

RESISTANCE

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Free/Donation

Cross at Crossrail: Fighting Sackings and the Blacklist

On 14th September 2012, 28 workers including two union representatives were sacked from the Westbourne Park site of the Crossrail development in London. In addition 15 workers were laid off at the Chatham docks site of Crossrail.

The main contractor for the tunnelling operation is the Bam Ferrovial Kier (BFK) consortium. Safety reps from the mechanical and engineering contractors EIS had raised concerns about health and safety; they were removed from the site even though their contract was meant to last into 2013. Shortly afterwards, part of the tunnelling equipment

collapsed at Westbourne Park.

Pickets put up soon after turned away deliveries and on several occasions building workers have caused a traffic gridlock by blockading the major route of Oxford Street in central London. There were two well-attended blacklist flashmob events - one outside the Crossrail BFK job at Tottenham Court Road Station and another close to Liverpool Street station. A sacked worker was reinstated after an unofficial mass walk-out at Ratcliff-on-Soar power station involving 800 workers.

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BFK are trying to attack health and safety guarantees and at the same time make sure wages are kept down by stopping workers from organising. An electrical engineer working for EIS was sacked because he took a photo of unsafe high voltage electrical cables.

Crossrail is the biggest construction project in Europe. It will not be completed until 2018. It is costing £18 billion, twice the cost of the Olympics. Tax avoidance is rampant among contractors building it. BAM and Keir (part of the BFK Consortium) are part of the illegal blacklisting conspiracy in the Consulting Association that was exposed in 2009. This fight needs to be won. Maximum support and the utmost solidarity is needed in beefing up the picket lines and supporting actions.

Blacklister's testimony highlights widespread espionage

Crossrail-linked convicted blacklister Ian Kerr broke his silence on 28th November and gave nearly 4 hours' worth of evidence to the Scottish Affairs Select Committee investigation into blacklisting.

Among the more jaw dropping evidence:

- Kerr has been a full-time black-

lister since 1969 - previously employed by the Economic League before he became the Chief Executive of the Consulting Association.

- Cullum McAlpine - Director of several companies within the Sir Robert McAlpine group was the first Chairman of the Consulting Association after providing a £10,000 start-up loan following the demise of the Economic League.
- Consulting Association meetings took place in the Sir Robert McAlpine London HQ.
- Sir Robert McAlpine paid Ian Kerr's £5,000 fine, solicitors fees, and costs associated with closing the organisation including redundancy money for the 4 staff to the order of £25,0000 in order to keep McAlpine's name out of the scandal.
- Kerr was paid £50k per year + car + bonus + BUPA + life insurance.
- Kerr's wife worked as the organisation's book-keeper.
- The main contact for each company was at Director level or similar.
- Police held regular meetings with senior members of the blacklisting operation, with information flowing both ways.
- Union officials provided information about their own members that ended up on the blacklist files. Ian Davidson MP described

this as "the union putting the kybosh on someone's employment."

- Kerr and other blacklist spies were sent undercover into union meetings.
- Widespread blacklisting took place on the Olympics construction project by McAlpine, Skanska and Balfour Beatty.
- Crossrail - "An awful lot of discussion took place at Consulting Association meetings about the Crossrail Project."
- 200 Environmental activists were blacklisted (these files were not seized by the ICO).
- All documents and computer records have now been burnt or destroyed.
- Other blacklisting operations were in existence, including Caprim Limited which was set up by the former managing Director of the Economic League.
- Kerr refused to answer the question as to whether he was part of the official vetting operation for Irish workers on MoD projects - after a long pause he asked if he could answer that question in private.
- Safety Reps were blacklisted if they were too persistent and likely to delay a project.

Note: Ian Kerr died on Tuesday 11th December 2012. We will not miss him, but we can only guess what secrets he took to the grave.



Community Action Groups Target Letting Agents

Haringey Housing Action Group, Haringey Solidarity Group and Haringey Private Tenants Action Group held an inspection of local letting agents to draw attention to high rents, short-term tenancies, discrimination against housing benefit claimants and high administration fees.

A team of 'Community Housing Inspectors' took a tour of local letting agents along Green Lanes to investigate their practices. About twenty people took part in the inspection, asking letting agency staff about their company policies, including: whether they accept tenants claiming housing benefit; how many months deposit they require; what charges they make to tenants; and what is the longest tenancy period they offer. Of the agencies visited, four agreed to take part, while Winkworths, Kings Group, Bairstow Eves, Brian Thomas and Anthony Pepe all denied access or refused to speak to the self styled inspectors.

The inspection-cum-protest took place against a backdrop of housing benefit cuts, a lack of Haringey letting agents willing to accept tenants on housing benefit, rent inflation outstripping wage inflation, and a concern that landlord and letting agent practices are leading to a significant change in the local demographic.

Rent increases in the private rented sector are not driven by increased costs. In a recent survey by Shelter, only four per cent of landlords said they had increased rents because increased mortgage costs. By contrast, one in five had put up rents because their letting agent had encouraged them to.

Renting out property is not a business like selling luxury cars: housing is a basic necessity. When letting agents put up fees and rents, this pushes tenants further into poverty. Haringey Housing Action Group will

support any tenants facing eviction because they cannot pay their rent

The protest felt like a huge success. We managed to gather information that will be of help to prospective tenants in the borough (the results will be publicly available), and we put across our demands to the letting agent staff, as well as to hundreds of passers-by, many of whom told us of their own bad experiences of local letting agents. We also shut down a handful of letting agents, possibly the ones who felt they had more to hide. And we turned the tables on the letting agents who carry out checks on our homes with-

out permission.

Haringey Housing Action Group organised this action alongside Haringey Solidarity Group and Haringey Private Tenants Action Group. We are part of a growing network of groups in London who are beginning to take action around the increasing housing crisis, groups such as Hackney Housing Group, Housing for the 99%, Hackney Digs and Camden Federation of Private Tenants.

See footage of the inspection event at www.haringeyhousingaction.org.uk/community-housing-inspectors-demonstration-video/



The Crisis in Housing

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation recently estimated that the number of homeowners in Britain under the age of 30 will drop from 2.4 million to 1.3 million within eight years, with the situation proportionately worse in London. Even those who can manage to buy are being forced further and further away from town centres. In addition, in many cities rent rises are eating into the wages of workers.

Rich investors are descending on Britain like vultures over a dying cowboy, drooling over the safe

haven offered. Huge areas of the centres of cities are being bought up by these investors. As a result prices are being driven higher and higher. They are using loopholes to avoid tax via offshore companies. In addition overseas buyers often buy up property and then leave it empty or only occupied for a fraction of the year. As a result, the social cleansing of central areas of British cities is being reinforced. Areas which were once working class heartlands are increasingly becoming playgrounds for the rich.

Wobbly Cleaners Stand Up to the Bosses

On Friday 16 November, the John Lewis cleaning staff employed by contractor Integrated Cleaning Management won a 9% pay rise as a result of their campaign, organised in the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) union.

The outsourced cleaners work at four different John Lewis sites in London and are employed by cleaning contractor Integrated Cleaning Management (ICM). This announcement follows a previous press release on Monday 12 November, in which IWW lodged a fresh pay dispute on behalf the IWW unionised cleaners at John Lewis, and a further press release on Wednesday 14th November, in which the IWW announced its intention to ballot the John Lewis cleaning staff for industrial action.

On Wednesday 28th November

members of the IWW organised a lobby of the British Medical Association (BMA) Council to demand a London Living Wage for the IWW unionised cleaning staff of BMA House, London and for BMA Council delegates to support the cleaners' demand for the London Living Wage of £8.55 per hour. The BMA outsources its cleaning contract to Interserve which pays the cleaners the minimum wage, currently £6.19 per hour.

The lobby was supported by Tower Hamlets BMA which sent a strong message of solidarity to the cleaners, had written to Mark Porter a prominent member of the BMA Council, and lobbied sympathetic Council members to table a motion. The cleaners and the IWW will make sure that pressure mounts until the cleaners get the London Living

Wage.

For more information see this article on the Commissioning GP web site: www.commissioning.gp/news/article/386/protest-outside-bma-for-cleaners-rights/17/



All Aboard!

Over 2000 bus drivers from nine garages across north London took 24-hour strike action from 3am Thursday 29 November 2012 following Arriva North's decision not to award workers a percentage pay increase this year despite massive profits; DB Group which owns Arriva PLC made €853,665,000 in profit before tax in the half year to 30 June this year.

93 per cent of the drivers, who took part in the ballot, voted for strike action. The drivers are already in the

their second year of a pay freeze and from April next year the workers will enter a third year of pay freezes. Workers at the majority of London's bus operators have received increases this year, as have Transport for London (TfL) staff.

Arriva North, the biggest single operator in London, attempted to prevent the strike through court action but were forced to drop its case. One in 10 bus routes were effected with the strike hitting north London but also a number of routes into central London.

Further strikes are possible.

Second Class Bullies Lead To First Class Strike

Reproduced courtesy of the West-country Mutineer.

Bristol posties have voted for strike action over the christmas period in response to a pattern of bullying delivered by their bosses. Issues started around a year ago, when managers introduced a new delivery system, making it nearly impossible for most posties to carry out their rounds in time. Despite the problems arising from management incompetence, the majority of posties in Bristol's southeast delivery office have repeatedly

found themselves facing harassment when they cannot complete deliveries within the new time frame.

Bob Gibson, a C.W.U. official representing post workers, highlighted that the problem is not just a local one, saying "Some of what I've been hearing from several areas around the country seems quite sinister in its application and can only be described as bullying, harassment and downright intimidation. This is a situation we cannot allow to continue".

With the workers holding massive

gate meetings in the run-up to and during the ballot, the unanimous 'yes' vote for strike action didn't come as much surprise. We know it's always a pain in the arse to have mail delayed, especially when it's yer X-mas edition of the Mutineer, but let's remember to put the blame where it belongs – scummy bosses (let's face it, we all know at least one) - and get behind our posties, who are not only fighting for their own right to be free of intimidation in the workplace, but for a postal service that works for us all.

Carpenters Estate and UCL: Tenants and Students Act!

UCL has chosen the Carpenters Estate in Newham, as the site for its proposed Stratford campus. A council housing estate adjacent to the Olympic park, the estate is home to 318 households who are now set to lose their homes and community. Many have already been forced out by Newham Council over the last decade. UCL's process thus far has included little to no satisfactory consultation with residents and the wider UCL community, including students, academics and alumni.

UCL's students' union has initiated a 'public campaign to fight in solidarity with the residents against UCL's current plans and to ensure that their demands are met.

At the end of November UCL students occupied in the Wilkins Building to protest against the eviction of the Carpenters Estate tenants. The UCL management in collaboration with Newham Council, controlled by the Labour Party with Robin Wales at its head, are determined to remove the 300 tenants. After a well-attended demonstration on 28th November, the Garden Room in the Wilkins Building was occupied and the following day several events were put on there with a Carpenters Estate resident.

However the occupation ended after university management gave notice that they would hold three students liable for £40,000 worth of costs. The students were served with a court order and injunction, which singled out three individuals. The occupiers faced a court hearing on 5th December if they chose to stay in the room. The group felt there was no option but to end their occupation, in the light of the victimisation of individuals for what was evidently a collective act.

The management have behaved in a high-handed way, refusing to enter into any dialogue with the occupiers, using CCTV footage and online surveillance, and then resorting to legal

threats to intimidate and remove them.

UCL students will have to build up their campaign and involve more students in the ongoing campaign. The links created with the Carpenters tenants were a very positive development. Now further links with other tenants, residents and community groups in East London need to be strengthened. In addition the recent actions taken by cleaners employed by a sub-contractor to UCL over their wages and conditions, and by UCL lecturers over changes in management right to fire should be seen as part of the same struggle against this bullying management, more concerned with profit than with the genuine needs of education.

This is an excerpt from a statement by student action group Bloomsbury Fightback.

There are several questions we have all been asking over these last few years: Where will we live? How will we be able to afford such expensive rent in London? How will we find jobs that pay enough to enjoy ourselves and live in comfort? When will we pay back our student debt?

The student housing sector has ballooned from a fringe investment 10 years ago to a global market worth

\$200bn today with it becoming a 'must have investment for most large funds'.

We feel it important that students are in full receipt of these facts and are confronted with the inevitable outcome that the present cap of £9000 on tuition fees will not remain with us for long. The present cap will soon go, and institutions as disparate as Cambridge and De Montfort are now issuing their own bonds. The university increasingly resembles little more than a debt factory. University College London have recently embarked on a £1 billion project – the extension of their London campus into Stratford. Social housing replaced by student housing funds run by private wealth managers, education no longer about capabilities and learning but merely a means by which to create returns from a relationship of debt.

UCL Stratford thus brings together many of the problems that you yourself face – impossible rent, debt, high fees. The institution does not serve your needs, rather you serve its need to service its debt and finance an ever larger number of managers who wish to 'invest' in land speculation and high-end residential buildings and perhaps even a few research centres.



Moroccan Miners Stand Firm

Since April 2012, the miners of Bouazar in Ouarzazate, southern Morocco, have undertaken a fierce struggle against the exploitative conditions imposed by the employer, the consortium of mining companies owned by the Moroccan royal family. A general strike of miners on October 15th was followed-up with actions on 12th and 13th November, to claim their labour rights and the reinstatement of 21 miners dismissed or transferred by the company in April. On 11th November, the Court of Appeal acquitted eight Ouarzazate miners on trial, giving them a boost.

However the strike and mass pickets on the 12th and 13th were violently attacked by the police with many miners being injured. This was followed on the 14th November by the sacking of four workers and the arrest of one of the organisers, Hamdi Majid, who was

not released until the 20th of that month. The union leadership called off a national solidarity strike under pressure from the authorities.

The miners are demanding reinstatement of their sacked workmates and the ending of constantly renewed 3 month contracts, some of which have

lasted for 30 years, leading to no paid holidays, precarity and absence of rights.

The Bouazar workers know full well that their struggle is against the political and economic power of the royal family, but stand still firm in their struggle and call for national and international solidarity.



No Grasses on Our Turf!

Reproduced courtesy of the West-country Mutineer: network23.com/thewestcountrymutineer

It's easy to have political beliefs, but so much harder to maintain those beliefs in the face of violence and intimidation. Which is why we're straying from the sandy shores of the westcountry to bring news of three imprisoned anarchists for Oregon, U.S.A.

Way back in August, anarchists Matthew Duran, Katherine Olejnik and Leah-Lynne Plante had their doors kicked in by armed police, all of their personal possessions seized as 'evidence', and the three were then locked up. Police reports, parroted by the media, claimed that all three were being held in relation to (a minor) vandalism of banks that had occurred during this year's Seattle Mayday parade.

Despite being able to prove that they were not at the protest, all

were ordered to return to court in order to provide names and information that may lead to arrests for the vandalism. During the course of their defence, lawyers working for the anarchists found that the arrest warrants had been signed off in March – before the vandalism at the centre of the investigation had even occurred. The arrests were nothing more than part of an evidence-gathering mission against a vibrant American anarchist movement. Back in court, all three anarchists refused to testify or provide any names or information. As per American law, the judge then applied to strip the defendants of their right to silence, which was duly granted.

All three still refused to talk and now, all but one are starting lengthy prison sentences for the 'crime' of refusing to grass on people who may or may not have committed minor crimes at an event which none of the defendants were actually at.

Since the trials ended, a fourth anarchist, Matt Pfeiffer has been called before a grand jury. He is also refusing to co-operate and is due to be imprisoned soon.

Across America, acts of solidarity, from protests to sabotage of court-houses and cop-shops, have been intensifying and the prisoners have reported receiving hundreds of books and letters of support (which you can add to by checking out nopoliticalrepression.wordpress.com). Here at the Mutineer, we want to raise our hats in salute to four people who took their politics beyond a game or lifestyle choice. When faced with a real test of their beliefs, they lived up to the thousands of anarchists before them who have faced imprisonment and repression simply for holding the dangerous belief that we can, and should, create a world free of injustice, inequality and tyranny.

Prisoners' Resistance Worldwide

Prison — The Art of the Matter

An exhibition of 32 pieces of art and poetry by prisoners continues its tour of Britain and Ireland this winter.

The Anarchist Black Cross Prisoner Art Exhibition was launched at the Colorama #2 Venue in South London in September. Bristol and London Anarchist Black Cross groups worked together to organise the project which is to be exhibited at 13 venues in 10 cities. As well as displaying the creative work by prisoners, the exhibition highlights the political cases of the artists.

The art is by current and ex-prisoners including Phil Africa, Peter Collins, Lucy Edkins, David Gilbert,

Alvaro Luna, Hernandez Hier and Thomas Meyer-Falk.

Check Bristol ABC and the websites of the following venues for dates of the show:

Saturday 1st December 2012:

Nottingham – Sumac Centre.

January 2013: Bradford – 1 in 12 Club.

February 2013: Liverpool – Next to Nowhere.

March 2013: Brighton – Cowley Club.

April 2013: Plymouth – Venue TBC.

Mozambique Mass Breakout

On Sunday 18th of November more than 45 prisoners escaped from the Tete provincial prison in Mozambique. Prisoners managed to smash the roof of one of the cells and then climb out. Unfortunately by Monday 19th the police had recaptured 17 of the prisoners but not without a

confrontation between escaped prisoners and police in a nearby town. The jail is massively overcrowded incarcerating about 500 prisoners in a prison that was built to hold 80.

Jail Resistance in Lebanon

A riot flared up on Wednesday 21st of November at a prison in Zahle, east Lebanon. The revolt was sparked by a combination of protests by prisoners about cell searches alongside resistance by two inmates against an attempt by the authorities to transfer them. Lebanese media stated that attempts by guards to transfer the two inmates enabled the prisoners to agitate within the facility which ultimately led to the riot. Prisoners were able to use mattresses and blankets to make fires and sabotage cells.

Writing to Prisoners

One of the hardest things for many prisoners to cope with is the feeling of isolation. A letter or postcard from the real world, even from a complete stranger, helps to maintain a connection with the outside and relieves the infernal tedium of a regime that often involves spending 23 hours of the day in the same cell. For a first-time prisoner, especially in the early stages of a sentence, this type of support can make a huge difference, helping them cope with the unfamiliar and often intimidating surroundings. For political prisoners or victims of miscarriages of justice, it's a simple message of solidarity – you're not on your own!

For the first letter you should tell them about yourself, what you do, what you're into, where you got their address. This breaks the ice and also makes a reply easier. So just fill a side of A4 with whatever you can think of – crap jokes, reminiscences, what you did last Friday night. Ask a few questions; how they're doing, plans they have for the future, what their interests are.

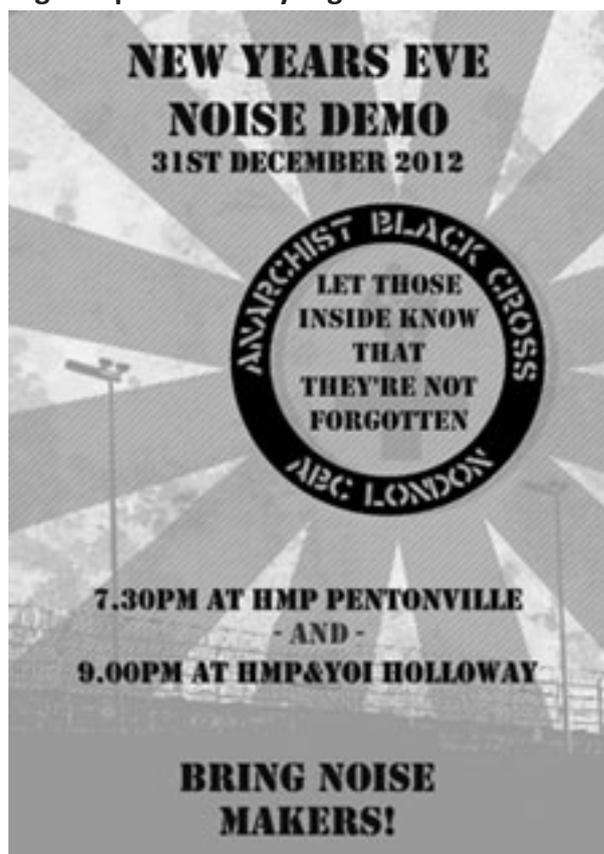
Basic rule; don't put anything in a letter that you wouldn't say to a copper's face. If the prisoner is in for a political offence you should obviously let them know that you support their actions but don't start praising them as some sort of hero. Make sure that you use the correct address, ensuring the prisoner's full name and prison number are written at the top of the letter. Many prisons will not allow stamps to be sent but should allow stamped-addressed envelopes in. Write your address in pencil so the prisoner can remove it if they want to use the envelope to send a letter to someone else.

Check the Anarchist Black Cross sites for addresses of prisoners. Leeds ABC has an excellent leaflet called 'Writing to Prisoners' available from their website as a PDF download

www.leedsabc.org

For news, information and links about prisons check the Campaign Against Prison Slavery website at:

www.againstprisonslavery.org





Liked *Resistance*? Try *Organise!*

Organise! is the Anarchist Federation's theoretical and historical magazine. It is published in order to develop anarchist communist ideas. It aims to give a clear anarchist viewpoint on contemporary issues, and initiate debates on areas not normally covered in agitational journals.

You can order or subscribe online at www.afed.org.uk, or get in touch with your local AF group for a copy.

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ANARCHIST FEDERATION

The Anarchist Federation is an organisation of class struggle anarchists (based in Britain and Ireland, but with many contacts overseas) 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 it's destruction must be complete and world wide. We reject attempts to reform it such as working through parliament and national liberation movements (like the IRA) 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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