

## **Bookfair Assembly Room programme at the 2013 Bookfair**

The Bookfair Collective has co-ordinated this programme of meetings in the Bookfair Assembly Room. **We believe that the topics under discussion encapsulate some (but obviously not all) of the key issues facing ordinary people today, be they political activists or not.** It is intended that upto an hour of each meeting will be given over to questions and discussion.

The **Assembly Room is on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor of the Trinity Centre**, and will be accessed via the main Stalls room on that floor. It is a large room holding 80+ people, so your assistance is welcomed in starting & ending meetings promptly – please enter/leave quietly! Because of the size of the Room we will be using a small PA.

Our thanks go to all those who agreed to speak, and to the volunteer facilitators.

### **Bookfair Assembly Room**

#### **11.45-1.15: Anarchism and the future of political struggle**

Panel - Nick Heath (Anarchist Federation), Tony Woods (Haringey Solidarity Group), Matt Wilson.

Facilitator - Sy (Bristol Indymedia)

Revolutionary anarchism emerged within the international workers movement of the 19th century as a radical expression of the need to do away with a society built upon class exploitation and hierarchy.

Far from mere philosophical speculation, anarchy is a practice that seeks to create a society based on equality and liberty. As such it is vital to assess our potential as a progressive movement and the opportunities for building the future we want. A discussion about where we are and where we are heading.

#### **1.30-3: Shrewsbury 24 Campaign - 'Guilty my arse!'**

Speakers - Terry Renshaw and Eileen Turnbull (S24Campaign)

Facilitator - Steve Mills (Unison – personal capacity & Bristol IWW)

Terry Renshaw will talk about his experiences on strike in the turbulent early 1970's, and Eileen Turnbull will discuss the new evidence she has discovered which echoes recent occurrences of black-listing and police corruption, and supports their justice campaign 40 years on.

In June 1972 construction workers held their first national strike. They lodged a pay claim with employers, the NFBTE, for an increase of £30 a week across the board; a 35 hour week and the lump eradicated; but crucially they wanted improved Health & Safety on building sites. From 1970-4 there were 391 fatalities on building sites. In the same years there were 148,000 reported industrial injuries. Many building sites were death traps.

After 12 weeks the strike ended on the 16th September 1972. Against all odds the construction workers succeeded with their pay claim and returned to work. For many building workers however they faced the blacklist, some never to work in the industry again.

On 14th February 1973, five months after the strike had ended, 24 building workers were picked up by the police and between them charged with 243 offences. Crucially these included conspiracy to intimidate. The police alleged that the charges were in relation to instances which took place mainly on the 6th September 1972 on the Brookside site in Shrewsbury. On that day the pickets visited 7 sites in the Shrewsbury area. They were escorted by up to 80 policemen. No one had been cautioned, no names were taken, and there were no arrests.

On 3rd October 1973 the first of three trials was held at Shrewsbury Crown Court. All six pickets faced 3 charges: Conspiracy to intimidate, Affray, and Unlawful assembly. After a 12 week trial Des Warren was sentenced to three years imprisonment on each charge; Ricky Tomlinson received two years; and John McKinsie Jones 9 months; all to run concurrently. Three more pickets were jailed in the second trial, whilst the remaining pickets in the second & third trials received suspended sentences.

The pickets have always maintained they were innocent of all charges. They believe there was government interference in bringing charges against them. They have campaigned for many years to have the miscarriage of justice overturned. The researcher for the campaign Eileen Turnbull has discovered evidence which points clearly

to government interference in the prosecutions of the pickets. This evidence has formed the basis for their application to the Criminal Cases Review Commission which was lodged on 3rd April 2012. She is aware that there are other documents which will prove the full extent of government interference in the Shrewsbury trials. She feels that these documents are crucial to the case, and should be submitted to the CCRC as further fresh evidence to demonstrate the pickets were innocent of all charges.

Once in receipt of these documents the campaign believes that the CCRC will then be in a position to consider the case in its entirety, find that the convictions of the Shrewsbury pickets were unsafe, and refer them back to the Court of Appeal.

Chris Grayling, the Justice Secretary, has recently announced that the documents appertaining to the trials at Shrewsbury will be withheld from the public for a further 10 years! 2021 will be the next review date for release which will be 50 years after the dispute ended.

Ricky Tomlinson has sponsored an e-petition calling on the Government to release the documents now. He believes that the government are playing a waiting game, the youngest picket is 65 and the eldest 84: "They are cynically waiting for us to die before they will release the papers which we believe will prove our innocence". The campaign and e-petition on is supported by many trade unions including Unite, UCATT, CWU, FBU, PCS, UNISON, & GMB. Please sign Ricky's e-petition to assist the campaign in their efforts to overturn this miscarriage of justice: the link is <http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/35394> with a deadline of 27 June 2013.

Contact the campaign through the website <http://www.shrewsbury24campaign.org.uk> or ring 07927 937773

### 3-4.30: **Greece: mainstream, Left, and Nazis – where is Anarchy?**

Speaker - Christos Boukalas (author of chapter 17 of the book 'Revolt and Crisis in Greece').

Facilitator - Nikos Kapitsinis (Real Democracy Bristol)

The capitalist attack unleashed in the context of the current economic crisis has acute (often lethal) consequences for all the peoples of Europe. Yet, thus far, it only has significant political repercussions in two countries: Italy and Greece.

Worried and exasperated, political 'scientists' and journalists describe the two countries as being in a situation of 'ingovernability'. Their fear is not unreasonable: in both countries the economic crisis has metastasised into political crisis. Their political systems cannot cope with the severe pressures put on them from 'above' (by transnational capital and powerful EU states), and the resistance from 'below' (by the majority of Italian and Greek people).

Charged with implementing the measures that ravage the population, politicians, dominant parties, and the state are targets of popular fury. The political crisis is (for now, at least) deeper and more acute in Greece. The political establishment that offered stability for 40 years is swept away overnight, the popular bases of support for the dominant parties have collapsed, and a new, precarious but perilous, re-alignment of state power has taken place.

This talk will try to map out the political crisis in Greece, and the perspectives ahead. It will discuss the fate of mainstream political parties, the sudden rise of the Euro-left, and the ominous ascendance of a Nazi party. It will focus on the new configuration of the Greek state along openly fascist terms, the (temporary) defeat of the social movements, and the condition of Greek Anarchy and its role in the present situation.

### 4.45-6.15: **The capitalist crisis - what are the alternatives to austerity?**

Panel - Dariush (Kaput Collective), Kieran (Bristol AFed), Di Parkin (BRHG) & Nikos Kapitsinis (Real Democracy Bristol)

Facilitator - Nate

Again and again politicians tell us that 'there is no alternative'. Even the Labour parliamentary opposition seem to have bought into this idea - merely arguing that cuts have gone 'too far too fast'. This meeting will debate the origins of the current crisis and ask why despite all the cuts, capitalist governments seem unable to resolve the crisis and return to 'business as usual'.

As Anarchists, what can we put forward as an alternative economic path that can bring us closer to a just and sustainable society?