

RESISTANCE

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School Struggles in Scotland

Parents occupied a North Lanarkshire primary school for 24 days in June in protest at its closure by the Labour-run Council, together with three other primary schools and two nurseries.

Although they claim the closure is due to budgetary constraints, the council was able to find £3.2 million from their "Learning and Leisure" budget for private contractors working on the Ravensraig Sports Facility vanity project. The four school closures combined will save a mere £1.2 million from the same budget.

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Occupations and protests against cuts



Inside: Defending welfare, the budget and much more!

School Struggles in Scotland

► Continued from front cover

Whereas privately-run schools have an average class size of 12, the maximum class size recommended by the Scottish Government for state schools is 18 for classes P1-3. Class sizes lower than 18 have been shown to benefit learning. In North Lanarkshire, however, the proportion of P1-3 children benefiting from class sizes of less than 18 is to fall from 24.4% to 16.5% thanks to these closures. Lower class sizes are especially important in deprived areas, and North Lanarkshire has above-average unemployment figures and below-average earnings.

But the council picked on the wrong community when it announced in October that it had chosen Gartsherrie Primary School in Coatbridge as one of its targets for the axe. Parents immediately formed an action group and pulled off marches, a widely circulated petition and mounted a legal challenge, all of which were ignored by the council, which voted in March to close Gartsherrie at the end of June. Finally, as the last days of the term approached, parents and grandparents decided to occupy the beautiful, Victorian school building, which generations of locals have attended.

The occupation was peaceful and lively, with lots of support within the community and fun days at the weekends with paddling pools and bouncy castles for the kids. With the future of the community and their children at stake, the parents were determined to stick it out as long as they could. Their goal, as they stated in the Scotsman, is not to keep the school open indefinitely, just for as long as it takes for the new Greenhill School to be constructed, so that their children wouldn't have to move to two different campuses in only a few years.

After three weeks of occupation, more than 20 police broke down a door to enter in a dawn raid, with vans and more officers blocking the angry group of community supporters that immediately assembled outside the school. With all but one fire door and all toilets boarded shut, the parents decided to end the occupation the following day. Campaigners vow that the fight is not over and are exploring their options for how best to continue to oppose the council. You can contact them to show your support at www.savegartsherriepriamry.blogspot.com.

On the Front Line

Workplace Roundup

More strikes in ongoing dispute at Glasgow Life

Museums, galleries, libraries and other cultural centres in Glasgow have been closed in the latest round of strike action in an ongoing dispute between City Life, which runs the facilities, and its employees.

City Life, formerly Culture and Sport Glasgow, have cut the pay of 150 workers by 10%, frozen the pay of all other staff, and cut holiday entitlements and overtime rates. The strike involves Unison, Unite, GMB and Bectu unions who collectively have 1,600 members working in over 140 facilities.

There have already been sev-

eral rounds of strike action in the ongoing dispute, in April, May and June. CSG workers also struck on election day earlier this year and even threatened to picket polling stations before a last-minute injunction banned the action.

Strike at Manchester College

Employees at Manchester College have taken part in a strike against the strict imposition of new contracts. The dispute has been intensified by the College principal, Peter Tavernor, ordering the de-recognition of the UCU after the strike was announced.

The action, which took place in June, saw striking college workers marching past the Town Hall and rallying in the city centre. Senior managers had been threatening to note down all those involved in picketing sites and participating in demonstrations. Nonetheless, turnout was solid.

The contracts raise the prospect of wage cuts, and some pay cuts of as much as 20% have already been announced. Tavernor, along with a number

of other senior managers, has recently awarded himself a significant pay rise.

London Underground Workers Strike

Maintenance workers on the London Underground struck in June over jobs, pay and working conditions. The 48-hour strike went ahead following a failed attempt by management to use the full weight of the anti-strike laws to ban the industrial action.

At the time of writing, the RMT union is balloting 10,000 tube workers for industrial action. 800 jobs are under threat and 140 ticket offices face closure as a result of the coalition government's austerity plans.

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Manchester Anarchist Bookfair

Books & Talks & Action & Anarchism.

Manchester Anarchist Bookfair
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Saturday 2nd October 2010
Dancehouse Theatre, Oxford Road
(Opposite BBC)
www.bookfair.org.uk

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National Day of Action to Defend Welfare

Protests took place across the UK on 16th June as part of a National Day of Action to Defend Welfare.

Protesters targeted workfare companies like Working Links and A4e, who run courses claiming to help people back into work. In reality, they back 20-30 people into a room with a newspaper and a phoneline. When this doesn't work, they force people into unpaid "work placements".

One man, a builder by trade, described having been sent to sweep the vegetable section at Asda for two weeks. After his "trial" period he was replaced by another A4e placement.

A4e's founder Emma Harrison has become rich from this scam; Asda benefits from free work, but the claimant gets no job, and no meaningful experience; workers' wages and security get undermined by this conscript army of the unemployed; and public funds are paid out for no good reason. It's benefit fraud on a massive scale.

For a profitable company, A4e are extremely sensitive to criticism. Edinburgh Coalition Against Poverty (ECAP) caused

their office to close for the day just by announcing their picket. For all the tabloid vilification of "benefit scroungers," people were sympathetic to the pickets once they found out what A4e do.

Protests also took place in Manchester and London. In London, Hackney Unemployed Workers and London Coalition Against Poverty picketed the Working Links and DWP offices, calling for "a fair benefit system that recognises our right to live -- not just to survive!"

In Nottingham AFed and IWW leafletted job centres and held a community meeting. The focus was 'Welfare to Work' and on changes that will mean people on Incapacity Benefit and Employment Support Allowance being subjected to intimidating assessments. These are designed to force them on to JSA and into work that they are not able to manage. This isn't just arbitrary and unfair, it may be dangerous to those individuals.

But we shouldn't be under any illusion that the current set-up is in any way 'fairer'. The activists heard from people who had already been illegally moved off

IB onto to JSA without being medically assessed.

Years of attacks on welfare have made us forget that it is the state that has failed if people are unemployed, not the unemployed themselves. Also, being unemployed is not shameful! Many of us are far too busy doing valuable unpaid work to take some soul-destroying job at minimum wage.

It is vital that we organise together to rebuild the networks of local, claimant-led activism that have been successful in the past in undermining similar schemes,

such as Project Work, and give us confidence in asserting claimant interests as part of the working class

No to Welfare Abolition Network - defendwelfare.org

Hackney Unemployed Workers - <http://hackneyunemployedworkers.wordpress.com/>

London Coalition Against Poverty - lcap.org.uk



All In It Together? Edinburgh Rally Against the Emergency Budget

Members of Edinburgh AF joined with a range of trade union and activist groups to organise a march and rally against the so-called "emergency" budget on 22nd June.

Around 400 people braved sunburn to hear speakers across the range of targeted groups, from public sector workers to service users. The scope and breadth of the attacks was made clear, with representation from victimised local council cleaning workers to national civil servants.

Many speakers condemned the coalition government but only

a few acknowledged that New Labour returned to government would be behaving similarly. This is not a fight that politicians of any party can win for us.

The indiscriminate nature of the cuts is both a challenge and an opportunity when it comes to fighting back against the attacks on our class. If we treat each cut as separate and those affecting others as not our concern, then we will fight our own battles only to lose in isolation. A literal Death of a Thousand Cuts for the most vulnerable in society. But if we see each cut as an

attack on us all then we might stand a chance. In practice that means working together to fight cuts, respecting political differences. Groups that mistrust each other need to show willingness to work together where they can and respect for differences where they can't. This is "baby steps" stuff, but the stakes are too high to mess around or play politics.

Even mainstream voices have described the budget as "a declaration of class war". It's time our class started to fight back. The coalition's budget funnels

money towards the rich (with cuts in corporation tax and their National Insurance contributions) and away from the rest of us (with a 2% hike in VAT).

There will be attacks on welfare spending, no details yet but probably targeting Disability Living Allowance / Employment Support Allowance -- accelerating Labour-initiated changes which have seen the terminally ill told to look for work. One thing that won't be cut? Trident nuclear missiles. Seems that we can afford unusable cold war relics but we can't afford nurseries.

Arms Factory Decommissioners Acquitted

On Friday the 2nd of July eight people were found not guilty of Conspiracy to Cause Criminal Damage, despite admitting to smashing up over £187,000 worth of equipment at the EDO MBM arms factory in Brighton. This “Decommissioning” action was taken last February during Israel’s bombing of Gaza, which killed over 1400 civilians including hundreds of children. Because this bombardment was considered a war crime by the UN, unlike “legal” bombing of civilians such as that ongoing in Afghanistan, the EDO Decommissioners were able to use the defence that they were preventing a greater crime than that which they were committing. This defence has been increasingly successful over the past few years in several high profile cases involving activist groups, such as in Derry in Northern Ireland where activists decommissioned a Raytheon arms factory twice and were acquitted both times, after which the company closed the factory. The EDO and Raytheon cases are not only significant as examples of people taking effective direct action to sabotage the war machine and getting away with it, but also because both cases expose the British State’s true role in the Israel/Palestine conflict. Despite it’s appalling imperialistic history, including its occupation of Palestine itself, the

British government likes to try and present itself as a progressive force in international relations by constantly affirming it’s commitment to peace in the middle east. Part of this façade is an official ban on exports of arms from Britain to Israel, but during the Decommissioning cases the defence were able to use their time in court to publicise a wealth of carefully researched evidence of UK arms companies producing military technology for the Israeli Air Force. Arms produced in places like Brighton, Bristol and Manchester are exported to the United States with permission by the UK government under

“End User Agreements” which are supposed to mean that they stay in the US and aren’t then taken anywhere else. However, as even the Judge in the EDO case admitted, “end User Agreements aren’t worth the paper they’re written on”, since the US government openly declares that it is not bound by them, which the UK government knows full well. Thus the British government and the business interests it represents, such as arms companies, are in fact facilitating and profiting from Israel’s atrocities against the Palestinian and Lebanese people, while claiming to be helping bring peace.

The outcome of this trial could perhaps pave the way for more actions of this kind at the many arms factories throughout the UK that are producing arms for Israel’s conflicts, as well as for other conflicts such as in Afghanistan which are equally atrocious yet not so condemned by international law. The Decommissioners have shown that ordinary working class people are capable of successfully taking radical direct action in solidarity with victims of capitalist wars in other parts of the world and exposing the lies of the State. May there be many more Decommissionings to come.



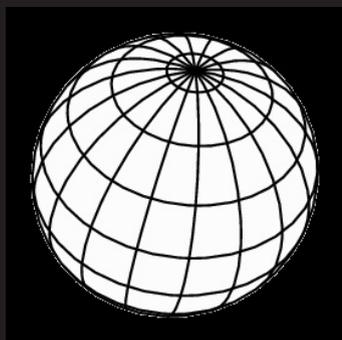
A sma'shing day out in Paisley

Every year on the first Saturday of July the people of Paisley come together to celebrate one of the oldest workers' festivals in the country. The origins of Sma' Shot Day date back to the early nineteenth century which saw a bitter conflict between bosses and weavers in Paisley, a town near Glasgow with a booming

textile industry. The town was especially known for its famous Paisley shawls. The employers refused to pay the weavers for the Sma' (small) Shot thread which, although invisible in the finished article, held all the other threads in the yarn together. Following sustained strike action by the workers against this practice, the mill owners

(known locally as 'corks') conceded to their demands in the summer of 1856. From then onwards, the traditional July holiday was renamed Sma' Shot Day. While the modern celebration of Sma' Shot Day has many different stalls and activities for kids and adults to enjoy, the radical heart of the holiday is still present. The

celebrations culminate in the 'burning of the cork', with an effigy of a defeated mill owner set alight and burned to dust. As well as being a fun day out for all the family, Sma' Shot Day offers an inspiring example for those attempting to uncover and celebrate local radical history.



World news roundup

FAU Wins Court Battle

The FAU, a German anarcho-syndicalist union effectively banned earlier this year, has won its legal battle for the right to operate as a union. Berlin's Higher Court took just 15 minutes to overturn the injunction that had prevented the FAU from calling itself a union and stripped legal protection from its members organising in Berlin's Babylon Cinema. Klaus Stähle, the lawyer who had defended the FAU in this case, made clear what the court meant with its ruling: "The Babylon Cinema has to live with the fact that you are a union!"

The decision was greeted with a demonstration outside the court which moved to the front of the cinema itself. Chants like "FAU-IWA, the union is here to stay" were shouted through Babylon Manager Timothy Grossman's window, one of the managers behind the injunction banning the FAU from calling itself a union.

This ruling has implications that go beyond the cinema and the FAU. Germany has very fixed union structures and centralized unions want to see their monopoly expanded. There is very little room for self-organized, grassroots groups in the country. Those who want to change this situation will face serious headwind. That's why the de-facto ban on the FAU Berlin was a serious precedent, which was an attack on union freedom in general. As Laure

Akai of the Polish ZSP-IWA said to the gathering, "a union is more than a piece of paper; it exists in our hearts, heads, and our actions."

For the FAU Berlin, the ruling means that a long period of intense activity is coming to an end. They are very delighted about all the support they have received—for example, from the Solidarity Committee which gathered countless signatures contesting the de-facto ban. Financial support through donations was also an important factor. As opposed to the government-funded cinema, which lets its court costs be

paid by tax dollars, the FAU does not receive any support from the government. The many letters, protest actions, and manifestations that occurred both nationally and internationally, were a decisive factor in this struggle.

The victory, however, was mixed. Although the FAU can now call itself a union, the boycott of the Babylon Cinema that led to the injunction in the first place continues. As long as the question of the FAU Berlin's capacity to conclude collective agreements has not been clarified, it will be difficult for the FAU local in the cinema to

make good their demands. Lars Röhm, secretary of the FAU Berlin: "We can now call ourselves a union again, but we'll still have to fight for the rights other unions take for granted."

More Info:

- www.fau.org
- <http://prekba.blogspot.de/>



The Battle of Leeufontein

As the vuvuzela sounds at the Battle of Leeufontein, the English Lions entered the field only roll-over and have their tummy's tickled by their old rivals, Germany. With the crestfallen superstars off on paradise retreats before the new season starts, a proper battle continues in South Africa. Hundreds of miners at four sites, including Leeufontein, have downed tools to demand the equalisation of pay and working conditions, in an indefinite strike backed by the South African National Union of Mineworkers (NUM). The mine owners, Shanduka Resources, describes itself as "a leading African black owned and managed investment company", and amongst its business principles are "Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment" and the promotion of "social responsibility". This strike to receive allowances and bonuses which are part of the terms at other strikes, follows a wave of workers' struggles in South Africa, including the Transnet transport workers' strike involving some 50,000 workers, wildcat bus workers' strikes, postal strikes, walkouts by construction

workers, and the high-profile strike by match stewards during the world cup.

Soon after the final whistle blew on Germany's 4-0 win over Australia, workers at Durban's Moses Mabhida stadium walked out, having been given 205 Rand (£18) per day; far short of the 1,500 Rand (£134) per day say they were promised. Having left their posts, police were called and tear gas, rubber bullets and percussive grenades were used to disperse demonstrators from the stadium car-park. As with previous strikes, the Government is described this as unpatriotic, and appealed to workers to shelve their concerns "in the national interest". The World Cup is neither a "once-in-a-lifetime" opportunity for South Africa's poor and working class to share in the wealth created, as the Government would have it, nor is it a "second liberation", as it has been described by the 2010 Organising Committee CEO, Danny Jordaan. While the urban poor and homeless are being rounded-up and forcibly removed to "temporary relocation areas" and "transit camps" to present a



good image to visitors and viewers, FIFA (aka THIEFA) have already gained over € 1 billion from media rights alone. These earnings have been boosted by forcibly clearing stadiums of anyone selling non-sanctioned FIFA products or fake team-kits. And THIEFA's official partners in crime? Coca-Cola, a company that refused to disinvest during the darkest days of the old regime.

To coincide with the opening of the 2010 Soccer World Cup about 3,000 people attended a Durban Social Forum protest

march, including security guards and stewards who were involved with clashes with police at the Moses Mabhida Stadium. The protestors were not opposed to the city hosting matches but were demonstrating in opposition to decisions made by FIFA, its corporate partners, politicians and bureaucrats for implemented the World Cup in a way that has only worsened inequality and poverty. Only the rich will score in 2010! For further information read ZACF statement 'All in the Name of the Beautiful Gain'.

Greek general strike in response to austerity measures

In Greece, resistance to the punishing economic measures demanded by the IMF and EU continues, with recent weeks seeing conflicts between workers and police, several general strikes, occupations and demonstrations. The 8th of July saw a general strike of both public and private sector workers. Local transportation workers struck, leaving buses, trams and the metro shut down, ferry and train workers walked out, hospitals were only running

for emergencies, and air traffic controllers walked out on a 4-hour strike. Other workers, including those in the media and those working in the Parliament building itself, also joined the strike action. Doctors had occupied their hospitals earlier in the week over non-payment of wages and a new law limiting the number of hours they can be paid for working, which would require them to work large periods of time for free to keep hospitals running properly.

This follows a previous general strike on the 29th of June, which saw tens of thousands of Greek workers demonstrating in the streets, where they clashed with riot police attempting to enter the demonstration, attacking them with water bottles and, in some cases, their bare hands. The demonstrators also confronted a small group of fascists waving Greek flags, who had tried to join the demonstration but ended up sheltering behind police lines after being chased

off. Entertainment was provided by several members of the hated Delta Force (units of 2 police mounted on motorbikes, which are driven into crowds while the passenger swings a club – a tactic borrowed from the Iranian state), who managed to crash their bikes into one another, injuring the riders.

As well as assaulting people

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Serbian anarchists set free

Charges against the six Serbian anarcho-syndicalists falsely accused of “international terrorism” following some minor property damage have finally been dropped following an international campaign.

Ratibor, one of the six, stated upon the announcement on 16 June: “All the charges against us are dropped now. The presiding judge shortly explained that the ruling is “based on law, and not politics” (which is indirect admitting that the whole process from the start was politically motivated, and not rooted in facts), and that there are no proofs to confirm that we were engaged in “helping and abetting” (comrade Tadej and I) and “creating of public danger” (companera Sanja and comrades Ivan S, Nikola and Ivan V). The Prosecutor has 8 days to file a complaint, but judging by the public reaction and huge media coverage of the case and ruling we don’t expect to have the verdict overturned in the higher court. Now our focus is on getting three comrades from ASI Vrsac freed from charges of “Obstruction of Justice” for putting up posters with “Free arrested anarchists” as the title, and getting passport back to a Croatian anarcho-syndicalist comrade who is being kept in Serbia for 4 months. A Croatian comrade is held here by the Court, with the same charge as Vrsac comrades, for having a peice of

paper with “Anarchism is not terrorism” title the Court on our first public hearing on 17th of February, when we were released from the investigation prison - after almost six months spent in unbelievable conditions.

“On 24-25 August 2009 the Greek Embassy in Belgrade, Serbia was defaced in solidarity with Todoris Iliopoulos who was imprisoned in Greece and was on hunger strike. There was minor damage to the outside of the embassy building. Even though responsibility was claimed by another group entirely, in September four members of the Anarchosyndicalist Initiative (ASI, the Serbian section of the International Workers’ Association) and two others were arrested without warrants. They were held without charge for 3 months and then finally charged with “international terrorism”, the first time this charge was ever used in Serbia.

“The Belgrade 6 spent the next five and a half months in terrible conditions of isolation and torture in the Central Prison in Belgrade. But hard work by other comrades in the Balkans, combined with impressive international protest by libertarian groups and public disquiet about the use of the new law resulted in their release on bail in February 2010. At the first hearing on 17 February, that more than 200 people from Serbia and elsewhere attempted to attend, the

court released them to continue their defence outside of prison. “It is important to know that during the detention of the Belgrade 6, three supporters from another ASI local were arrested in Vršac for putting up posters with the words “Freedom for arrested anarchists”. Two other comrades from outside Serbia were arrested while supporting the Belgrade 6 during the trial, for handing out a leaflet saying “Anarchism is not terrorism”, and had their travel papers seized. Also the authorities tried to close down an art show featuring one of the Belgrade 6. After the defeat of the first hearing the right-wing decided to use alternative forms of repression and intimidation against ASI. In early March 2010 fascist posters saying “Know your neighborhood! Know the enemies of Serbia” appeared near the entrance of a tower block where one of the Belgrade 6 lives. The poster told lies about ASI and said “if a corrupt court will not judge them, there are those who will” and “We know where you live, we know when you sleep”.

“A second hearing took place on 23 March. Under the threat of another month of delay the defendants were forced to participate in the second hearing without a public presence. Only on the day of the trial were they were told that the charge of “international terrorism” would be dropped to one of “endangering public safety”. The

charge was still serious as it is the same charge given to nationalists who set fire to the American embassy against U.S. support for Kosovo’s declaration of independence, in which one person died. The minimum prison sentence is 6 months and the maximum is 13 years.

“From the beginning the charge of “international terrorism” and the political show trial was most clearly another act of repression against ASI who are opposing the ultra-conservatives and nationalists and supporting workers’ unrest in Serbia and elsewhere in the Balkans, like Greece. Protests have been banned in downtown Belgrade, as the authorities seek to control workers’ unrest. The Belgrade Pride parade was also banned. Members of ASI supported that parade. We see that political convictions are enough to get anarchists locked up, to face the most serious of charges.”



► Greek general strike continued

on the day of the strike, both on the march and later in the metro system, police had also been deployed at the docks on the 28th of June, the day before the strike, to prevent striking dock workers from occupying the harbour. In spite of the use of tear gas, the dock workers, accompanied by members of the builders union and others, broke the police occupation of the dockyards and succeeded in blockading the harbour. Activity continued between the

two general strikes. As well as the occupation of hospitals by the doctors, temporary workers at the National Radio and Television building occupied and blockaded the entrances after being told their contracts would not be renewed. These occupations followed in the wake of the occupation of the Public Power Corporation by its employees to discuss the crisis and organise for the general strikes. Also, on July 3rd, a new squatted social centre opened

in a working class community in Athens, which has provided social activities and communal meals, and on June the 7th, a restaurant in Thessaloniki that was closing down was taken over by its workers, who have been running it without a boss ever since. Finally, a group of 25 anarchists raided a supermarket, taking essential goods from the shelves to an open-air market, where they were distributed free of charge to passers by.

More Info:

● <http://libcom.org/tags/greece>

● <http://www.occupiedlondon.org/blog/>

New AF Pamphlet

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Introduction to Anarchist Communism

Anarchist Federation



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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.

NATIONAL CONTACT

Web: www.afed.org.uk

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England & main national/international email address

International of Anarchist Federations:

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