

PICKET LINES

Just after christmas ambulance crews covering south east Wales refused to work overtime for four weeks to highlight staff shortages in the service.

Some claimed they were working an extra 50 hours a month & it was difficult to take all their annual leave.

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On Wednesday 23rd January the Police Federation marched in London for a pay rise. Support came from the British National Party, Tony Benn, Lembit Opik, & Ken Livingstone.

An anarchist counter demonstration called by London Class War, surrounded by on duty police shouted abuse at what was agreed to be the most boring march in history. 2 Fitwatch activists escaped being followed for long enough to get to the start of the march & started handing out spoof Section 14 notices (the section of the Public Order Act 1986, that police use to pen in protesters & defuse protests) before promptly getting arrested for obstructing 20,000 cops!

The UK Police force has had massive resources thrown at it over the past three decades. That the cops demand more money by going out into the streets & march, given the way they have treated every other worker who has demonstrated for better wages makes their protest cheeky beyond belief.

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Operating department practitioners at the Royal Gwent Hospital, owed up to £20,000 each by Gwent Healthcare NHS Trust are considering industrial action. They have not received any unsocial hours payments for almost two years.

Unison is now preparing ballot papers for a vote on industrial action if the matter is not resolved.

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The Advisory, Conciliation & Arbitration Service has warned that the UK is facing a wave of strikes spearheaded by disgruntled public sector workers, Ed Sweeney, chairman of ACAS said: "In the public sector there is anger over pay & there will be major change in the private sector."

Teachers Unions are currently balloting members in Wales & England over a one-day strike on the latest below inflation pay rise offer, whilst local government workers are threatening a national strike over their 6 per cent pay demand.

The number of work days lost through strikes has been steadily increasing in recent years. Figures show more than 965,000 days lost to strike action to the end of November. For the whole of 2006, 754,500 days were lost to disputes. 2008 could be a big year for industrial action.

DEPORTATION DEATH SENTENCE

On 9th January, Ama Sumani, a terminally ill Ghanaian mother of two was denied medical care for her cancer at University Hospital, Cardiff & subsequently deported. The decision has been widely & strongly criticised by the UK medical profession, with the medical journal 'The Lancet' stating that "the UK has committed an atrocious barbarism". A doctor treating Ama at the hospital stressed to the immigration authorities that they were sending her to her death. Ama now has to fund her own kidney dialysis in Accra at £50 a day, without which she would die within 2 weeks. Most of the vital medication that was given by Welsh doctors for Ama to take home with her was taken by a UK government Doctor, leaving her with 5 or 6 tablets. With no treatment plan passed on to doctors in Ghana, they say they are unable to treat her properly. Friends of Ama in Cardiff have been attempting to raise money for Ama's treatment, transport & care at home in order to extend her life.

According to Lin Homer, the chief executive of the Border & Immigration Agency, the case was "not exceptional" & is just the tip of the iceberg, with hundreds of other asylum seekers denied medical care & then deported every year. Things are set to get even worse for hundreds of thousands of other migrants if government plans to further cut health care for so-called 'failed asylum seekers' & 'illegal immigrants' are implemented. Currently asylum seekers whose claims have been refused but cannot return to their 'home' countries are only eligible for free access to GPs & emergency care. But the new proposals would cut health care to all but emergency services, despite warnings from health experts that this would place far greater pressures on already stretched A&E departments as well as increasing the risks to public health. Once again government policy is set to make life more difficult & precarious for one of the most vulnerable groups in society.

Donations for Ama Sumani may be made via Xquisite Africa, 148 City Road, Roath, Cardiff, CF24 3DR. checks payable to Ama Sumani Check out: amasumani.eu

PETER HAIN GOES DOWN THE DRAIN

Recently resigned Secretary of State Peter Hain has hardly been out of the news over taking undisclosed back-handers to finance his failed attempt to become the Labour Party's deputy leader. It is, of course, lovely to see yet another slimy corrupt (& in Hain's case alarmingly orange) Welsh Secretary get flushed down the u-bend of political history, but this press attention on his personal financial soap opera missed the story which will affect us all.

Hain, who is also Secretary of State for Works & Pensions, has demanded that all workers take out private pensions even though we all pay national insurance tax toward a state pension from our wage packet already - so we've got to pay twice!

Yet despite these blatantly anti-working class policies, so many of the Trade Unions still fund him. The GMB trade union gave a donation of £14197 towards his disastrous bid to become deputy Prime Minister, & UCATT (the construction union) donated £2500. Union dues via the political levy are going into the pocket of someone who couldn't give a stuff about union members. It's not just Hain who gets this support, whoever's matey with the trade union bureaucrats gets a bundle of cash.

DON'T LOOSE THE RIGHT TO CHOOSE

Right-wing Christian fundamentalists are going on a nationwide "Passion for Life roadshow" tour to oppose a women's right to control her own body. Speakers including Tory MP Ann Widdecombe will be at the City Temple, Cowbridge Road East, Cardiff on Tuesday 4th March.

Opposition to abortion & contraception by religious bigots isn't new. The first hospital birth control clinic at Abertillery in 1925 failed because of the opposition from the chapels who associated birth control with immorality. In the Rhondda in 1935-36 illegal abortions accounted for the deaths of 35% of mothers.

As anarchists we believe decisions should be made at the most local level, this means it's the woman's decision whether or not they get pregnant & whether they remain pregnant. It's possible to be an anarchist & have an objection to abortion - what's not on, is not supporting women's right to choose. If the right to abortion doesn't belong to pregnant women then who decides? the state? the courts? the cops? Anne bloody Widdecombe!? A counter demonstration has been called, South Wales Anarchists will be in attendance, please come & oppose these extremists, starts 7pm. Check out: abortionrights.org.uk



DNA DATABASE MADNESS

A staggering 1 in 10 people in Wales are on a national DNA database which is now accessible by every police force in the European Union. Welsh cops have been on a thieving-spree for the last 10 years, & have doubled the number of people whose "genetic fingerprint" is being kept on record. 264,420 are now on the database; many are innocent & have never been charged with anything, but their sample will be kept for life. More than 7,155 samples have been taken from under-16s, & the annual number of samples taken by Welsh police forces was twice as high in 2006-07 as it was a decade ago.

Under the rules of a recent EU agreement recently signed by Justice Minister Jack Straw, Britain now has to set up a system (at the taxpayers' expense) to let other member states access UK citizens' DNA, fingerprints, & vehicle registration details. We don't even need to have done anything wrong to be targeted. The UK must provide personal data files even if there is only "reason to believe that the data subjects will commit criminal offences". In other words the agreement states our most personal details have to be given up if foreign cops suspect we might commit a crime at some point in the future!

The U.S. FBI is also knocking on the door for access to our DNA & other details. Although it doesn't exist yet, the U.S. is currently pushing for a "server in the sky" that would mean UK cops would be sharing information with yet another country - & not one that's well known for its respect for civil liberties. We only have to look at recent history to see that what the US wants from UK politicians, it usually gets. Check out: genewatch.org

SLAUGHTER SCHOOL SETBACK

On 1st February the MOD decided not to bring the highly lucrative (£5bn) 'Phase 2' of a massive privatised military academy to RAF St Athan in the Vale of Glamorgan. The plan would have seen all military training related to logistics, photography, administration, policing & language training relocated there.

On 17th January South Wales Anarchists joined campaigners gathered outside the National Assembly to protest against plans to build the £14 billion military training academy. We can only assume the AMs within did not notice our presence because only one (Leanne Wood from Plaid Cymru) could bring themselves to come out & engage with us. Other representatives of the state were not so shy, & the small demo attracted a number of boys in blue including, once again Ian Skivens (no. 5494), from the Metropolitan Police Forward Intelligence Team (FIT) - the protest harassment squad. Ian seems quite fond of getting out of the big smoke & out into the provinces.

This academy is a bad idea for loads of reasons: Politicians keep telling us that it'll create 5000 jobs for the local area, but this is a lie. Most of the jobs will be relocated from elsewhere; it's another PFI-style privatisation that hands £14 billion of public money & control of military training to the Metrix Consortium who will make a profit out of it; the companies that are gonna be raking it in at our expense are the worst group of arms dealing scum you are ever likely to see assembled around a boardroom table (Raytheon the manufacturers of cluster bombs & depleted uranium weapons, & Qinetiq the manufacturers of ballistic missiles to name just two); as well as being used to train every single recruit to any of the UK's armed forces, the place will be used to train foreign soldiers from across the world; There was no proper public consultation about whether local people actually want the academy - just a PR whitewash by the Metrix consortium; & most importantly, public money, the wealth created by society should be used to improve the lives of the people, not enrich arms dealers looking to make a quick buck training the army on the cheap. Check out: nomurderacademyatstathans.com

WASTED FOOD, WASTED LIVES

In the UK whilst 4 million people can't afford a healthy diet, 17 million tones of food are dumped in landfill sites every year (of which 4 million is perfectly alright to eat) because it's cheaper & easier for the food industry to chuck it out than to give it away or sell it for less. Profit margins must be maintained by supermarkets, whatever the human costs. This wastage amounts to £18 billion worth of food dumped as "surplus" in order to keep prices up & the "bottom line" intact.

This chaotic situation is typical of capitalism, stealing people's lives by making us work to produce food that is wasted whilst others go hungry. We need to bring in a distribution system for the wellbeing of everyone, a system that puts people before profit.



COPWATCH

CORRUPT COP SACKED

A Neath Port Talbot cop has been sacked over "honesty & integrity" issues, after investigation of 8 PCs & 2 sergeants. Senior police will not release his or her identity or even say what they did. Given that corrupt cops who are found out are more likely to be promoted or retired with full pensions than actually sacked, we can be sure it must have been something really bad.

SPEEDING FUZZ SHOCKER!

More than 100 cops from Welsh forces have been caught speeding in the past 2 years. 28 from North Wales, 25 from Dyfed-Powys & 28 from Gwent. South Wales Police release their figures differently but between July 2006 & 07, there were 80 speeding offences being investigated & 14 cops were issued with court summonses!

A spokeswoman said usually police have a "legitimate reason for exceeding the speed limit". That'll be the police definition of their own "legitimate reason" of course.

PANDA CRASH PEELER SUSPENDED

A Swansea traffic cop who pranged his squad car while on duty has been suspended from driving. South Wales Police are refusing to name the officer who was involved in the incident in Ynystawe on 17th December. The crash was so severe it destroyed a wall & flattened a bus shelter, writing off the Series 5 BMW police car. No one else was involved in the incident.

DRIVING DEATH DETECTIVE DOCKED

Dyfed-Powys Police detective Ashley Brice has only been fined 13 days pay & a fixed penalty (totalling £3,000) for killing Gareth Edward James by trying to overtake a convoy of 3 cars by crossing into an oncoming lane on a sharp bend at 60mph. He crashed into the left curb & hit Mr James' car. He will be allowed to drive again once he has had retraining & a retest.

ROAD CHIEF ESCAPES DISCIPLINE

South Yorkshire Chief constable Meredydd Hughes, who was disqualified for 42 days & fined £350 by Wrexham magistrates for driving at 90mph in a 60mph zone (see last issue), will not face any disciplinary action. Though he has now quit as chairman of roads policing at the Association of Chief Police Officers.

CORRUPTION PROBE SPARKS ARRESTS

An ex-South Wales Police officer & a member of staff have recently been arrested on suspicion of corruption & conspiracy to commit misconduct in public office. A spokeswoman said "The arrests relate to corruption & unlawful disclosure".