

Rebel★Bull

Free/Donation

Herefordshire's favourite news sheet

Issue 5 - May/June 2003

WIN! WIN! WIN!

We are giving away free one year subscriptions to Rebel Bull to five lucky people. Just answer this simple question: what is the first name of the famous Russian anarchist and geographer _____ Kropotkin?

Send your answers to the address on page 4 by 1st June and five winners will be randomly picked out of a hat. Good luck.

MAYDAY!

May 1st 1886 saw 340,000 workers striking all over the United States demanding an 8-hour day. In Chicago alone, 80,000 came out. There the anarchist movement was strong and had taken a great part in the agitation. The following Monday, the police fired on strikers at the McCormick Harvester

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NAZI TAKES SEAT IN TOWN COUNCIL



ELECTIONS



The recent May local elections saw the appointment of John Haycock to the Bromyard and Winslow Town Council. Haycock, of 26 Ballhurst, Bromyard, has stood and attempted to stand for many parties in the past such as the British National Party (BNP), as an Independent and for the Countryside Alliance. This time he was 'elected' under the banner of 'Union Flag Independent - No Asylum Seekers'. Whatever the label his policies remain the same. This racist bigot was among eighteen councillors who were sworn in to the eighteen places up for election without a single vote from the local people. Like we predicted in our last issue, he entered the election race at the 'last minute'.

This is not the first time the disgraced Haycock has sat on the Town Council. He was elected as a BNP councillor back in 2001, yet again without a vote - only sixteen candidates for eighteen places. He was later kicked off the board for failing to turn up to the meetings. Not only an ignorant chauvinist, but a damn bad councillor too. He mysteriously re-

appeared on the Town Council minutes in 2002 where it was noted that he was distributing BNP newsletters door to door around much of the Bromyard area - this from a man who maintains he left the BNP years ago!

In the 2001 general elections he attempted to stand for the Leominster constituency as a Countryside Alliance MP not being intelligent enough to realise that the CA are a pressure group and not a political party i.e. they do not seek election to parliament. D'oh! He was taken to court and consequently dropped his CA election campaign. And he thinks he's clever enough to 'represent' half of Herefordshire!

So the question on everyone's lips is will he be kicked off the council again? Well that all depends on our abilities to organise against him. Inbred Haycock has never met any resistance in the past so who knows how easy it might be to kick him out.

John Haycock can be contacted on 01885 482241 - that's if he's worked out how to use a phone yet!

PUBLIC TRANSPORT TOO EXPENSIVE

It's not a well hidden fact that public transport can be very costly, especially across Herefordshire where many people rely greatly on the rural train and bus

services. For those of us without a car, transport costs can eat heavily into our weekly expenses. Every year bus and train fares continue to rise, and although this may only be by

around 20 pence extra, for those of us on a tight budget this can mount up to a lot of money over a week or month. What's worse is that we don't get the service we pay for.

Rural busses, for example, can be sporadic and unreliable at the best of times and only stopping at

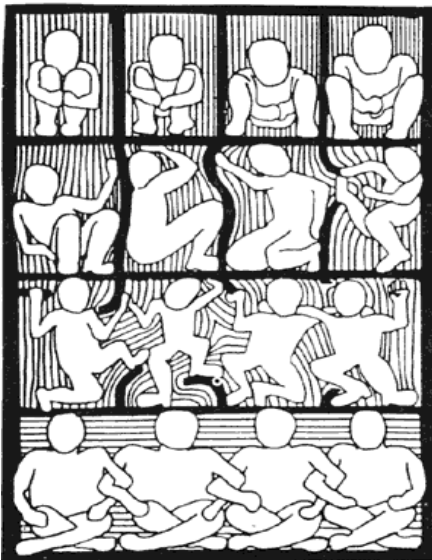
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WORKPLACE ORGANISING

It is not easy to operate in an overwhelmingly hostile environment. Your chances of success are affected by a whole range of factors. Small workplaces have less opportunities than larger ones. Shops and catering are extremely difficult. Established firms with traditions of militancy usually offer more opportunities. White collar workers have different priorities than manual workers, and so on. Despite the difficulties, workplace organization can offer some spectacular opportunities including sabotage, occupations, strikes, go-slows and expropriations! However, a sobering feature is that management intimidation can lead to loss of livelihood. So, unless you couldn't give a toss, some degree of caution is advisable.

Organising at work does have the advantage over other areas of activity insofar as issues tend to be clearer. In times of recession, when the employers are under pressure to hold on to markets and unemployment is high, issues such as redundancies, increasing output (i.e. the rate of exploitation), wage cuts, tougher work conditions, job evaluation, etc., come to the fore. In periods of economic upturn, short, sharp conflicts arise when workers take advantage of their strengthening positions to win back what has been lost in the previous period. Generally then, there is no shortage of issues to take up.

The reactionary nature of trade unions is a difficult issue to tackle as many workers (despite being continuously disappointed) see them as defenders of their interests. Often the best militants identify unions with the class struggle. This false perception must be patiently and carefully argued against both theoretically and with example from the abundant evidence available of official union sabotage of real struggles. In day to day practice, ideas can be spread through casual conversation. More serious and details revolutionary effort might involve meetings of like minded comrades, the production of leaflets and perhaps workplace bulletins etc.



LOCAL ROUND-UP

Herefordshire bin men recently threatened an indefinite strike. The employees of private firm FOCSA were on a lower wage than their Council employed fellow workers. FOCSA backed down at the last minute and gave their employees a wage rise.

At the beginning of April, local man Joe Jenkins of Hereford, was refusing to pay 10% of his income tax, saying the money would be spent on the war in Iraq, which he opposed. Instead he directed all money he didn't pay to the NHS. Such acts of resistance should be an example to us all.

MARDEN PREPARES FOR SEASONAL WORKERS

This summer, like always, sees Herefordshire's largest strawberry grower import labour power from all over Europe (mostly from Eastern Europe) in order to pick the fruit on time. It sees the population of Marden double in size, much to the annoyance of local residents who claim that crime increases and the tranquility of the village becomes disturbed. This year the farm will take on 900 workers and poorly house them in just two accommodation blocks and fifty caravans. Hardly luxury.

But why do the farm employ people from far off countries when there are plenty of people locally that are looking for jobs? Surely it's not because nobody wants to

pick strawberries?

The reason behind this is that foreign labour is often cheaper and so it increases profits for the boss when they don't have to pay higher wages. Foreign workers are also often oblivious to domestic laws on such things as the minimum wage. And as seasonal workers, they are only on temporary (if any) contracts meaning that they don't get the same rights as many people do who work on permanent contracts - such as the right to sick pay.

For more information about casualisation and your rights at work contact the Solidarity Federation on 01772 739724 or email solfed@solfed.org.uk

A few articles from this issue of Rebel Bull have been taken from various issues of Resistance - the bulletin of the Anarchist Federation. To subscribe to Resistance send £4 (12 issues) to AF, PO Box 375, Knaphill, Woking, Surrey, GU21 2XL. Cheques payable to AF

FREE THE TRAINS AND BUSES

a select few places leaving many people with long walks home. Not particularly desirable in the rain with the weekly shopping to carry.

Traffic Problem

It can't be ignored that Hereford, like many other cities and towns, has a traffic problem. For the past decade the only answer to this has been a bypass. The plans for the previous bypass were rejected back in the early '90s. These plans have been re-submitted and, with the weight of local business behind them, Hereford looks set to have it's own 'access road' (albeit extremely damaging to the local environment) within a few years.

Solution

But we propose a different solution: one of free public transport. Not only would

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this encourage a lot more motorists onto the trains and busses, it would mean that everybody could afford to get where they wanted when they wanted. Moreover, the public transport industry should be owned by it's users and workers for their benefit only - not by the bosses. If Herefordshire Council and the travel companies wont give us the service we deserve then surely this solution is worth a try.

DISTRIBUTE REBEL BULL!

Can you take a bundle of Rebel Bull to distribute to friends, workmates or the local shop? Then get in touch (contact details on page 4).

IRAQI 'FREEDOM'?

Operation "Iraqi Freedom" has supposedly liberated Iraqi Arabs and Kurds. The trouble is, what freedom and peace can this sort of war bring? It was the creation of Iraq by colonial powers, their backing for Saddam against Iran, the imposition of sanctions when he stopped behaving as the US wanted, and the blind-eye turned to the suffering of Kurds by western governments that has also been responsible for the misery of ordinary people. So this is a war not to right those wrongs but to improve the US economic and political influence in the oil rich region. We all know this, and millions of people have told the UK and US governments "Not In Our Name", but were still unable to stop it. Here in Hereford many anti-war protests brought parts of the city to a standstill (see photo). Meanwhile, not less but more US involvement is called for even by leaders who said they opposed the war, to "restore order". The western and Iraqi middle classes patronisingly call looting unfortunate and misguided. They fail to understand that in the space between repression and poverty under a tyrant and an equally uncertain future, it makes sense to take what you can and need. It is survival, not theft. Of course there are people acting against working class interests – the contract stealing of what should be common resources for personal profit. But government at the point of a US gun has removed opportunities for more constructive self-



A sit down protest in Commercial Road outside the Armed Forces Careers on the day war broke out

organisation and community based solutions. This is what war – any statist war – does. The rich and the brutal get richer and more brutal at the expense of the rest. The Iraqi working class doesn't need US troops to impose order but peace to organise autonomously.

Iraqi 'self-rule'?

But working class self-organisation is not the same as the nationalist self-rule which newly emerging leaders in Iraq are demanding. Anarchists know that self-rule granted by western powers will mean yet more military-backed divisive

repression of ordinary people of all ethnic and religious groups. It might come in the form of twisted religious clerics like those who run Iran, or of ethnically defined regional government that will oppress minorities, or, most likely, by Arab dominated secular government promoting the interests of the Sunni middle class within global capitalism. Ordinary people need to unite across such divisions, and revolutionaries must help them.

Western "democracy"?

But appealing to western leaders to see reason isn't working. International opposition has continued, and even grown as the war unfolds and we watch the true US agenda reveal itself. If Anarchists fear what will come next in Iraq we also point out the defects of our own countries' supposedly democratic systems. The majority of people in Britain opposed the war, and between 1 and 2 million people in England were present on a single march in London (that's between 1 in 30 and 1 in 60 people in the population!). But our democratically elected government entirely ignore our demands. So, what exactly is so good about "western democracy"? "We have the freedom to demonstrate", liberals argue. But this "democracy" is robbing us, as it will rob Iraqis, of the freedom to bring about real change.

ORIGINS OF MAYDAY

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works and 6 workers were killed.

The next day a protest meeting was held in the centre of Chicago. At the end, the police began to attack the rally. In the following melee, a bomb was thrown at the police, killing one outright and fatally wounding 7 others. Evidence came to light later that the bomb had been thrown by a police agent. The State and the bosses, however, used this incident to victimise leading anarchists, some of whom had spoken at the rally, and had already left it to go on elsewhere when the bomb was thrown. After a farce of a trial, where the judge showed openly how biased he was, with a jury made up of businessmen, their clerks, and a relative of a dead policeman, four anarchists were hanged, another preferring to take his own life before sentence could be passed.

In 1888, the American Federation of Labour continued the 8-hour day movement with May 1 as a day of action. The Paris conference of the Second International of Working People fixed Mayday as

an international day of solidarity for the 8-hour day. That year, demonstrations took place all over Europe and America. The anarchists had not been satisfied with the granting of 8-hours, they saw the actions as a springboard to further action and organisation and the destruction of capitalism.

In Britain, when workers took the day off on May 1, a previous Labour government conveniently granted a public holiday- but not necessarily on May 1st but the closest Monday to it! What a joke!

May 1st should be brought back to life as a day when we don't go to work, when we take over the streets and prepare for the time when every day will be a May Day, when we take on the State and the boss class, when we ignore the pathetic manipulations of the trade union bureaucrats and their leftist friends(who conveniently disguise the fact that the Chicago martyrs were anarchists). When boring ritualised demonstrations are replaced by meaningful mass action. Roll on that day!

GET E-BULL

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HEREFORDSHIRE PIONEERS THE POSTAL VOTE

It's been hard to ignore, but on May 1st, aside from being International Workers' Day, local elections took place all over England, including Herefordshire.

Over recent years, voter apathy has increased dramatically to the point where the state seems to be getting scared at the level of non-participation. Government task forces have been set up to deal with the 'problem' and solutions such as compulsory voting have been suggested. Many 'experts' claim the problem is that the ballot box is simply too inconvenient for many people. So other solutions such as e-voting (voting on the internet) have been thought up to make things easier for the hard

working voter. Here in Herefordshire the local council is pioneering a system of postal voting. From what we can make out this involves a huge PR drive to get people to vote. Posters everywhere and

adverts in the Hereford Times and Hereford Journal. Even huge banners like the one seen defacing the side of the



planning building in Blueschool Street to encourage us that voting is important.

The reality is that it's not. The one thing all the politicians and ministerial advisors cannot seem to understand is that people

aren't interested in the game of parliamentary politics anymore. It's a game that doesn't benefit us and simply replaces one set of leaders from the Coca Cola party with another set of leaders from the Pepsi party. The drink of course isn't coke, it's capitalism – the economic system that sees power and profit lie with the few for the benefit of the few and at the expense of the rest of us.

One thing that is for sure is that the Herefordshire Anarchist Group won't be standing in elections, claiming to represent you or making promises at election time and then forgetting them as soon as we get into power. Instead we encourage people to organise their own affairs and to act with others on an equal level for the benefit of the community and not the rich.

Don't vote - Organise!

SPECIAL METALS TO SHED 90 JOBS



It was recently announced that Special Metals (what used to be Wiggins) will put 90 workers out of a job. Top bosses are offering voluntary redundancy to any workers willing to take it. They are blaming the international market and the downfall in demand by 25% since September 11th. Special Metals has been the scene for recent strikes in Hereford where the 700+ workforce walked out over pay and conditions. The GMB organised strike won through as bosses backed down to the pathetic 1% pay rise the union were demanding. The union have looked luke-warm over this issue too accepting these redundancies reluctantly like the Transport and General Workers Union did over the 200 Bulmers redundancies. The reality is that the workers are paying the price for the boss' mistakes. Of course this is just capitalism in practise, going from crisis to crisis. These redundancies have to be resisted. Recently, soon to be redundant Fiat

workers in Italy fought back against the company by blocking train lines and roads in protest at the job losses.

We believe that the workplace and all it's affairs should be controlled and owned by its workers for the benefit of society, not for the boss to make private gains. The only job losses that should be happening at Special Metals should be the employers and owners.

Like what you read?

You can subscribe to 6 issues (a year) of Rebel Bull for just £2, towards postage and 'packaging'. Send well concealed monies to address on the right.

WHO ARE WE?

Rebel Bull has been produced by the Herefordshire Anarchist Group. Unlike the media would have you believe, anarchists aren't a bunch of mindless thugs, hardcore rioters or terrorists. We do actually have a few good ideas we reckon the working class, and all the oppressed could use.

Our Statement

We are a group of local anarchists coming from all parts of Herefordshire with the aim of creating a global anarchist society. We have a vision of a classless society where people would live free from authority and oppression of any kind. Such a world would demand organisation on a horizontal (i.e. non-hierarchical) level and would rely on the mutual aid, co-operation and solidarity of the people involved. We believe that for the creation of such a society the destruction of capitalism is absolutely vital, and that only the direct action by the entire working class can achieve this.

Unlike other leftist groups, we see no purpose for the state, no matter what stage of the revolution or whoever's controlling it.

While the Herefordshire Anarchist Group was established to create a global anarchist society, we organise around local issues and promote anarchism in our own cider swilling, straw chewing county.

Want more info on our group and/or anarchism?

Want to join? Contact:

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