultation, and sacked them when they protested. The workers protested against Willis insurance bank in the city of London and were supported by cleaners from the nearby Schroeders bank. The Unite union has offered no support to the workers, who are members.

To get involved with the ongoing campaign contact Edwin Pazmino on 07931464890, Juan Carlos Piedra on 07908099375, or williscleaners4justice@live.co.uk



# SEX WORK IS WORK!

**Every day we see stories in the press about communities plagued by the sex trade. Those involved are demonised, made out to be drug-crazed or foreign sex slaves. Either way, they are portrayed simply as victims. Here we see a rather different story from Soho in London.**

In the space of two months London Metropolitan Police have carried out two raids at the residences of maids and sex workers in Soho.

Police have obtained a closure order for 61 Dean Street alleging that two flats “promote anti-social behaviour and attract touts and opportunist thieves and drug dealers who gather outside the venue”. All this fuss without anyone even asking for it!

If London Met *had* been paying attention to the community they were supposed to be protecting then they might have seen the petition signed by thousands of Soho residents expressing their support, sympathy and solidarity with the women that the Met had chosen to criminalise.

Workers and residents from across the area delivered heartfelt sentiments not only encouraging the diversity that the maids and sex workers brought to Soho but also displaying outrage at the way the women had been targeted for nothing more than consensual sex while ‘law and order’ seemed to be ignoring more violent crimes.

Many more also feared for the women’s safety once they had been removed from the protection of the flats they worked in and forced out into the streets - particularly those who were single parents.

The aggressive way in which the police have singled out these women and ignored the protests of the local people sends a clear message as to just how little they value the opinion of the public and how very much they have ‘abused’ their powers in order to act on no one’s behalf

but their own.

There are many arguments against sex work, most of which are oddly selective in their criticism. Instead of focusing on things like consent, sexual freedom, honesty and organised resistance to sexploitation many people adopt puritanical attitudes and maintain the idea that when sex is not in a format they can understand then it must be wrong. Under capitalism, everything and everyone exists as a commodity, and the women in Soho provide a service which is no different to the labour power that workers of other trades give, and deserves to be treated in the same respect: not valued as any better or worse because, let’s face it, *all* work under capitalism is crap.

We should stand alongside all workers of all trades because we all face

the constant violence of the state and capitalism, whether it is through job insecurity, poor working conditions or the potential loss of home and shelter.

The state constantly divides us along the lines of gender, sexuality, race and class to serve its own interests. But when we begin to unite—as the residents of Soho have done—on common ground under the basis of mutual aid, equality, freedom and honesty, we can start to carve out a better future from the cold shell of capitalism.

*As we go to press the closure order has just been thrown out of court and the women are ‘free’ (so to speak) to return to their work.*



# OCCUPATION WAVE YET TO BREAK

Despite the recent atrocities in Gaza having disappeared from our TV screens and dropped out of the media spotlight, resistance to the actions of the Israeli state and calls for solidarity with ordinary Palestinian people still continue. Since the last issue of Resistance there have been university occupations in Nottingham, Sheffield Hallam, Strathclyde, Manchester, Glasgow, Edinburgh, East Anglia, Gold-

smiths, St. Andrews, Cardiff, Plymouth and London University of the Arts. The occupations have met mixed results. Some students have won partial demands, while others have been forcefully evicted (as at Nottingham) or seen the suspension of students and union officers participating (as at Sheffield Hallam). Despite the peaceful nature of the protests and a commitment to not disrupt education, time and time again

university management have harassed, victimised and threatened activists with police action. The commitment of universities to free speech and political dissent has always been skin-deep. In a time when education is so heavily marketised, political protest is simply “bad for business”. Students are increasingly seen as “consumers”, paying

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 5 ►**

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

a service and rewarded with good job opportunities. Universities, for their part, provide employers with a well trained, skilled and obedient workforce able to fill the management positions of the future. In reality students face a bleak future – a significant chance of unemployment on graduation, with the luckier ones finding work which they don't need a degree for anyway.

The priority of the universities is to keep turnover up, and students who are increasingly questioning the role of the army, arms manufacturers and sweatshop employers at their universities represent a real threat to a huge portion of administrations' revenues. In the face of this, it is good to see student activism on the rise once again and a general acknowledgement of the on-going crisis in the occupied territories and the continuing need to offer practical aid and solidarity. What is generally not so positive is the way that the Stop the War Coalition have been claiming this activity as some kind of resurgence for their organisation. Undoubtedly activists from Stop the War Coalition have been involved as participants and organisers in occupations, however the actions of students are by no means a result of any centrally planned campaign on their part. This is a genuinely grass-roots movement and occupations have seen a diverse coalition of activists coming together for a common cause acting to support each other and share ideas and tactics. Members of the Anarchist Federation, for example, have been active in sustaining occupations in Leeds, East Anglia, Sheffield and Nottingham along with many other areas. Unfortunately, in some cases Trotskyist groups have attempted to sabotage occupation attempts outright in cases where the party would not be able to exercise control over the action. Anarchists in Leeds were even forced to stage an "occupation walk-out" after a minority of Trotskyists showed themselves to be completely incapable of living and organising collectively. More generally the endorsement of this newest bout of student militancy by the Stop the War Coalition seems rather strange given their opposition to direct action in the run-up to the Iraq War (which saw A to B marches fail to stop anything and slowly dwindle into nothing).

However, these problems aside, this is a positive move for the student movement and we only hope to see this grassroots militancy spread further into the fight against the marketisation of education, student debt and general resistance to the economic crisis.

## NAVY MANAGES TO CRASH NUCLEAR SUBMARINE ...IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ATLANTIC



Imagine it. You're in your big nuclear submarine, sauntering around the Atlantic Ocean and then all of a sudden *crash...* you've have a traffic accident...With another nuclear submarine.

This is exactly what happened at the beginning of February between British and French submarines carrying a combined total of 32 nuclear missiles. No one knows how two giant submarines came to be in the same spot at the same moment in the middle of the second biggest bit of water on the planet, but a "cross-channel investigation" has been launched to get to the bottom of it.

Apparently the nuclear weapons were perfectly safe at all times but frankly would they tell us even if they weren't? With the planned spending of £25 billion on a new set of submarines designed to make us feel 'safer', perhaps they could spend a bit of time training their drivers not to crash vehicles capable of destroying much of the world into each other. Alternatively, they could scrap the whole lot and invest the money, time and effort into our failing education systems, bankrupt National Health Service or increasing the pay for millions of workers struggling to get by in the recession.

## 'NO MOUSE IN THE HOUSE!'

### LONDON HOSTEL RESIDENTS FIGHT FOR BETTER CONDITIONS

London Coalition Against Poverty joined the residents of the temporary accommodation hostel at Alexandra Court in Hackney, London in demonstrating against the appalling conditions there.

Around 70 protesters marched to Hackney Town Hall on the 7th February. They were led by the children of hostel residents chanting "no mouse in the house!" in reference to the mice and other vermin infesting the building.

Hackney Council charges residents at Alexandra Court £350 a week to stay in a building in disrepair, and put up with broken lifts, vermin, severe overcrowding and other unsafe conditions. The hostel is supposed to be short-stay accommodation for those on the waiting list for social housing, but some residents have

been there for months.

Despite attempts by the police to stop the march, the demonstration was a success, with hostel residents addressing crowds of locals about their struggle. LCAP and the hostel residents have already won some victories in their campaign, such as repair work and rehousing, but vow to continue to demand accommodation fit for the residents until it is delivered.

London Coalition Against Poverty is a campaign group based on class struggle politics and direct action tactics. To get involved go to [www.lcap.org.uk](http://www.lcap.org.uk), or find out about Edinburgh Coalition Against Poverty visit [www.edinburghagainstpoverity.co.uk](http://www.edinburghagainstpoverity.co.uk).

London Coalition Against Poverty can also be reached on 07932 241737

# REFINERY AND ENERGY WORKERS' STRIKES: A RACIST CAMPAIGN?

The recent wildcat walkouts by workers at oil refineries and power stations across Britain have seen massive media coverage, even being described as 2009's 'winter of discontent'. This is unusual, as the mainstream media usually ignores or condemns any strike action by workers, let alone illegal strikes.

The actions were consistently described as walkouts 'over foreign workers' and presented as if the strikers were taking action against the presence of foreigners, not against their exclusion from skilled work where they live. Rumours of BNP involvement at Lindsay Oil Refinery (LOR) received hysterical coverage from newspapers, but were unfounded—the BNP's regional organiser was filmed being kicked off the picket by workers, and the elected strike committee at LOR were explicit in warning the fascists to stay away from their struggle.

These strikes contained contradictions, but they weren't racist. It is telling that the BBC had to edit footage of a striker to get something close to a racist comment from him. On the News at Ten on the 2nd February the striker was quoted in the context of a ministerial condemnation of 'xenophobia', saying that the locals can't work alongside foreign workers. When the full quote was shown half an hour later on

Newsnight it was clear he was saying they can't work alongside them as they're not allowed to—because the bosses segregate the foreign workers from everyone else!

It wasn't difficult to find statements by strikers explaining that they had no problem with the foreign workers. This is common sense. There are over a million British workers on jobs elsewhere in the EU and it is common for the skilled workers at the centre of the dispute to follow work abroad. If all the foreign workers in Brit-

**'The simple fact is that this was a strike for jobs, not against "foreigners". Capitalism can't provide us with the jobs we need to get by. It isn't meant to.'**

ain were kicked out and the EU countries did the same to British workers the situation would be exactly the same – we'd still have to fight for jobs. The workers knew this. *The Guardian* quoted John Cummins from Cardiff, as saying: "I was laid off as a stevedore two weeks ago. I've worked in Cardiff and Barry Docks for 11 years and I've come here today hoping that we can shake the government up. I think the whole country should go on strike as we're losing all British industry. But I've got nothing against foreign workers. I can't blame them for going where the work is." Keith

Gibson, a member of LOR strike committee said, "The workers of LOR, Conoco and Easington did not take strike action against immigrant workers. Our action is rightly aimed against company bosses who attempt to play off one nationality of worker against the other and undermine the NAECI agreement."

The national media was silent when hundreds of Polish workers at a nuclear power station in Plymouth walked out alongside locals in sympathy. It was

also quiet on what the actual demands of the strikers were at LOR, the dispute which kicked off the strike wave. The list of demands they passed by vote was clearly anti-racist, demanding the same terms and conditions for all workers, the unionisation of foreign workers in the UK and translators for immigrant workers.

Nonetheless, there were contradictions in the strike. The strikers followed the strategy of throwing Gordon Brown's words at the 2007 Labour Party conference back at him and the unions and some workers quoted his promise of "British



jobs for British workers” for the cameras on placards. This isn’t surprising, as it resulted in plenty of attention from papers that whip up hostility to immigrant workers. This meant that the struggle could be presented as one about race, not class. For the same reason the media mostly ignored workers carrying signs saying ‘workers of the world unite’ and banners in Italian. The simple fact is that this was a strike for jobs, not against ‘foreigners’. Capitalism can’t provide us with the jobs we need to get by. It isn’t meant to. Capitalism is based on making profits for the people who own workplaces. And bosses keep these profits up by using divisions to undercut working conditions—they often use agency workers for this but can use workers from abroad too.

This strike has given us valuable lessons. It shows how we can defend our-

selves during the recession. Bosses caused this recession but are making workers pay for it through redundancies, attacks on pay and conditions and cuts to services like the NHS. These strikes show that workers can take control of what happens to them and win victories from bosses. They show that on our own we can’t defend ourselves, but through practical solidarity we can get what we need. They show that if we are going to defend ourselves from a hammering during this recession we have to stick together, across divisions of workplace, trade, grade and nationality. Nationalism is always a tool against us, as it divides the workforce up and assumes a common national interest, which doesn’t exist. Workers have their own interests, bosses have theirs. We want better wages and conditions for ourselves, they want the opposite. Nationalism is a dead end that must always be resisted.

## RUDE WAKEUP FOR FASCIST ORGANISER

It was just over 6 months ago that the fascist British National Party held its ‘Red, White & Blue Festival’. According to the fascists the ‘festival’ is a family event, but drunken antics, fighting, urinating in neighbouring gardens, Nazi drinking songs, and in 2008 a ‘shooting camp’ for children & classes on how to deal with ‘Marxist teachers’ showed the true colours of the festival. Local residents & anti-fascists voiced their opposition to the festival in the run up to it taking place, and strict conditions were placed upon the event because of fears of clashes. While it was taking place, police battled to protect the BNP members inside, with riot shields, batons and dogs coming into use. This resulted in 33 people being arrested.

For the last 2 years, the residents of Codnor in Derbyshire have had to put up with this disruption. This is due to the venue host, Alan Warner, the event organiser, David Shapcott, and the BNP leadership insisting that they hold the festival there. Next year it appears that it will be Essex residents that are unlucky enough to experience ‘RWB’.

In the wee hours of 17th February, David Shapcott was given a little taste of his own medicine, and experienced some of the disruption that he has caused to the villagers of Codnor and elsewhere. Anti-fascists activated a dozen personal attack alarms around his home, interrupting his good night’s sleep. Posters were put up around the surrounding area explaining why the action was taken, and making local residents aware of what Mr Shapcott causes others to experience. The text of the leaflet read:

“SORRY TO WAKE YOU UP!

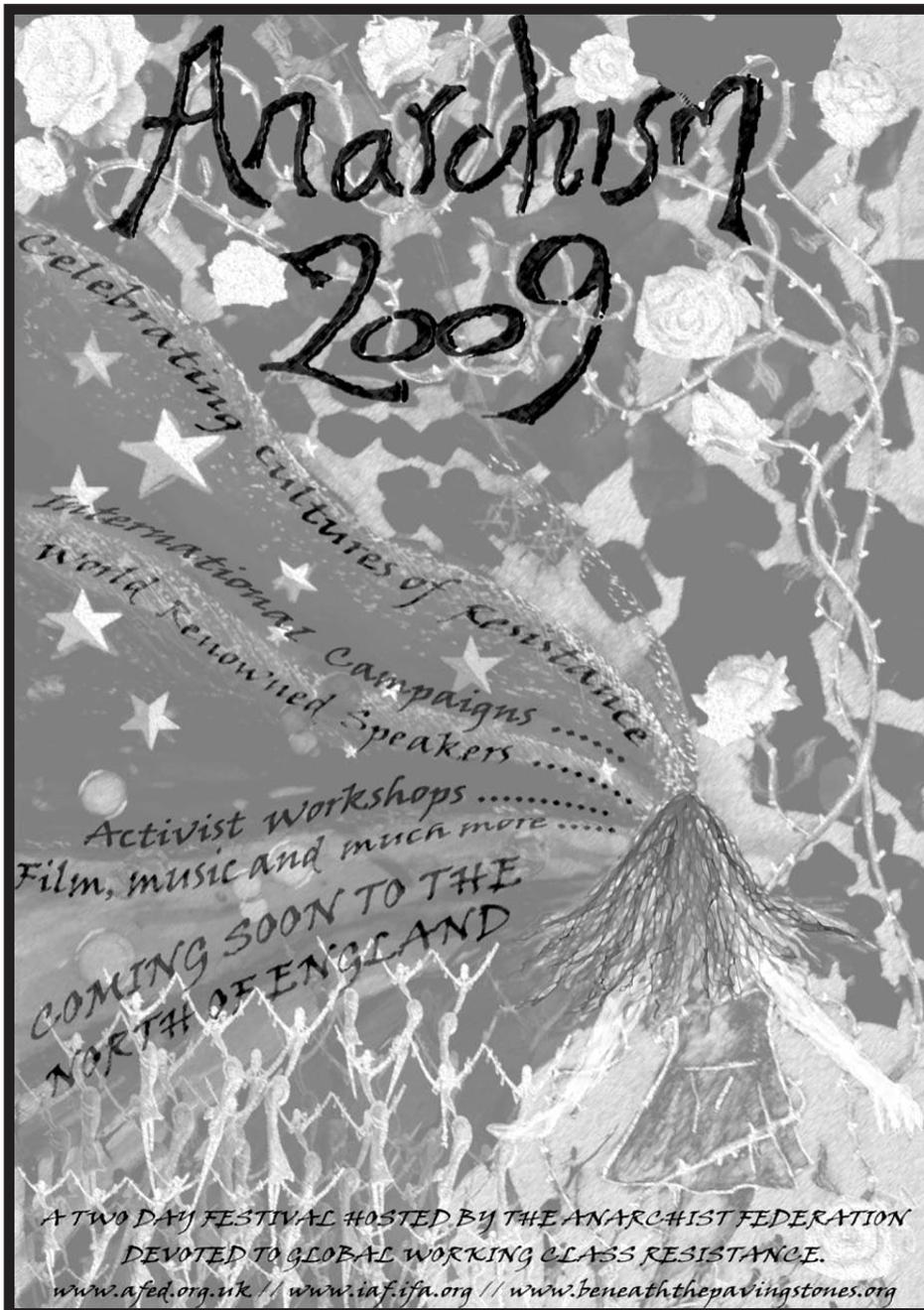
“At least you’ve not been woken to the sound of Nazi drinking songs, the noise of people having sex on your front lawn, or groups of drunken jobs using your garden as a toilet.

“For the past 2 years the people of the small village of Codnor in Derbyshire have had to put up with this, and worse, for weeks at a time – Thanks to your fascist neighbour, David Shapcott of 6 The Spinney, who organises the British National Party’s annual ‘Red, White, & Blue’ rally.

“They don’t want him and his fascist thugs back. Nor do others want the BNP in their backyards. Do you?”

For more information go to

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



# ANARCHIST FEDERATION

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.

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