Bastard of the month

And now to Caroline Flint MP who recently proposed that the long term unemployed should be kicked out of social housing; congratulations, you are this month’s Bastard!

In her first speech as housing minister, Ms Flint told the Fabian Society that the unemployed should either look for work or lose their homes. Ms Flint’s ‘kick ’em while they’re down’ approach would see families and communities torn apart; children forced onto the streets because their parents can’t find work. And all because we live in a society that pushes us to sell the best years of our life to the boss just to get by. “Social housing should be based around the principle of something for something,” said Flint. No. We completely disagree. Housing should be based on the principle of something for nothing – quite literally. Housing should be free, given to everyone based on need regardless of whether we’re in work or not. How about this for an amended proposal: all politicians should find proper work themselves or be forcibly removed from power by an organised working class! Caroline Flint: you are a Bastard. 

Subvert!

When going on demonstrations stay sober, don’t talk to the police if you are arrested give only your name and address then say “no comment” to any other questions. Visit ldmg.org.uk

March

2nd - EDINBURGH COALITION AGAINST POVERTY LAUNCH NIGHT – 7:30 at ACE, 37 West Montgomery Place, Edinburgh. Speakers from London Coalition Against Poverty, IIWW, ACE and Edinburgh Claimants. Followed by a chat about strategy and tactics.

21st - JUST DEFY! vs. Poverty - A night of techno/acid/DnB/post-punk/mashup for London Coalition Against Poverty. Louise+1, Nick Disjunct, Gergl, Magneze, Blagsta. 8 til late. Only £4 @ Korsan, 161-165 Kingsland Road, E2 LCAP.org.uk

SMASH EDO “On the Verge Tour” - touring the UK (and beyond) and screening On The Verge at every venue. It will give those involved the chance to discuss tactics, get feedback, and organise for the future. See http://www.schnews.co.uk/schmovies/index-on-the-verge.html for dates as they stand (regularly updated). If you want the tour to come to your town/city email - on-the-verge@hotmail.co.uk

April

1st - FOSSIL FOOLS DAY - day of action against the fossil fuels industry, events nationwide. See http://www.fossilfoolsday.org

11th and 12th - call for decentralized days of action for squats and autonomous spaces, UK and beyond. See http://april2008.squat.net

In today’s society sex is valued no more or less than a commodity. It is an asset which we all posses and some choose to use to their own benefit. There are many reasons why an individual may become a sex worker; they may be forced by economic circumstances, they may be dependant on such work to support families or drug addictions (according to sources, 95% of Britain’s sex workers have a history of substance abuse) or they may see sex work as a form of liberation. Whatever the reasons for becoming a sex worker, victimisation and prosecution are not the solution.

Sex workers face a constant struggle to get their voices heard. We often read stuff in the media or hear statements from government officials about the problems they face, but neither of these have any idea of the real situation. Efforts have been made to overcome this. For example, the X-talk project, organised by a network of workers, offers free language classes which help communication between sex workers as well as between themselves and clients. Schemes such as these are a step towards how sex workers are able and should be allowed to organise, secure their own conditions and protect themselves. The same way any group of workers should.

Government policy regarding the sex trade is punitive and counterproductive. Instead of allowing sex workers to improve their conditions, the government has pursued its obsession with demonising the trade. Under the 1993 Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) act, anyone found to be selling sex is liable for a £1000 fine and six month prison term, anyone thought to be soliciting sex from prostitutes is liable for a £500 fine. A prostitute forced to pay a £1000 fine will not and cannot ‘give up and find another job’. Sex workers will instead be forced to work longer and ever more dangerous hours in order to recoup losses. There is also the risk of forcing workers deeper into a criminal underworld that doesn’t care about their rights or welfare.

This legislation has been proven deadly most recently in the tragic murders of the five prostitutes in Ipswich. The government continues to reject proposals for legalised prostitution zones, brothels and massage parlours, all of which allow prostitutes greater security and solidarity. These measures could have been instrumental in preventing the murders of these five workers. Instead they are forced into the dark and systematically ignored by society. These laws simply serve to marginalise yet another group of workers who, at the end of the day, possess the right to a free choice of work like anyone else. When it comes down to it, behind all the moralising, shaming and blaming that surrounds sex work one simple fact still remains – that only rights can stop the wrongs.
100% Need Not Apply

It seems these days you can’t board a bus, use a public call box or even watch some telly without being told of the “adventurous”, “life-fulfilling” career that awaits you in the British Army. Members of Sheffield Activist Network and Sheffield Anarchist Federation had just about enough of all this nonsense and decided it was time to make a stand.

On the fifth anniversary of the 2,000,000-strong anti-war demo in London, activists blockaded the city’s major military recruitment centre. They t-docked the doors closed and gave out over four hundred leaflets exposing the realities that working-class kids expect to face in the military. Business inside the centre was seriously disrupted and the events even caught the attention of the local media.

The police presence was sustained throughout the day. Coppers choosing to wait for the streets to empty and then simply overwhelm and remove protest- ers by sheer force of numbers.

The general reaction of the public, however, proved the demo to be a success and the sympathy of some ex-squaddies was particularly encouraging.

An emotive member of the public, who had lost both her grandsons to the military, personally thanked us for our efforts and said she was proud to see young people take a stand.

Other recent protests against war and militarism include invasion of a lecture on aerial warfare and the disruption of arms dealers at a careers fair.

Good news from Belarus

We reported in Resistance #98 that the parole hearings of two Belarusian anti-fascists, imprisoned a year ago after confronting neo-nazis in the street, had been postponed. We are now pleased to report that both Vladislav Piyashkevich and Gubski Maxim now have been released, although they will now spend around 1 1/2 years on parole.

Thanks to everyone who wrote letters of support during this time of uncertainty.

For anti-fascist activity in UK, see http://www.antifa.org.uk

http://nobnpfestival.wordpress.com

Wikileaks censored

Transparency website Wikileaks has been muzzled with a legal injunction by a US court following the publication of leaked documents about a Swiss bank implicated in alleged money laundering.

The anonymous whistleblower site, devoted to battle against corruption and censorship, published several hundred documents purportedly showing that Bank Julius Baer and its Cayman Islands subsidiary had been involved in offshore tax evasion and money laundering by extremely wealthy and, in some cases, politically sensitive clients from the US, Europe, China and Peru.

In response, the San Francisco District Court has ordered the removal of all hosting records for the wikileaks.org domain name and prevented from resolving to the wikileaks.org website or any other website or server other than a blank park page. Wikileaks has published important leaked documents in the past, such as the Rules of Engagement for Iraq, the Guantanamo Camp Delta Standard Operating Procedures and evidence of major bank fraud in Nyasaland.

Copies of the site are still up and running - http://wikileaks.be

Bog off Branson!

Not content with owning a record company, a radio station, a music festival, a health club chain, an airline, a hot air balloon operator, a travel agency, a publisher, retailer and distributor of books, a bridal wear shop, a private jet marketplace, a comic book producer, a retailer of cosmetics, jewellery and home ware, a drinks manufacturer, an internet airline and gambling service, a stem cell bank, a cruise holiday agent, a ski lodge, private spas, an exclusive island, a game reserve, nightclubs, a limousine service, your telephone, television, cable, mobile and internet service, a credit card company, a video game promoter, distributor and marketer, a railway operator, a clothes brand and retailer and a company offering orbital and sub-orbital private space flight, Richard Branson now has his greedy mitts set on our health service.

With 250 GP practices already up for takeover, the floodgates are now being opened for the complete privatisation of primary health services.

Richard Branson’s Virgin Healthcare is on a whirlwind “privatisation tour” hosting meetings up and down the country inviting NHS GPs to join new health centres which will market private healthcare services alongside free and public ones. This will only hasten a two-tier system of treatment within the health service and bring the end of local public welfare.

We invite Resistance readers across the country to lay on a “welcome party” in your home-town for these parasites -

Virgin Healthcare’s whirlwind privatisation tour.

3rd March - Canterbury (Kent Uni)
4th March - Tunbridge Wells (Salomans Centre)
5th March - Guildford (Clandon Park)
6th March - Horsham (Roffrey Park)
10th March – Twickenham (Holiday Inn Shepperton)
11th March - Winchester (The Mercure Wessex Hotel)
12th March - Plymouth (Future Inn)
17th March - Oxford (St Hugh’s College)
18th March - Cheltenham (The Centaur)
19th March - Bristol (Hilton Hotel)

Sod that for a game o’ soldiers

If you’ve been wondering why the British state is still in Iraq for no apparent reason when just about all opinion (even the yanks) is now favouring a hasty retreat, you’ll be pleased to hear that a sizeable chunk of UK soldiers are wondering the same thing! A record number of 20,340 troops have not re-turned to active duty – one ninth of the armed forces has quit or gone AWOL. This has left the army 6000 short of operating capability.

We have also learned that they lose more troops to hard drugs than to enemy ac-tion – around a platoon a year. Looks like it’s not all fun in the sun with a gun.

Anonymous is legion!

Last issue we asked whether the anti-scientology protests organised by Anonymous - and picked up by all media every-where – were Serious Business or just For The Lulz; the truth is out – they were both.

On Febru-ary 11th the forces of The Internet in all its greasy glory gathered gormlessly at the gates of this century’s most amusing cult. Scientology could run but it couldn’t hide in over 30 cities worldwide. “The fact that this wasn’t really that serious made it lot better; there’s worse than Scientoloogy in this world”, one protestor in London told us, “this has been the funniest day out in years.” Having witnessed 600 spotty youths in V masks singing Rick Astley on the Tottenham Court Road, with riot cops on horseback galloping by, Resistance is inclined to agree. You’ve won this round Anon...

Billion Dollar Bomber Banger

Not to be outdone by our cop-crashed riot van (Resistance #100) the US air force has written off the most expensive fighter plane of all time. Used exclusively by America the B-2 Stealth Bomber is designed to evade all radar detection ...

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Dear Taliban,

I know we haven’t always seen eye to eye. What with my communism, atheism, appreciation of recorded music, acceptance of homosexuality and even appreciation of music recorded by homosexuals - we haven’t really been singing from the same hymn sheet. If you can find it in your heart to look past all that, and please, if you see this prick -

wandering around Kabul, just shoot him, I think we can really start to get along.

Yours in hope,
I. Mananakis

Pensions rip-off

The government has refused to accept responsibility for 125,000 pensioners ruined when their company pension schemes collapsed. When an appeal confirmed the High Court’s judgement against the government, James Purnell, Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, appealed in his turn to the House of Lords.

During the 1990s, ministers made false statements about protection for pension funds introduced by new legislation. The Parliamentary Ombudsman took two years to investigate and in a report in March 2006 said the government had misled workers about the safety of occupational pension schemes and called for full compensation.

The government refused to pay. Under pressure it created a ‘Financial Assistance Scheme’, which so far has paid out tiny amounts and which provides a far lower level of compensation than today’s workers have.

A High Court ruling last year, the government reluctantly raised the level of FAS compensation, but not by much. The pensioners have suffered, not just in terms of pensions, but with the stress of the situation affecting their lives and health, with some losing their homes.

There is no compensation for this in the FAS.

That is why the pensioners have fought on.

The Government knows that it will probably lose its appeal. They are deliberately obstructing any payouts in a deeply cynical move, banking on more pensioners dying before they have to make compensations.

Quit Buggin’ Me!

There has been uproar this past month because Sadiq Khan, a Labour MP, had his conversation recorded by the police when talking to one of his constituents, an inmate at Woodhill prison. The whole thing comes from something called “the Wilson doctrine”, a 40 years old policy that bans the secret services or the police from tapping MPs conversations. Obviously, this doctrine has been breached in this case. But should we worry? MPs are exempt from the level of surveillance that the rest of us are subjected to because their conversations with constituents are considered confidential.

This year a quarter of a million applications are made to bug or follow people. Think of the “no ifs, no butts” adverts that local councils have put up. They are saying it very loud and clear; if you receive benefits of any kind, chances are your local council is going to investigate you and most likely put you under surveillance. There are even new plans to fit chips in wheelie bins to keep track of how much rubbish you put in. Where’s the limit? Cameras in your kitchen to fight obesity? After all, it kills more people every year than terrorism. Will MPs be exempt from this snooping as well? Probably.

Cops spooked by fuzzy friend

Hackers sparked a security alert by breaking into the Metropolitan Police recruitment website, posting a picture of a cuddly toy on its front page and adding taunting comments beneath. Brobee, from the TV series “Yo Gabba Gabba!”, appeared above a message that made reference to the SO15 counter-terrorism unit. “OH HAI GUYS do joo wanna be a policeman lulz?” it said, “I see that teh so15 anti-terrorism unit. I know we haven’t always seen eye to eye. What with your atheism, appreciation of recorded music, acceptance of homosexuality and even appreciation of music recorded by homosexuals - we haven’t really been singing from the same hymn sheet. If you can find it in your heart to look past all that, and please, if you see this prick -

On the frontline

Postal workers in Oakham, Leicestershire, walked out in defence of a sacked colleague in February. The 57 workers were angry that a postal worker had been sacked after refusals to cooperate with the SO15 counter-terrorism unit. “OH HAI GUYS do joo wanna be a policeman lulz?” it said, “I see that teh so15 anti-terrorism unit. I know we haven’t always seen eye to eye. What with your atheism, appreciation of recorded music, acceptance of homosexuality and even appreciation of music recorded by homosexuals - we haven’t really been singing from the same hymn sheet. If you can find it in your heart to look past all that, and please, if you see this prick -

Around 20,000 council workers walked out in Birmingham. A new pay structure (single status pay) would lead to pay cuts for around 4,000 members of staff, with some seeing their pay slashed by as much as £18,000 a year.

Birmingham council claims the changes are designed to bring women’s pay into line with men’s. However, New Labour has refused funds to pay for such a deal and to make up the money the council plans to cut wages and slash services. This, (not so) funnily enough, includes not paying female workers up to 6 years of back pay, meaning 110 women will lose up to £10,000 each. Overall, there are twice as many women as men facing pay cuts. Really the pay scheme does nothing to change any inequality between sexes but tries to cover up the council’s own financial mistakes. With millions owed in unpaid money the council has attempted to make up this money by forcing pay cuts upon staff. Continued action is expected.

National rock

The Northern Rock small shareholders group have a lot to be miserable about. Not only have their share holdings plummeted to 90 pence from last years high of £12, but Alistair Darling the Chancellor of the Exchequer has nationalized the company effectively leaving them penniless.

Naturally most ordinary people aren’t shedding any tears for that lot - if you gamble there’s a chance you might actually lose! But the same is not true for the off shore based company Granite and major investors. It just so happens that the best of Northern Rock’s mortgage business, comprising of mortgages worth £47 billion - some 40% of the company’s assets - had been transferred to Granite. Since September last year, your money - £25 billion worth, has been loaned to Northern Rock to guarantee no losses for savers (read major investors).

Through all of this there have been howls of outrage from free marketers. Never mind that when times are good they demand light regulation and taxation, justifying it by insisting they are risking it all. As soon as things turn ugly many abandon their ‘principals’ in favour of a tax payer’s bailout. Think of the last time you were in debt and the Bank of England decided to save you from bankruptcy?... funny cause I can’t!

National science museum staff have voted overwhelmingly to strike over pay and plans to close the civil service pension scheme to new members. Members of the Public and Commercial Services union (PCS) are furious that a below inflation pay offer has been imposed on them at a successful time for the museum.

On the frontline

Postal workers in Oakham, Leicestershire, walked out in defence of a sacked colleague in February. The 57 workers were angry that a postal worker had been summarily dismissed.

After two days on wildcard strike in February, refuse workers at Brighton’s Hollingdean Depot won their fight against management bullying.

The striking bin staff had been complaining about management bullying after staff refused to move the workload due to lack of vehicles and under-staffing. As part of what workers called management’s “bully tactics”, four refuse workers had been moved onto different crews sparking anger amongst the depot and leading to the wildcard action.

The four workers have been allowed back onto their old crews and management has started negotiations over staffing levels and vehicle numbers.

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Anarchism is for life; not just for gigs

On Saturday 16th of February, Sheffield AF held a fundraiser gig at the Casbah nightclub to help raise money for the Anarchist Federation Solidarity Fund. Although it had a stressful start for a few members, the gig turned out to be a massive success. All the bands were very supportive of the cause and played exceptionally well. Big thanks have to be said to all of them, especially the Inner Terrestrial who came all the way from London just to play at our gig. They were a lot of fun to listen to (even though some numpit in the crowd managed to break his leg within the first 10 minutes of them taking the stage).

Fun and games aside, thanks to the bands we managed to raise roughly £700 that night, which will support anarchist projects locally, nationally and worldwide. Special thanks to everyone who helped out.

This was not Sheffield AF’s first fundraiser gig; we previously held a squat gig (Red and Black Fest) in an abandoned factory where, despite being shut down by the cops early, we were able to raise 6,000 Mexican pesos for our comrades in Oaxaca. We have recently been in contact with them and they were able to inform us of how and where the money has helped;

Harmondsworth four acquitted
The four migrants accused of “conspiracy to commit violent disorder” during the Harmondsworth uprising in 2006 were found “not guilty” this past month. The prosecutions strategy of attempting to single out and punish few individuals with violent criminal convictions and long sentences as a lesson to others has been thwarted. Of course, all four have already served one year and three months in prison, on top of varying times in immigration detention. Now they will have to re-surface their struggle against the immigration system, which imprisoned them for seeking refuge in the first place, and will most probably be dispersed around Britain’s detention estate until their cases are ‘resolved’.

The uprising began on 28 November 2006 as detainees at Harmondsworth immigration prison spontaneously protested against conditions inside the centre and their treatment by the guards. The centre was severely damaged and the detainees were moved to other detention centres and prisons.

Prison riot squads were drafted in to halt the protest. About 50 detainees were left in a cold courtyard all night and others were locked in their rooms even though parts of the detention centre were still on fire. Five men were charged after the incident, although one was declared unfit for trial and is currently still in a psychiatric institution.

The uprising clearly involved hundreds of detainees protesting spontaneously against their imprisonment, triggered by TV coverage of the damning report on Harmondsworth by the Chief Inspector of Prisons. While only five people were charged, saving authorities from a more in-depth investigation into the centre. The prosecution has tried hard to ‘prove’ that these men had been planning the uprising for weeks. But, inevitably, the jury could not avoid hearing a great deal of the detained individuals’ complaints about the conditions in the centre, and their loud and frequent demands for freedom, justice, and an end to immigration detention. So, while these four individuals have been rightly acquitted for this crime, the injustice of Britain’s immigration detention system continues unchallenged, with the government making plans for further expansion of centres. ★

Victory for striking miners in Cananea
Striking miners in Cananea enjoy a victory as a judicial panel ruled their six month strike legal. This reversed an earlier ruling in January which had led to brutal attacks by the police.

On February 14 the Mexican Supreme Court of Justice reversed an earlier ruling, declaring that the six-plus month strike of unionized workers in Cananea, Sonora may continue.

The panel had previously ruled on January 11, 2008 that the nicality. This ruling lead to a brutal attack by Mexican federal police later that same day. Cananea, a city about 30 miles south of the Arizona border, has been the site of numerous historic labour battles. Workers at the Cananea Copper mine, owned by Grupo Mexico S.A. (who also own Asarco in the U.S.), have been on strike since July 31. The mine has refused to negotiate with the workers’ union.

While the newest ruling does not bring an end to the strike, it does give the workers a stronger hand as they move forward against Grupo Mexico, who refuse to address occupational safety concerns or enter into the workers’ collective agreement.

Ever since January 11 Cananea has been a city under siege, with thousands of federal officers guarding the entrance to the mine and preventing workers from resuming their pickets. The mine has been operating with scab labour ever since. ★

http://section65cananea.wordpress.com/
Thanks to Libcom for much of the above information - libcom.org

Instant muscle gets wasted
Training provider “Instant Muscle” have gone into administration, leaving their staff unpaid for February, and unemployed trainees turned away from the doorsteps of their training centres! Staff were given termination letters as they arrived at work on February 27th.

Nottingham Evening Post wrote:

Training provider “Instant Muscle” have gone into administration, leaving their staff unpaid for February, and unemployed trainees turned away from the doorsteps of their training centres! Staff were given termination letters as they arrived at work on February 27th.

The IT make a desperate appeal on the behalf of Sheffield AF projects locally, nationally and worldwide. Special thanks to everyone who helped out.

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