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EPIDEMIC HITS QUEEN

TERROR ALERT!

Discontent over housing reaches breaking point as 'Palacites' squat royal wardrobe



Taking royalties: squatters intend to stay put in the Queen's wardrobe

BY ROY L. MESS

SQUATTERS HAVE been discovered living in one of the Queen's personal walk-in wardrobes, and have now barricaded themselves in.

Amazingly, in the worst security breach ever seen, palace sources say they have no idea how long the

squatters have been living there, or how they got in.

This morning sees outrage from the royal family, as they call in terror police and marines to evict the uninvited guests.

An army of lawyers has been drafted in to deal with the aftermath.

The squatters, calling themselves

'The Palacites,' made an exclusive statement to the MESHO at 5am this morning: "The Queen is the biggest landowner in the world. Inside Buckingham Palace alone there are 775 rooms, and since we got in here we've counted 78 bathrooms.

She lives like a Queen while thousands of people across this country

don't even have one wardrobe or bathroom to call their own."

Government sources are concerned the news could cause an epidemic of ordinary, law abiding citizens to start taking housing into their own hands in this sensational way.

Speculation is that extortionate housing costs and the soaring debt crisis are largely to blame.

NATIONAL LOTTERY

This week's numbers

23

23

23

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23

**YOUR INSIDE GUIDE TO
SQUATTING**

An Introduction to Squatting

A definition of squatting is the act of occupying an abandoned or unoccupied space or building, without the owners permission. This could in theory be anything from an unused patch of ground in an industrial estate, to an area of ancient woodland, to an empty building.

There is an image of squatters in this country as dirty youths living in abandoned buildings, but this isn't always the case. Some squat out of political belief, some out of necessity. Lots of squatters are just normal people, squatting is their only housing option.

If we look at it on a global scale, there are as many as one billion squatters in the world, (about one in seven people). Squatting is a way to gain shelter when no other means are available, and, as many would agree, access to shelter is a basic human right; using an otherwise disused space makes sense. The high number of squatters globally is due to the fact that in many of the world's poorer countries there are shanty towns that are self built on the edge of larger cities.

BY BELLO COS

Obviously the majority of squats in England are in cities but also there are many protest sites and land squats, throughout the UK, protecting our quickly dying out green areas. The basic laws surrounding squatting in England are centred around the laws of trespass, which is covered by common law, and a civil matter rather than a criminal one.

This law states that provided no forced entry is evident, and the occupiers have secured the property so they have exclusive access to it, then those occupying the property have the right to stay in the building. The legal owners must take them to court to prove that they own the property. There is a legal warning which squatters often use to inform those attempting to enter the property of their legal rights, this states that anyone entering the property by violence or by threatening violence will be prosecuted.

The squats within our cities are not all just residential squats, some are social centres and autonomous spaces that are so badly needed in this society where time and space costs so much. These are spaces where we can

continue to build our communities, and see alternative ways of living. People have used squats and autonomous spaces both urban and rural, to take control of their own lives.

For decades, squat movements across Europe and beyond have fought capitalist development, contributing to local struggles against destruction of communities and green spaces; providing alternatives to profit-making and consumer culture.

Some squats, especially social centers, are run on a non-hierarchical level - meaning that they are organized by everyone, no one is in charge. Often these spaces are open for all to become involved, and the idea is that everyone has equal opportunities within the collective

In the current climate of unaffordable house prices and high rent squatting is a real solution to the housing crisis. With levels of debt rising to the highest ever there are more home repossessions, leading to more homeless people and more empty buildings - its clear that unless you're a venture capitalist this just doesn't add up. Squatting is a way for communities to take back what should be theirs, allowing for community spaces, for green spaces and housing for all.

ST PAULS INVADED BY YUPPIES

ONE OF Bristol's most vibrant inter-city communities is under threat. Over the past couple of years Bristol City Council, working with various companies, has been pushing the old community out to make way for yuppie flats and gated communities. Many people who have resided in the area for years have been displaced as more houses are destroyed, and more flats built.

WOT NO TENANT?

There are 288,763 private houses sitting empty in England, according to new research.

Over the previous decade house prices have been increasing dramatically, partially based on a shortage of supply, but homes have been sitting empty in all regions of the country.

Yet, the picture is more alarming in some areas than others.

Some 15 local authorities have 'high' levels of housing stock sitting empty.

These include Pendle, which has 6.2 % of its homes sitting empty, Manchester (5.7%) and Liverpool (5 %).

House prices in these 15 areas were found to be an average of 17% lower than the national level, while average wages are ten per cent lower than the national average.

The survey also reveals there are 89,953 vacant public dwellings, some 1.5 per cent of the public dwelling stock.

Twelve local authorities have more than five per cent of their public dwelling stock vacant, of which 9 are in the north of England, with the highest proportions in Tyndale (7.9%), Hartlepool (6.7 %) and North Norfolk (6.5 %).

Direct action is needed to address the issue, according to inside sources.

"We would like people to consider occupying all properties vacant for more than six months, not just those properties that have been unoccupied for more than two years," said our source.

Empty property is defined as homes which have been unoccupied for six months or more.

POLICE CUPID STUNT

Four car loads of cops burst into a squat in Kemp Town, Brighton, in the evening of 19 Feb, accusing squatters of abstracting electricity.

Section 17 of P.A.C.E. was used (reasonable suspicion that an offence was being committed on the premises), to gain entry, despite the squatters producing an electricity contract with a supplier.

They were then given the hobson's choice of stay and get arrested or get out, before being bullied out onto the street.

The police have found 'abstracting electricity' a useful law to evict squats without waiting for a court order, but as squatters around here have got savvy and taken out contracts, the cops have ignored the law (surprise, surprise) and have evicted anyway.

Interestingly the police log shows the reason to be because of a DRO (Displaced Residential Occupier), as the owner told the police he was away on holiday, yet the property had been vacant for months and was completely empty.

TO HOUSE AND TO HOLD

Lambeth council forgot about 19 houses it owned, leaving two squatters able to claim ownership after they proved in court they'd lived in the houses for 12 years.

A neighbour said "The council have only themselves to blame for this". One of the squatters, Ian Ames, sold his new house and moved to Australia, which understandably upset his neighbours, but the other, Timothy Ellis, continued to live in the house.

IS YOUR AREA UNDER THREAT? THINGS TO WATCH OUT FOR...

MORE AND more areas are being changed from community based areas to gentrified yuppie strongholds. Is your local area under threat? Here are some tell tale signs:

- Police action to stop 'street crime'
- Planning permission applications for flats and 'gated communities'
- Trendy cafés and bars where the old greasy spoon was
- Rent prices rising
- Council offering discounted house improvements

These are just some of the many tactics the council uses to change your area into a soulless yuppie pit. If you notice a rise in these activities it is time for you and your neighbours to resist together.



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HOUSING ADVICE

If you're homeless or having a problem with your housing, make sure you find out your rights, or else you'll get fucked over more easily.

- We can't give much advice here as each case is different and it could all get pretty complicated, but remember...

- You have some rights as a tenant or owner occupier.

- If you have a housing problem developing, sort it out now. Ignoring the problem won't make it go away.

- Get advice from an independent organisation before talking to the council, leaving your home or arguing with the landlord. There are often local advice and support groups, or try the Advisory Service for Squatters or Citizens' Advice Bureau. They should be able to tell you what you are entitled to and give you options on what to do.

- Don't let anyone push you around or ignore you. If you aren't normally assertive and brave, now is a good time to start!

- The local council may have duty to help you if you are homeless or will be homeless soon. You also have to meet other criteria, so check with independent advisers whether it applies to you. Don't assume the council want to help you – they'd probably rather not.

- You might qualify for the council housing waiting list, but may have to wait a long time if you aren't considered in a 'vulnerable' enough position.

- Housing Benefit and a Crisis Loan might be an option, to get rent paid to private landlords or a housing association.

- You could find an empty house and occupy it. Ask some more experienced squatters for help or read the ASS website to get you started. For some this is a short term solution until other housing is arranged, but for others it can be longer term.

- If you find yourself with literally nowhere to sleep tonight – don't panic! Try asking friends, find your local night shelter, or get imaginative. And it's nothing to be ashamed of, if you do end up sleeping on the street.

Housing problems? Try the direct action approach!

BY PISSED O'RYAN

WE ALL know the stereotype of the clichéd squatter: half starved dog being dragged along by frayed polyprop, encrusted white powder building up around nostrils barely visible through umpteen piercings.

This is the type of bullshit this project is hoping to dispel, and to further this cause I aim to demonstrate that squatting has never been the sole reserve of crusty wrong uns.

In fact, it was once a mass movement.

This island has had a long history of working class resistance to the greed of wealthy landlords.

The Glasgow rent strikes of 1915 are a great example of this, in which attempts to implement large rent increases led to thousands of tenants refusing out right to pay rent at all.

When the Sheriff's officers were sent to evict rebellious tenants, drums, bells and trumpets would be used to rally support from the community, and large numbers of fellow strikers would come and physically block the officers' path, bombarding them with bags of flour and successfully resisting evictions.

A massive demonstration and march to the Glasgow Sheriff's court in November scared the government into passing the '1915 Rent Restriction Act'.

The rent strike was not led by a single group but was a popular struggle involving many different groups and individuals.

At its peak, in October 1915, 30,000 tenants participated.

The aftermath of the Second World War brought about another mass movement of DIY housing.

Responding to a situation in which the government was seemingly unable to provide housing for hundreds

of families, committees made up of mostly ex-servicemen went about installing homeless families and their furniture in unoccupied houses under the cover of night.

The campaign was most active in south coast resorts, particularly Brighton, in part to protest at the way big seaside houses were kept empty for most of the year, then let out at unaffordable rents during the brief holiday season.

The squatting movement took off in a big way the following year. The target of the 1946 campaign was the hundreds of empty army barracks, a scandalous occurrence at a time of mass housing shortages.

The movement began when the Fielding family of Scunthorpe, desperate for somewhere to live, moved into the former officers' mess of an unoccupied anti-aircraft camp.

The news quickly spread and other families in a similar predicament moved into other huts in the camp.

The movement soon became national with the seizure of hundreds of camps across Britain.

By October 1,038 camps in England and Wales had been occupied by 39,535 people, with a further 4,000 squatting in Scotland.

The most inspiring aspect to the movement was the level of communal organisation and spontaneous co-operation demonstrated by the squatters.

Communal cooking, laundering and nursing facilities sprang up and Squatters Protection Societies and Federations were formed.

It shows how taking matters into our own hands can not only provide material results, but can empower

us to work together as a community, rather than relying on petty state handouts which keep us subservient and isolated.

These examples of resistance, just a few of the many forms of housing direct action that occurred throughout the last hundred years, demonstrate what we can achieve when we work together, in alliances based on common aspirations and common enemies.

The state and the propertied elite they aim to protect don't give a shit about the struggles we face just to get by, their interest is solely in maintaining their power and the screwed economic order.

As we exist today, they can carry out their policies with minimal resistance.

Our fragmented society lacks the means of mobilisation to fight for our right to decent housing, but it doesn't have to be this way.

The next time you have worries regarding your housing situation, whatever they may be, talk to your neighbours and you're likely to find they have similar concerns.

By acting collectively we can fight for the things that will improve our lives.



Fighting for justice: Harry Cowley broke squats for the benefit of homeless families

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VIEW FROM INSIDE

ON RECLAIMING LAND FOR INSPIRATION



Hazel, Tree Dweller

Hazel moved on to her first protest site two years ago. Since then she has lived at several protest sites around the UK, canoeing near nuclear submarines, blockading military bases, building treehouses, digging tunnels, 'locking-on' to bulldozers and cultivating new life forms on her socks. She currently spends most of her time at Titnore Woods near Worthing.

Why do you live on squatted land?

I'm here to stop this woodland being destroyed for yet another Tesco and a huge, unnecessary housing development. Similar protest camps have been successful in protecting areas of countryside before. It feels good to be resisting, every day, the greedy developers who want to destroy the countryside to squeeze more money out of the people they've stolen the land from in the first place.

Did you rent before? What was it like?

I used to rent rooms in houses and flats. It was really boring as I was tied into working full time to pay the rent and I felt boxed in indoors as well. It felt like I was wasting my life, my money and energy.

What's an average day like for you?

Every day is different, of course. I wake up in a treehouse I built myself, admire the view for a while then abseil down for breakfast. Quite a bit of the day can be taken up on routine jobs like chopping firewood, collecting water

"Squatting together seems to a build strong and supportive community atmosphere"

from the nearest houses, washing up and cooking. There's normally someone with a project to help out with like building more defences from eviction, making a bike trailer or organising fundraising events. We have plenty of time for chatting with each other and visitors or playing games and music. Sometimes you find yourself working manically day and night for a bit, but other times there's just a bit of washing up to do and then sunbathing.

Have you been evicted?

I was in an eviction at a site in South Wales against the huge gas pipeline. I locked myself to a tree-house. It took two days for the bailiffs to get us all out of the trees, and then they spent five days digging out the tunnel, even though no-one was in there. It was pretty traumatic knowing this amazing woodland habitat was going to be trashed, but you pick yourself up and keep going.

You must have a lot of dealings with police and landowners. What's your favourite quote from one of them?

The owner of Titnore Woods said in the local paper something along the lines of: "If I had it my way I'd go down the camp with my shotgun, but unfortunately we have to go through the courts."

What's your favourite possession?

Possessions just tie you down, but I do quite like my double bass.

What's the best thing you've ever found in a skip?

Oh so many things! Humus, mattresses, wine, all my clothes...

Most of the materials for my house came from a skip, most of the food I eat and the clothes I wear too. Everything really.

What are you learning at the moment?

I'm learning to play guitar, and to grow vegetables. I want to work out how to make a cycle powered generator sometime.

What do you think about the state of the world?

We're probably all fucked, but I don't like to be negative.

Have you got any events coming up?

There's our Sunday Free Cafe at the end of every month now. I'll probably go to the Punx Piknik at Faslane Peace Camp in Scotland 2nd-4th May. Then we're taking a stall around festivals.

Tom, Bristol squatter

Tom has been living in squats in Bristol since his ex-girlfriend threw him out of her flat in 2003. He volunteers at a vegan cafe and a refugee support project. He also spends time campaigning on environmental issues, animal rights, and the like.

Why do you squat?

I don't believe in property ownership. I see squatting as a way to sort out a place to live without pandering to a system which demands I waste my time in a pointless, depressing job, so I can pay rent or mortgage. I don't want to justify the state by claiming benefits either. Squatting is also an autonomous redistribution of wealth through reclaiming spaces from the rich.

Do you try to involve other people in squatting too?

I've been involved with squatted social centres, cafes and parties. We often help out people who want or need to start squatting.

Have you ever rented a house or a flat? What was it like compared to squatting?

I rented for a while. It was really frustrating that although it was my home I couldn't do what I wanted with it, because of the contract. And it's such a lot of money.

What's your favourite quote from a police officer or land lord?

One policeman read the legal notice I gave him, about squatters rights and he said "Well everyone's got different lifestyle choices. You wouldn't catch me behind that door but, well, enjoy yourselves."

On the other hand, when I was asking another cop, on camera, what he could do about the illegal eviction in progress, he said "I don't give a toss - I've dealt with you before."

What's hard about squatting?

Dealing with housemates, cops and landlords, fixing run down buildings, not knowing when you'll have to move again.

What's fun about squatting?

Dealing with housemates, cops and landlords, fixing run down buildings, not knowing when you'll have to move again. All these can be fun too, depending on the situation and how you take it at the time.

How do you manage for money, food and all that?

I eat from shop bins, get clothes and furniture from skips, hitch hike, and generally find ways to do most things for no money. It can be finding things, swapping things with friends, working in exchange, or just making do. It's so often assumed that money's essential for entertainment, travel education, its not. It just means that things are easily available with no effort and therefore little pleasure. What little money I do need I work for. People assume we're poor and hungry but the supermarkets throw out so much good food we eat like kings most of the time.

Who do you live with?

At the moment I live with 5 others. All of us are in our twenties. There's one girl I've lived with for years now and then the two Czech guys only joined us recently but fitted straight in. For a while, I lived with about 15 people in a four-bedroom house, which was fun but obviously pretty hectic, so some of us moved on.

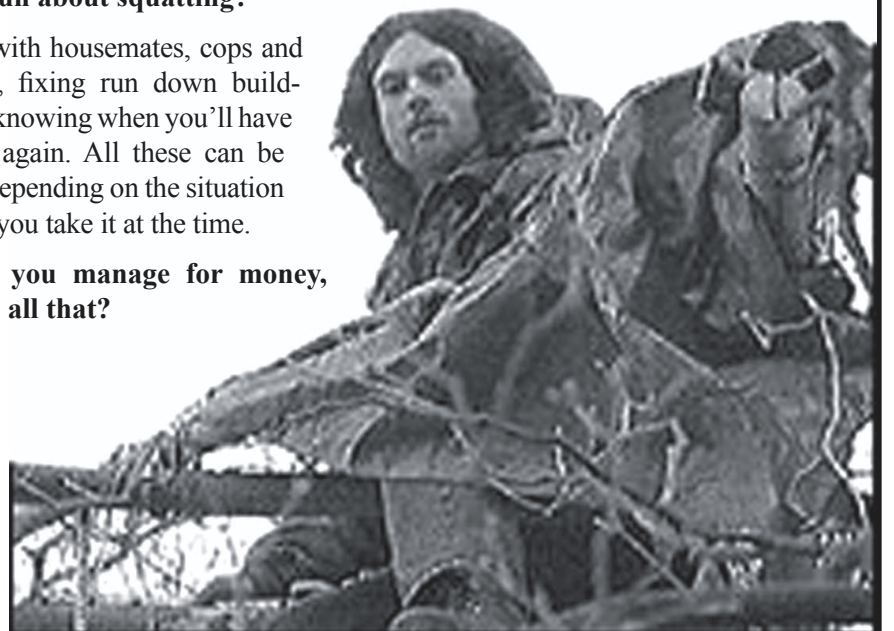
Squatting together seems to a build strong and supportive community atmosphere. I suppose it comes from working together, sharing whatever we need, and because our friendships aren't constrained by 'normal' society. When we don't have much, it's OK because we still have each other.

What does squatting bring to the rest of society?

It brings the use of reclaimed spaces for positive social and community based interactions, without needing money. Making communities and life in general more vibrant. It can make education, good food and social events more accessible to people with little or no money.

Can anyone squat?

Anyone can. It's obviously a lot easier with a few other people and it helps if you've used a screwdriver before, but you learn as you go along and there's many ways to get help starting from handbooks to associations. It's possible to squat with children too, although it's got to be hard work and an extra worry whenever there's a problem.



OCCUPATION: IT'S SQUAT YOU MAKE OF IT

SQUATTING IS direct action housing. For whatever reasons people choose to squat, the act itself is breaking down the control held over one of life's most fundamental requirements to an autonomous and social level.

Most housing, whether paid for through the death grip of a mortgage or through subservience to a landlord, is the largest cost we are expected to pay in our lives. Of course for not fitting into a system based on property ownership, squatters face repression from that system. At the same time we are all seeking to retain some form of autonomy which is afforded to us only through squatting. By taking our housing needs into our own hands we are taking a step away from the power held over us, we are making use of the spaces that capitalism has left to decay.

As well as on the personal level, squatting is used as a practical tool to counter the system in a more organised way. Social centres can provide auto-

nous zones for networking, organising, fund-raising, and inspiring cohesion within a community. They can also be a lot of fun, either to be involved in or just to visit for workshops or benefit gigs.

Squatted warehouse parties and raves are for many the first and often only experience of squatting. This can lead people to think that's what its all about. Whilst some of us do do live immersed in a sound track of gabba, breakcore and dirty d 'n' b, its a far cry from my current residence with its board game obsession to the tunes of mandolin, flute and acoustic guitar. Raves, although not everyone's cup of tea, do provide one form of temporary autonomous space. Other reclamations of space for specific cultural purposes like punks picnics or unlicensed festivals, although not technically squatting, are necessary actions to ensure we can continue to exist outside our prescribed boxes.

Obviously the potential for temporary squatted events is far greater than just parties. For example in recent years Temporary Autonomous Art squats have brought together a variety of groups and individuals in a number of cities across the country, culminating in four day extravaganzas of cultural interactive autonomous creativity. Lady-Squat has provided a more radical side to the Lady-Fest celebrations of feminist culture and this February there was the first UK national squatters meeting since either the 1970s or 1940s (no one was entirely sure!).

Another form of squatting was seen in the numerous eco-action campaigns that have happened over the last twenty years in the UK. During the 90s a number of sites, including tree-sits and whole squatted streets, were set up to facilitate action against the government's road-building schemes of the time. Although few managed to stop the individual 'developments', a u-turn in the road building programme was achieved and the occupation of spaces has proven many times since to be effective at least in costing the development companies vast sums of money. The occupation of woodland using treehouses and tunnels can be difficult and expensive to evict. Last year in the south of Wales squatters even took up residence inside a section

of the 200 mile long gas pipeline that was devastating the Welsh countryside.

At the moment, there are squatted protest sites at Bilston Glen in Scotland, Nine Ladies in Derbyshire, Camp Bling in Southend, Titnore in Sussex and Tara in Ireland, which is undergoing eviction as I type this. In some instances these sites can last for years and the focus of site-life can shift from building defences and preparing for the bailiffs come eviction to more community related activities like open days and cafés and exploration into more sustainable methods of living. Climate Camp is another prime example of a temporary event on squatted land.

At the moment in this country squatters aren't as well connected as we could be, but as a network we seem to be gathering momentum. I think its important to recognise that as individuals we are all struggling towards freedom not just in our own lives but for those around us too. To succeed we must stand in solidarity with others involved in the same struggle, even though we may have some differences. I want to end this article by quoting a piece of graffiti from the city I'm currently squatting that always makes me smile;

"If your heart is free then the ground you're standing on is liberated territory. Defend it"

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A legal warning notice on Section 6 of the Criminal Law Act 1977 which protects the rights of occupiers of properties.

If you are squatting it is strongly advised you display this notice to inform people of your rights - and let them know that you are aware of your rights

LEGAL WARNING

Section 6 Criminal Law Act 1977

As amended by Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994

THAT we live in this property, it is our home and we intend to stay here.

THAT at all times there is at least one person in this property.

THAT any entry or attempt to enter into this property without our permission is a criminal offence as any one of us who is in physical possession is opposed to entry without our permission.

THAT if you attempt to enter by violence or by threatening violence we will prosecute you. You may receive a sentence of up to six months imprisonment and/or a fine of up to £5,000.

THAT if you want to get us out you will have to take out a summons for possession in the County Court or in the High Court, or produce to us a written statement or certificate in terms of S.12A Criminal Law Act, 1977 (as inserted by Criminal Justice and Public Order Act, 1994).

THAT it is an offence under S.12A (8) Criminal Law Act 1977 (as amended) to knowingly make a false statement to obtain a written statement for the purposes of S. 12A. A person guilty of such an offence may receive a sentence of up to six months imprisonment and/or a fine of up to £5,000.

Signed

The Occupiers

N.B. Signing this Legal warning is optional. It is equally valid whether or not it is signed.

WHERE'S HOT AND WHERE'S NOT? Squatted holiday homes, Great offers start now!!!

CRAVING A holiday, want a taste of culture but have no dollar? Want to move abroad and investigate possible homes? Hungry for a challenge? Want to create a positive social space elsewhere? Fancy some good old autonomy and community living? Squatting overseas could be the answer for you! Here is information about the law and the reality in areas around the world. The destinations each have pros and cons, so take a look and decide where's hot and where's not for you!



Canmasdeu near Barcelona

SPAIN

The Spanish squatting movement has gained energy in the last thirty years, with a strong presence in major cities such as Madrid and Barcelona. The Spanish administration reckons there are 20,000 empty houses in Barcelona alone. Squatting in Spain has received unacceptable crap from the state and its thugs. In 2006 three squats were raided in Barcelona one morning by armed cops. One of the squats was evicted with no violence, but street parties were set up to keep a presence in the area. One of the squats, 191 Pillars, clashed with the Guardia Civil (Spanish pigs) and private security and weapons were claimed to have been used to intimidate the squatters. However the raid was resisted and 191 lived to fight another day.

Like in the UK, squatting in Spain is neither legal nor illegal. Article 33 of the 1978 constitution states that "the right to private property and inheritance is recognised" but also says that "except for justified cause of public

utility or social interest after proper indemnification in accordance with the law". Article 47, however, reveals that "All Spaniards have the right to enjoy decent and adequate housing". Squatting is harder since the publication of article 243 which states that "the state will not be able to grant exemptions of rights, appraises or imposed policemen. The municipalities will only be able to do it by means of municipal agreement." According to some this has had serious implications for squatters as police have infiltrated many projects.

There are lots of reasons to go to Spain; Barcelona has beautiful architecture, ie the Gaudis. You never know one could even be empty one day! Or attend the world's biggest food fight in the town of Bunol where people hit each other with 240,000 lbs of tomatoes. Think of the skipping opportunities! Or just hang at one of the many squats or social spaces, such as Canmasdeu. Find out more at www.canmasdeu.net.

THE NETHERLANDS

Holland like Spain, has a vibrant squat culture. Most squats are networked, holding a kraakspreekuur (squatters' conversation hour), where advice is given and friendships made. Evictions take place every 3 months in waves, where several squats are evicted over a few days. They are resisted physically using barricades and paint bombs and mouldy food. It is estimated that the Fort Panterden (a military fort) eviction in Nov 2006 cost the police one million Euros, and provoked the use of military machinery. Ouch!

Squatting is a legal act in Holland.

A legal basis was gained in 1971 when the Supreme Court ruled that a house cannot be entered without the permission of the owner. However this also applied to occupiers, under conditions since 1994. From then the 'legal' owner must go through court to evict the kraakers (squatters). This is laid out in Chapter 1 of the constitution, Article 12. "Entry into a home against the will of the occupant shall be permitted

only in the cases laid down by or pursuant to Act of Parliament." The conditions passed in 1994 state that a property must have been empty for a year, and that police may check that the premises are (in legal terms) lived in, ie there is a bed, chair, table, and working lock and door.

Not convinced? Why not check out some of the events and festivals in the village of Ruigoord, a squatted community near Amsterdam, sample some tunes in Rotterdam, or chill at the Molli, Vrankrijk or Citex squat bars. Check out www.squat.net for more details.



Vrankrijk - another in yer face Amsterdam squat

AUSTRALIA

Squatting in Australia had a strong presence when private property was first introduced by European colonialists. Farmers settled on huge tracks of land when they were the only Europeans. From 1824 regulations were placed to restrict squatters. It is difficult to get a general idea of squatting in Australia, as laws vary from area to area, and since 1970 it is completely illegal except by consent or disappearance of the "legal" owner. The criminalization of the movement seems to have pushed squatting completely underground.

Although property laws vary from state to state, the general consensus is that squatting is trespass, no loop holes or contradiction here. In the New South Wales region, including Sydney, squatting is covered by the Enclosed Lands Protection Act (NSW). Under this it is illegal to either "1. Enter upon enclosed lands without consent from the owner or

representative of the owner OR 2. Remain upon enclosed lands after being requested to leave by the owner or the agent."

Anyhow here are some nifty tips for those determined to squat out there! If there is no evidence that you entered without 'lawful excuse' or 'consent' - i.e., witness accounts, surveillance footage, tools and broken locks lying around - then you cannot be charged with 'entering' provision. If asked, the door was ajar and you simply wondered in. Thus, once you've secured your new abode, you cannot be evicted until the owner, or agent (heavies), asks you to leave. It can be useful to know who the landlord is prior to your occupation as any one could try to evict you under the pretence of being the owner. Always ask for ID. Once the owner has asked you to leave you could try and sweet talk them into letting you stay, but this all depends on whether you are prepared to negotiate.

Australia has many spectacles, for one it is the picture of sun, sea and sand if that's what floats ya boat. You could explore the wild life from sharks to koalas. Get drunk on Aussie wine. Or view some unique indigenous rock art painted up to 30,000 years ago, found in Tasmania, the Kimberlys, Victoria, Queens land and Arnhem Land.



Squatting in Australia - hang on isn't the whole country a squat?

In South Africa squatters generally live in informal settlement camps on the outskirts of cities like Cape Town, Johannesburg and Durban. It is estimated that of 44 million inhabitants of South Africa, 7.7 million live in these settlements and the numbers are ever growing. Johannesburg has many inner city squats, in early 2006 there were 60 eviction orders pending and an eviction concerning 300 residents over 3 properties was halted by an unconvinced judge. In Durban there is a number of squatter settlements that have had sustained conflict with local authorities, as a result of the conflict a road blockade was organised in 2005, which led to the formation of the Abahlali baseMjondolo movement.

The movement now consists of 36 shack settlements, some blocks of flats, areas of squatted rural land and operates in the region of Kwa Zulu-Natal. Abahlali have been subjected to many forms of state repression, including police brutality, acts and legislation. For example an unarmed, 17 year old boy was shot in the knee on New Years Eve, for urinating in public and the "elimination and prevention of re-emergence slums bill 2006". The Abahlali refuse to take part or negotiate in party politics or NGOs, they seek to build a democratic peoples' community based on life and work.

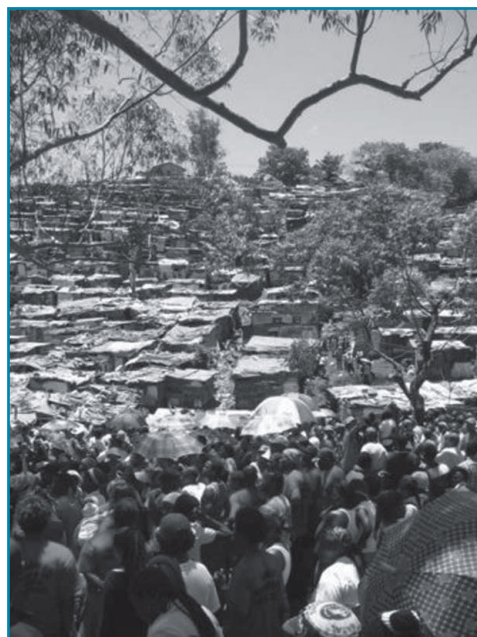
Article 26 of the constitution lays down that "1. Everyone has the right to have access to adequate housing. 2. The state must take reasonable legislative and other measures, within its available resources, to achieve the progressive realisation of this right. 3. No one may be evicted from their home, or have their home demolished, without an order of court made after considering all the relevant circumstances. No legislation may permit arbitrary evictions", suggesting the right to squat.

Despite efforts by the government and the police force to over rule this article of the constitution, its importance was reinstated by a Johannesburg judge when he paused the eviction of 300 residents. He concluded that the city authorities

could not evict squatted projects unless alternative accommodation was offered and rejected the notion of relocating occupants to local squatter camps.

If South Africa tickles ya fancy here are some cool things to see and do when visiting. Firstly South Africa has some of the most beautiful natural sites such as the table mountain in Cape Town, The Sterkfontein Caves about an hour from Johannesburg and the Richtersveld Cultural and Botanical Landscape in the north east is home to the Norma people who still live a pastoral life handed down from there ancient ancestors. Or why not experience some historic cultural art created by the South Ndebele Women who make pieces of intricate bead works and geometric murals. This tradition was born from the need women felt to express themselves and their individual identity in a strictly patriarchal nation.

So, book now for free accommodation, in any destination of your choice. To find out more about locations not listed in this page why not check out the net or appropriate books or zines. Remember squatting abroad is a brilliant way of boycotting the ever detrimental tourist industry that we are faced with when visiting different places, and if all goes well can leave you with more resources to do the things you want. Sound!



Shanty town occupations in South Africa

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squatting . occupying . section 6

Squatting: Win a house! (And how not to lose one)

If you fall either side of the squatting divide, you may care to consider the following issues:

IF YOU'RE A SQUATTER...

- Make sure you cover your tracks and can't be done for criminal damage.
- If the police come round, tell them no arrestable offence has been committed.
- Send yourself a letter at the address - it could be used as proof you are living there.
- Put a section 6 outside the house saying you are there, you intend to stay there, and that the property is not being left empty.
- Get gas and electricity supplied in a false name.
- If a warrant of possession is made against you, the court may decide to delay it for up to six weeks if you can show "exceptional hardship".

IF YOU'RE AN OWNER...

- It's probably best not to leave properties empty in the first place, although plenty of owners do.
- If people are squatting in your property, do not use or threaten violence to gain entry, as this is a crime in itself.
- Apply to the county court for a summons to obtain possession. But this will cost you.
- Deliver the summons to the squatter, either through the letterbox or nailed to the door.
- Get a proper job and stop being a landlord.
- Whatever you do, don't forget which houses you own, you useless parasite.



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MANCHESTER SPACE INVADERS...

Creating autonomous space for all.

Across the country cities are being sold to the highest bidders. The drive for 'regeneration' is demolishing homes, marginalising communities, privatising public space and closing down vital community services. There has seldom been a time when fighting for autonomous spaces in Manchester has been more important.

With sky-high rents, the creeping privatisation of public space, and a council willing to close down vital community services, there has seldom been a time when fighting for autonomous spaces in Manchester has been more important. The closure of the Basement social centre last May dealt a heavy blow to autonomous political and cultural organisations in our city. The landlord's attempt to discontinue the lease in favour of a more profitable tenant is one minor example of the violence of property under capitalism.

Squatted projects in Manchester have a vibrant history, from the Okasional Cafe and Kickstart, to the more recent LostnFound or Temporary Au-

tonomous Arts centre. Manchester's newest squatted social centre, the Archway, blurs the barriers between 'housing' and 'social centre'; and will hopefully be the first in a row of squats occupying the railway arches and using them for accommodation, campaigning, creative spaces and more.

We are taking control of our lives when we squat an abandoned building. On April 11th and 12th Manchester Space Invaders will take over our city - learn skills needed to squat your own home, get creative, demonstrate against borders and for freedom of movement, and help create a new social space. Join us in a glorious celebration of our city and the networks which thrive in it despite corporate control and the creeping privatisation of public space.

For a full timetable of events email manchesterspaceinvaders@yahoo.co.uk

Or visit: <http://indymedia.org.uk/en/regions/manchester/2008/03/393455.html>
See also

<http://www.april-12.blogspot.com>

SCAMELOT

CORPORATE SQUATTERS IN YOUR TOWN?

BY SQUIRTY DOTTER

In the South of England there has been an outbreak sweeping towns and cities, with some cases even reported in the countryside, that is putting people's housing situation at risk.

This epidemic started in Holland in 1993 and despite some efforts of containment it has managed to spread through to Belgium, Ireland and the UK with France likely to be hit next. Holland has been the worst hit with more than 8500 people affected currently, however in only 2 years it has spread to more than 200 people in the UK.

This is no new super-bug though, this epidemic hides under a company called Camelot, founded by Joost van Gestel.

Basically, this company offers rich property owners 'protection' for their empty buildings, whilst advertising for people to live in exciting places with cheap rent.

So, on the surface it sounds all good; people finally getting a chance at affordable housing and less disused buildings going to waste.

However, this is far from the case. Camelot are aiming to keep all control of our housing situations out of our hands and into those of the rich.

If you want to live in a Camelot property, you have to fit their criteria. This means no children, no animals, no criminal convictions and no unemployed people.

They charge between £25 and £60 per week along with added costs such as a "fire safety pack" and fees every time they decide to move you.

To live in one these properties means you give up your privacy as they hold the right and the keys to enter your home and room any time they want and will do so at least once a month, leaving you "Camelot notes" to do things like tidy your room.

If you are invited to view one of their properties and refuse to live there then you will not be offered any more, so to get cheap rent you can't choose where you live.

So here is a company that invites people to live in derelict, unfurnished buildings and charges them for the "privilege". Not only do the people who live in Camelot homes have to follow strict rules but also they live under constant threat of eviction, with sometimes only a weeks notice.

In their contract they have NO RIGHTS of a normal tenant - therefore they have no legal grounds to complain about the state of their living conditions and neither the landlord nor Camelot are obliged to make the property a clean state, leaving this in the hands of the people living there.

There is a lot of fundamental problems with Camelot that go beyond the way they treat their tenants. This company is trying to keep everyone's housing situation in the hands of the rich landlords.

Rather than encouraging a real use for abandoned buildings they are encouraging landlords to keep their properties unused whilst the prices increase, making housing more unaffordable for us all.

Camelot are not offering affordable rent for all, just a select few, whilst taking away properties that people who are actually in need of a solution, no matter how temporary, can squat.

This is a company that is aimed specifically at countries with more liberal squatting laws, although it claims not to be anti squatting, it clearly has this as its main aim.

Therefore it is important to resist this company in every way possible - we need to make a housing solution for us all and not just for the few.





OCCUPATION, OCCUPATION, OCCUPATION!!

Discover how easy it is to save time and money finding the property you want. With house prices soaring, and crowbars, yale locks and cross-heads being so cheaply and readily available, there's never been a better time to browse our luxurious collection of long standing empty properties. Whether you're a first-time squatter or seasoned occupier, there's sure to be something to get your pulse racing. Contact us today and we'll arrange for a greasy estate agent to slither his lubricated body in that tiny second floor window that no one else could fit through.



Unfortunately already in use as a gas pipeline this minimalist accommodation situated in a muddy wet hole in the ground in Wales delayed construction and inspired further action.



Abandoned ski slope complex with a number of buildings on the site this could be ideal for squatters with a penchant for the quirky. Ski lift may give pigs reason to suspect extraction of electric.



Spacious detached residence, central London, excellent opportunities for 'recycling' copper, lead and gold. Slight firing squad damage/blood staining on south facing wall.



An exclusive hospital mansion in the north of the country. Excellent views of leafy suburbia, with extensive grounds for occupation. Ideal for those requiring ad hoc medical treatment.



Attractive "it was like that when we got here, officer" windows round the back. Potential for both gas and electric, some floorboards needed. Great potential for learning new skills in renovations.



Beautiful heritage home available in a quiet coastal Devonshire location. The property boasts a roof garden in the gutters, spacious bedrooms and a handy watchtower so you can see when the bailiffs are coming.



This exotic self-build; wood polyprop and tarp structure between oak trees comes complete with concrete lock-ons and aerial access to neighbouring homes. Bonus of specialist bailiffs needed for eviction.



10 bedroom mansion with self squeaking floor-boards and groaning pipes (despite no water!?) Thriving local community (of bats), may require extensive excorism work.



Excellent film viewing potential, 500 seat auditorium. Would make a good radical social centre for showing insurrectionary films and ranting poets.



Cosy and rustic dwelling, join the growing number of people across the globe living in these self-styled structures. Electricity and sanitation debatable.



A fabulous contemporary (crime) family home, in Rochester, Kent. Complete with well lit office space and cramped not so well lit, en suite cells, landlords known to have violent tendencies.



Good community relationship available if you sort out the garden a bit, because the neighbours are annoyed that this place has been left to rot for so long.

GOVERNMENT DEMANDS 1.6 MILLION MORE NEW HOUSES THAN WE NEED

Gordon Brown says we need to build 3 million more homes by 2020. But our research shows this is more than twice as many as needed. The UK population is only expected to grow by about 5.6 million by 2020. An average household size is 2.5 people. So that's 2.24 million homes needed. There's about 816000 empty properties in the UK. That leaves only 1.424 million extra homes we need. So already Gordon Brown was going to have forests cut down and fields covered in concrete to build more than twice as many houses as we need.

That's not even taking into account abandoned industrial properties or the significant number of second, third or fourth homes that rich greedy people have sitting empty most of the time.

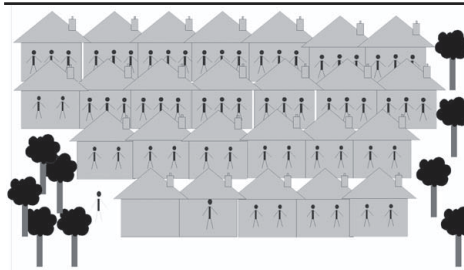
Nor does it take into account the size

of households compared to the size of the houses. All the official statistics ignore details like this so it's pretty difficult to get to the bottom of it. However your intrepid statistics reporter has been delving into all sorts of reports and things.

The UK Population has increased but the demand for housing has increased faster than the population due to more people living alone or in smaller households than they used to. In 1971, 3 million people lived alone but by 2005 that became 7 million. It takes a lot more space and resources for all these people to live in separate boxes than to live together in larger households. It's also both cause and effect of the isolation in our society, where we strive for possessions and personal ownership, rather than appreciating the joys of friendships and sharing and the beauty of nature.

When	No of people	Average household size	No of houses	New built houses
Now	61,000,000	2.5	24,400,000	
Gordon 2020	66,600,000	2.5?	27,400,000	3,000,000
Our 2020	66,600,000	2.5	25,824,000	1,400,000
Alternative 2020	66,600,000	4	16,650,000	600,000

This diagram shows the three scenarios for housing in the UK - the current one, Brown's plan for 2020, and an alternative plan for 2020. Each house represents one million houses, each person one million people, and the trees speak for themselves.



Pic I - current housing situation including empties and homeless people



Pic II - Gordon Brown's plan to build three million more houses by 2020



Pic III - Alternative 2020 with larger households and all empties occupied



Recycle the empties !

TIME YIELDS FIELDS

One company recently tried to claim their human rights had been infringed when they discovered squatters could claim possession of land the company had basically forgotten about for over 12 years. The company had let the neighbouring farmers use the land for grazing, but in December 1983 they told the farmers to leave the land. The farmers asked again for permission but were refused.

A few months later they started to use the land again and were not contacted by the company again until 1999, by which time the farmers had had possession of the land for over 12 years, making it legally theirs. The company went to court to try to reclaim the land. Judges told them that unfortunately they'd lost the land, although it did seem rather unfair.

CONGRATULATIONS! You and your family have an exciting chance for holidarity in Japan

7-9th of June 2008



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• **SOUTH AFRICA:** Police unlawfully evicted 1600 residents in Delft, Cape Town. On the 19th February police shot people at close range, hospitalising more than 20 people including 3 children. 2,000 families lived in Delft Symphony. They occupied new houses last year after the government failed to house them, some had been homeless for 20 years or more. After the violent eviction in February, residents occupied the pavement refusing to leave. Since the Delft residents occupied the pavement 4 babies have been born on these streets.

• **CAMBODIA:** 19 communities - tens of thousands of people - face forced eviction in the capital city Pnomh Penh. One community, Dey Krahorm, have been resisting the eviction threat for the last 3 years, facing intimidation and harassment. They have lived on the land for the last 20 years, according to Cambodian law they have the right to the land. This makes little difference to company 7NG who are trying to evict them.

The company are trying to relocate the families to a rice field 20km outside the city, with no facilities, jobs or public transport to the city. In an attempt to have total control over their lives, the company, 7NG, plan to build a factory there. Giving them a workforce to exploit, who would have no choice over their conditions. The community continue to fight the attempts to evict, despite the corruption and brutality they face.

• **JAPAN:** Park dwellers face eviction in the lead up to the G8, as the government attempts to 'clean up' the country before the so-called world leaders come to Hokkaido. The area the G8 'leaders' are meeting is the land of the indigenous Ainu, or Utari people, whose land has been physically and culturally taken over centuries.

A land-rights issue is the existence of American military bases. 75% of the US bases in the county of Okinawa, make up less than 1% of the area of Japan. Okinawa is the poorest part of Japan, cul-

turally different from the rest of the country, the high presence of military bases there can be seen as an anti-Okinawan policy. Military bases occupy over 11% of the county, 20% of the largest island, so contribute to overcrowding in the area

• **CHILE:** 2008 sees continued protest and uprising by the Mapuche people, indigenous to Chile.

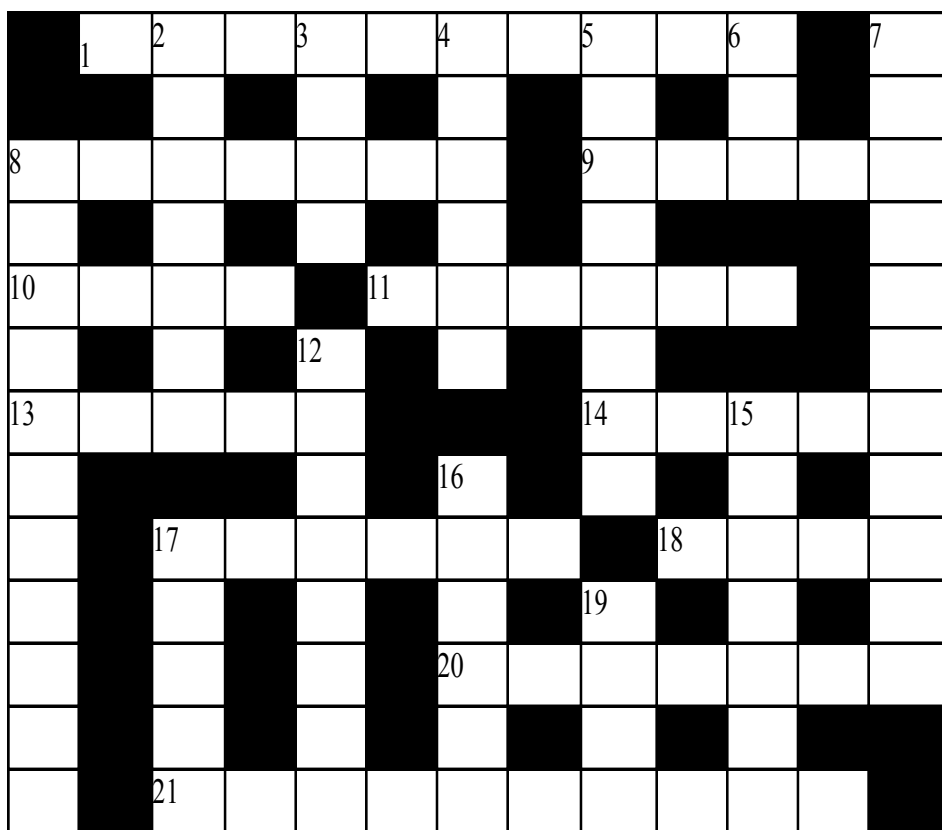
Protesting against the stealing of ancestral lands, tradition and culture. January saw the death of student Matias Catrileo Quezada, shot in the back by police, while protesting for land rights.

Mapuche means 'earth people'; their land is fundamental to their way of life. Recent struggles are part of a continuing struggle that has been going on



In-tents campaign: the Japanese authorities plan to 'clean up' settlements such as these

since colonialism. The Mapuche people and the land were abused first by European colonialists, then multinational companies, the Chilean government, industrial farming and the building of hydro-electric dams. Despite centuries of persecution, the Mapuche people still fight against the abuse of the land.



BORED SHITLESS? - TRY OUR LITTLE TEASER

Across

- 1 - person on private property without permission
- 8 - method of doing something
- 9 - below
- 10 - betting chances
- 11 - money you pay to a landlords
- 13 - dodgy accounting sent this US company into collapse
- 14 - to spot
- 17 - a seed or a centre
- 18 - returning sound
- 20 - castrated male bovine
- 21 - board game involving dice and counters, originally played on pigskin

Down

- 2 - organise differently or request again
- 3 - simple meal cooked all in one pan
- 4 - what you're trying to find here

- 5 - person living in a house without permission
- 6 - colour of blood
- 7 - device fitted into a door for securing it.
- 8 - treehouses etc set up to prevent destruction of a place
- 12 - without leaders or laws
- 15 - high pitched flute
- 16 - essential for the favourite English beverage
- 17 - Middle Eastern or Asian dish generally involving grilled lamb or beef
- 19 - dirty, dilapidated, unfit housing



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ASYLUM SEEKER?

It's looking bleaker

MOST PEOPLE have an image of homelessness; of the kind of people who become homeless and why, and of how they survive.

Underneath this stereotypical image, the true extent of homelessness is hidden, the invisible homeless are there, but without even an image to represent them.

A huge group of the hidden homeless are the many people who come to Britain to claim asylum, to flee from their country in fear of persecution.

After making what is often a difficult journey to this country, these people find themselves without even the basic necessity of shelter in the fifth wealthiest country in the world.

There is a mistaken belief in this country that as long as you 'work hard' and 'do the right thing' then the state will provide for you. This so-called 'care' by the state is in reality applied with a racist bias.

The hatred of asylum seekers often comes from misinformation, for example, the clichéd racist line of "asylum seekers come here and steal our jobs".

In fact, asylum seekers are not actually allowed to work to support themselves in this country, leaving them reliant on the state, which often doesn't provide for them.

If they do take illegal work, out of necessity, people often end up being exploited and risk going to prison. Working illegally usually means working for very low wages, or even doing a weeks work without getting paid, and no opportunity to complain.

Many people are on what is called section 4 support, meaning that they receive just £36 a week in vouchers which can be used in certain supermarkets. They are not allowed to work, and receive no money, often having to walk for miles to spend their vouchers in a supermarket, as they don't even have a few pounds for the bus.

Thousands of people are left homeless, and even more in very low quality, insecure accommodation while they apply for asylum here.

The best someone can hope for is National Asylum Support Service accommodation, provided by private companies.

In this situation, asylum seekers can be moved house, detained and deported with either no notice, or very little warning.

Families are woken up at dawn by immigration services banging on the door, with a van waiting to take them into detention.

If they are fully compliant they are given literally minutes to pack the possessions that represent, for many people, years of their life in this country. If they are not considered fully compliant, then they are taken with no belongings.

Some of the private companies running this accommodation have earned themselves a reputation of running a bad service, putting vulnerable people in very low quality housing.

One of these companies, Angel Group, is run by millionaire business woman Julie Davey, who makes her money by putting asylum seekers in substandard accommodation.

Rather than exposing people like Davey, who clocks up millions of pounds through a combination of tax evasion and housing vulnerable people poorly, the mainstream media targets asylum seekers, almost without exception.

There is a racist denial of the right to housing. In a world where property ownership and the power of the state are the governing forces, invisible means of survival grow. Squatting has throughout history been a way of surviving. In cities, the diverse survival tactics range from people using a network of friends and different kinds of communities for support, to relying on complete strangers who provide accommodation through charities.

Other solutions are living in established squats, or starting new squats, or trying to sleep in public places like bus stations, or sleeping on the streets.

During a winter month in Leeds last year, recorded figures by the Rowntree Trust found 26 men and 3 women who'd come to this country as asylum seekers had been sleeping on the streets.

The real figure was probably much higher, with hundreds more staying in insecure accommodation, with friends, or finding other means of shelter.

The fact that people who come

here to claim asylum end up having to survive in these ways is shameful in a country with such wealth.

However, there can be creative survival tactics that come from the denial of the basic right to shelter.

The methods of the state seem to be to make this country as unappealing as possible for as many people as possible. This is done by taking away someone's basic rights, and in doing so taking away their ability to control the direction of their own life.

One of the ways they take control away is by dispersing people around the country, giving them no choice in where they live.

In many ways these tactics of the state work, but there is a network of self-organisation and self-direction that fights back against these government strategies.

Communities are strengthened as people have to take care of each other, and links are made between asylum seekers, and the communities they move into.

There is a connection of different kinds of people who are forced into a situation, such as squatting an empty building together, creating a new kind of network and community.

SHACK HAPPY HARRY!



At Home: Harry in Hampstead Heath

Squatter Harry Hallows, about 70, was awarded adverse possession of his home on land valued at £2million. For 20 years, he'd lived in a shack he built himself on Hampstead Heath.

He found himself homeless when he lost his job and then his bedsit back in the 80's.

Harry didn't plan to claim ownership but his hand was forced when the land was sold to developers, who wanted to evict him. He was granted the legal ownership in 2007. As far as we know, he's still there.

The wise old man said: "I'm just delighted that I can stay here as long as I like. It would be a very mean thing for me to claim the property as my own. I don't care about money and I value my health and living in this lovely part of Hampstead Heath much more than I want money.

And "When you haven't any money it's better. You have the whole of nature around you as opposed to some dreadful bedsit."

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COLLAPSE IMMINENT?

BY JOHN MILTON KEYNES

A full-blown recession in the United States is now inescapable, with the rest of the globe set to be dragged into a continuing plunge in world stock markets.

Nouriel Roubini, the influential economic consultant said. "The recession is going to be deeper and lasting ... It's going to be a severe recession."

Stephen Roach, former chief economist at Morgan Stanley highlighted how, "it would be the mother of all recessions"

"We have used the overvalued home like an ATM [cash] machine, and in doing that we have taken debt loads up to record highs."

Mr Roach and Mr Roubini dismissed suggestions that Europe could escape fallout from a US recession.

"Europe is not going to get a special dispensation from the global slowdown," Mr Roach said.

He added, "We've got prima facie evidence that we have the central banks are being goaded into action just by what the markets are doing and ... this is going to end in tears.

It's a dangerous, reckless and irresponsible way to run the world's economy."

Harvard University economist Martin Feldstein recently said that we are in the worst recession since World War II, although it was not an official declaration.

BUSINESS COMMENT

BY PETE KRAPOTKIN



Pete on a bad hair day

US is now and while all those rich US corporations may file their taxes there, their wealth and power will remain offshore. So, if the US tips into head-long recession, we can expect the rest of the world to follow.

This includes Britain. The British economy is dire, we spend half as much on foreign trade while our exports and industrial base languish. We are more vulnerable than the Americans to the impact of falling house prices and contracting credit, though you wouldn't guess it from the way policy is made.

The addiction to debt allowing you to enjoy something that you haven't earned is incredibly powerful and has been generously exploited by parts of the financial services industry.

But it's not just individuals buying assets, goods and services for personal enjoyment. Debt has been so cheap because of Alan Greenspan's lack of savior-faire in controlling monetary expansion businesses who have loaded up on the basis that the proprietors might be billionaires if the ploy went well, and not too badly off if the project crashed. Greed has reached completely new territory and derivatives and insurance platforms supposed to protect debt are collapsing with it.

This collapse has been in the making since 1987 and with hindsight, certainly over the last 10 years.

American brands and companies increasingly populate the world top 100 and the US invests huge sums on its knowledge economy. Yet the fact remains that the large US corporation has decoupled from the US through the movement of jobs overseas that has nothing to do with comparative advantage, by the free movement of capital out of the US\$ and into any floating currency a US corporation wishes to hold it in and also by the investment in R&D that only produces growth for the richest Americans, its institutions and corporations which then use it to boost the GDP of countries

Karl Polanyi said in his double movement theory that capitalism can't decouple from the economy as societal forces move to prevent what would otherwise be the destruction of the society in which that economy lives. However completely open international trade changed the equation, because a corporation can shield itself and a vast percentage of a nation's wealth which it has made in other parts of the world. The country may eject this capitalism but it can't control it. The result is that the nation is gravely wounded. This is where the

This crisis, like all such crises, is a crisis of over-production. And the source of the liquidity in search of returns that fuelled it has been the super-profits that resulted from the long run of wage erosion. One solution is a substantial and immediate rise in wages, both in the US and elsewhere. But that of course wouldn't be capitalism.

The solutions offered by the Fed in supplying further largesse to the sector that precipitated the crisis are the precise opposite of what is required. But with the state everywhere under the control of the very social layer that has most benefited from the exploitation of the wage earner that is all to be expected.

The Americans have invented a system with no commitment, trust or human relationships and the result is mayhem. For the banks, there was a glorious by-product. They could borrow to a stunning degree because they had, allegedly, spread their risk. Bear Stearns had \$11.8bn of capital and \$395bn of debt. When things are going well, it is 'leverage' like this that creates the volume of business that generates incredible bonuses for their executives. When things go badly, the bank simply goes bust.

So far, the chief activist in this farce has been the US central bank, the Federal Reserve, with the idea-lite Bush administration using the crisis to agree to tax cuts to stimulate the economy, its panacea for everything. It was the Fed that agreed to offer \$200bn of support to help Bear Stearns; it was the Fed that bailed out Bear Stearns itself; and it was the Fed that earlier slashed interest rates. Chairman Ben Bernanke has said he will do everything in his power to prevent a rerun of 1929.

However a short look at history and with the benefit of hindsight it seems apparent that all of the current hullabaloo is simply a corrupt economic system putting plasters on a deep and gaping wound. Or to paraphrase a well known song from the hit parade- 'things can only get worse'.

REAL RECESSION HITS HOUSING

BY A. STATEAGENT

The Bank of England is considering a request by Britain's big five banks to reform the way it provides them with emergency funding.

However this would be seen as bailing out banks that had behaved foolishly in the private sector.

The Bank injected an extra £5bn into the money markets in an attempt to ease concerns about the liquidity of the banking system.

The loans were added to the weekly funds offered to commercial banks, almost doubling it to £11bn.

Additional funding has been five times oversubscribed and both the European Central Bank and the US Federal Reserve have made much more money available.

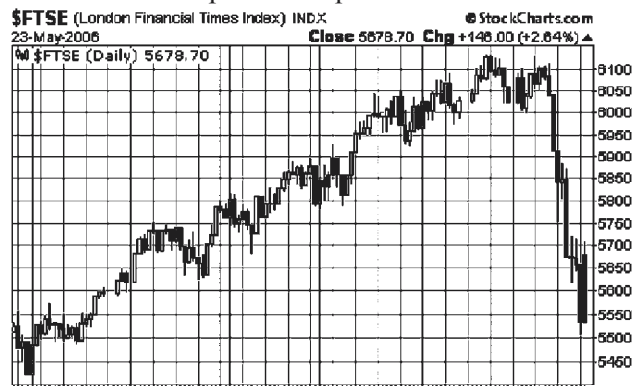
Central banks on both sides of the Atlantic are actively engaged in discussions about the feasibility of mass purchases of mortgage-backed securities as a possible solution to the credit crisis.

Such a move would involve the use of public funds to shore up the market in a key financial instrument and restore confidence.

The fact that such a move is being discussed at all indicates the depth of concern that exists over the health of the banking system.

Any move to buy mortgage-backed securities would require government involvement because taxpayers would be assuming credit risk.

In other words the public is being forced to bail out bad decisions made in the private corporate sector.



Michael Coogan, the director-general of the UK's Council of Mortgage Lenders, said: "Demand for mortgages remains strong but cannot be fully met from existing funding sources."

He predicted higher prices, higher rates for mortgages and reduced lending as banks try to hold onto what money they have left.

Squatting/housing help

- Advisory Service for Squatters (A.S.S.) - www.squatter.org.uk
- Free Tenancy Agreements - www.propertyhawk.co.uk
- Urban Explorers - www.28dayslater.co.uk
- Citizens' Advice Bureau - www.adviceguide.org.uk
- Friends Families and Travellers (F.F.T.) - www.gypsy-traveller.org
- Bristol Housing Action Movement - www.public-interest.co.uk/bham

Squat news and info

- Squatter City - <http://squattercity.blogspot.com>
- Squat Juice - www.squatjuice.com/phpBB2
- Squat Net - www.squat.net
- Rent Free Cornwall - www.rentfreecornwall.blogspot.com
- Koepi squat, Berlin - www.koepi137.net
- Rigaer Strasse (Berlin Squat) - <http://rigaer94.squat.net/eng/index.html>

Protest Camps

- Climate Camp - www.climatecamp.org.uk
- Titnore Woods - www.protectourwoodland.co.uk <http://www.myspace.com/camptitnore>
- Bilston Glen - www.bilstonglen-abs.org.uk
- Faslane Peace Camp - <http://faslane.co.nr>
- Hill Of Tara - www.tarapixie.net www.tarataratara.net

Campaigning

- International Days of Action For Autonomous Spaces and Squats - <http://april2008.squat.net>
- Anarchist Black Cross - www.brightonabc.org.uk
- Hunt Sabs Association - www.huntsabs.org.uk
- Space Hijackers - www.spacehijackers.co.uk
- Fit Watch - www.fitwatch.blogspot.com
- Earth First - www.earthfirst.org.uk
- No Borders - www.noborders.org.uk
- Class War - www.classwaruk.org
- Smash EDO - www.smashedo.org.uk
- Defy ID - www.defy-id.org.uk
- The Land Is Ours - www.tlio.org.uk
- Rising Tide - www.risingtide.org.uk
- ANTIFA - www.antifa.org.uk
- SHAC - www.shac.net
- Mutatoes - www.mutatoes.org
- Shell To Sea - www.corribsos.com

Alternative media

- SchNEWS - www.schnews.org.uk
- Indymedia - www.indymedia.org.uk
- 325 - www.325collective.com
- Gagged (S. Wales) - www.gaggedanarchist.tk
- Rupture - www.randomartists.org/rupture.shtml
- Rough Music (Brighton) - www.roughmusic.org.uk
- Porkbolter (Worthing) - www.eco-action.org/porkbolter

Housing Co-ops

- Radical Routes - www.radicalroutes.org.uk

Arty things

- Random Artists - www.randomartists.org
- Headfuk - www.headfuk.net
- Temporary Autonomous Art - www.taexhibitions.org



The Film Police Tried To Ban!

SchMOVIES presents... **on the verge**

- The Smash EDO campaign film. Telling the story of the four year campaign to close down Brighton bomb factory EDO-MBM.

Out in April - currently being screened during the Smash EDO National Tour, March-May 2008.

For more details see www.schnews.org.uk/schmovies



MESHOScope

by Lippy Sparker

ARIES (Mar 21-Apr 20)

The last full moon gave you a wild streak, a night which has led you to be ASBOed. Today will be the final straw as you risk being banned from your own home.

TAURUS (Apr 21-May 21)

Don't let the kindness of your heart run away with you. You're in no position to be helping others as you're about to lose your job and home. Better get yourself one of those family sleeping bags for 4.

GEMINI (May 22-Jun 21)

A new moon should have brought positive change in your life. Yes, you did get a free paper this morning, but doom and gloom is around the corner. A Private Finance Initiative is moving into your area in this moon cycle, get ready for eviction.

CANCER (Jun 22-Jul 23)

You're too concerned about your image and impressions you're giving. Stop buying expensive crap you don't need, as you won't be able to afford your rent. Your credit card will make you homeless in the future.

LEO (Jul 24-Aug 23)

Bad luck. Your local police decide they don't like squatters today, you'll wake up to the sound of your door being broken in. Better dig out your crowbar and start again.

VIRGO (Aug 24-Sep 23)

Yeah it's a catch-22 situation isn't it? As the moon aligns with Venus, housing advice will break it to you that the council have no obligation to house you as you haven't been a resident of this city for long enough. Keep fighting the bureaucracy, but don't say I told you so when you give up and sink into despair.

LIBRA (Sep 24-Oct 23)

Get stuck in for plenty of hard work. The position of the new moon shows that soon you will have the bailiffs trying to repossess your family home. It looks like a difficult week ahead for you and your kids. Bad luck.

SCORPIO (Oct 24-Nov 22)

Your decision to buy a crowbar gives you a much warmer night's sleep tonight. Nice one.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov 23-Dec 21)

A competition or challenge is evident in your stars, maybe it's got something to do with your shit landlord who hasn't fixed anything for months. Watch out though, if you take it too far and punch him in the face you'll find yourself out on the streets with all your stuff burning on the road.

CAPRICORN (Dec 22-Jan 20)

Your decision to buy that second home in the countryside might have been a bad one. As the moon goes into your psychic phase, your dream of dirty squatters rampaging round your luxury home might just be reality. Why not drive up there and have a check?

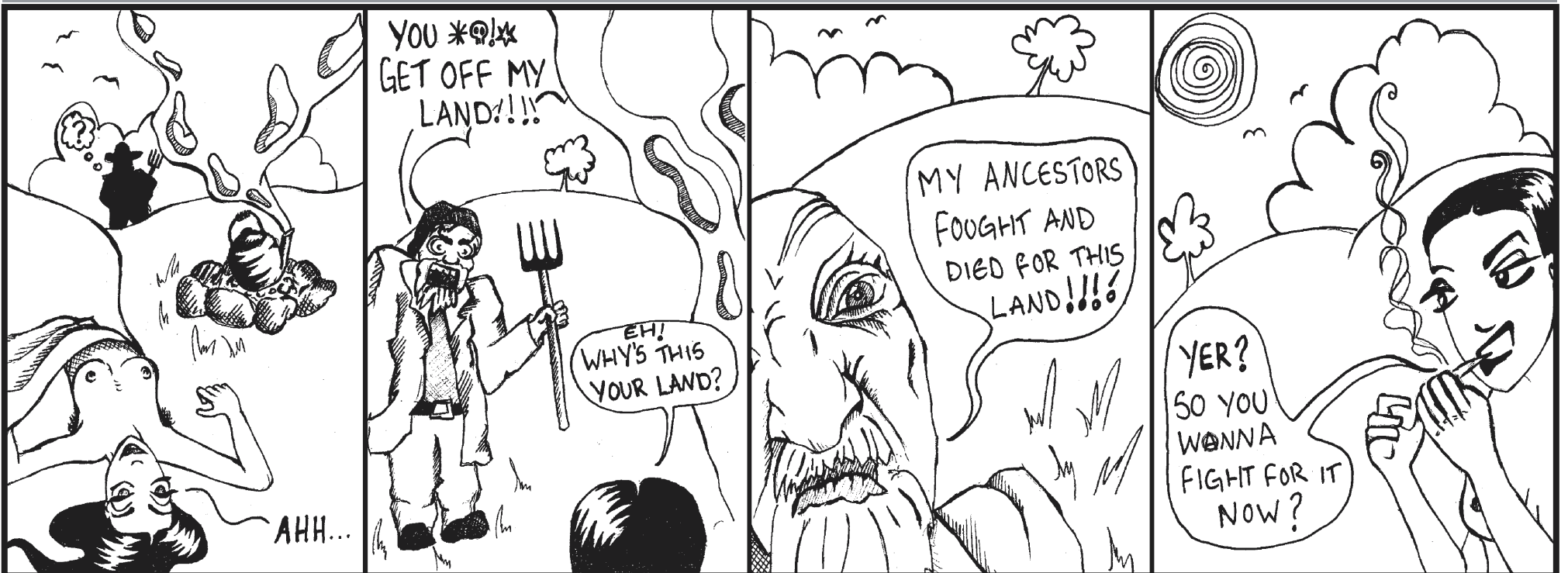
AQUARIUS (Jan 21-Feb 19)

The moon moves into your sign to help you express your own emotions calmly. Uranus opens in line with the moon, as all those pent up feelings about how shit your life is pour out your mouth.

PISCES (Feb 20-Mar 20)

As the moon lights your way you'll be pushing your possessions through the streets in a shopping trolley. Don't give up hope though.

Skwotlife - by Sekshun6



OLYMP-TRICKS

SPORTING MEGA-EVENT SCHEDULED TO REAP HAVOC IN LONDON'S EAST END

BY LINFORD CRUSTIE



Moved on: the Olympics have spelt disaster for the poor

THE OLYMPICS, due to hit London in 2012, have been billed by the organisers as “the greenest in history” and by Tessa Jowell, the Secretary of State for Culture, Media & Sport, as “a chance to transform one of the poorest and most deprived parts of our capital city”.

Sounds good, eh? Improve the lives of people in the East end and demonstrate Britain’s place as champion of sustainable energy use.

Unfortunately, these proud, bold promises are likely to be as accurate as the Met’s estimation of the numbers at a demonstration.

Time and time again, the Olympics have been a disaster for the majority of the host’s population.

During the five years preceding the 1988 games in Seoul, South Korea, 48,000 buildings, housing 720,000 people, were destroyed for re-development.

Only ten per cent of these evictees received replacement housing in the new site.

The following games, in Barcelona, unleashed development forces which caused huge escalations in costs, forcing tens of thousands of low-income people and small businesses out of the city.

Basically, while governments advertise the Olympics as a grand opportunity for urban regeneration, the outcome is nothing but gentrification and aesthetic cleansing.

Rather than redistributing wealth or improving facilities in the host cities, regeneration Olympics style simply displaces poverty, forcing poor people out of their cities.

The last games, in Athens in 2004, demonstrated just how destructive the Olympics can be for a city.

Nearly all 36 Olympics sites now lie empty, with the marathon route and a new \$380 million tramway causing severe drainage problems.

Many of these extortionately priced structures were constructed in open public spaces that could have been maintained

as free green spaces where everybody could enjoy playing sports, rather than a few ‘world-class’ athletes.

The cost of maintaining these useless, empty structures has led the government to sell many to the private sector, leaving them even more alienated from the city’s population.

The price of hosting the event was so huge that Greece was left with a massive deficit in its budget.

The government’s estimate that the event would cost \$1 billion turned out to be just a tad conservative, with the actual figure exceeding \$9 billion, mostly coming out of the public purse.

\$1.2 billion of this went on surveillance systems, specialized computers and other equipment to ‘secure’ the Games.

The government also mobilized nearly 100,000 soldiers, police officers and other security forces.

NAZI GOLD

This security mobilisation continues the Olympics proud tradition of crushing protest and dissent.

An early example is the 1936 Games in Berlin, in which International Olympic Committee (IOC) members opposing the Nazi regime were dropped.

The Games took place just half an hour down the road from a concentration camp.

The torch of Olympic oppression has been passed from Games to Games ever since, a notable example being the hundreds of people massacred by a special ops unit called the Olympia Brigade in Mexico City, just before the Olympics in August 1968.

The same year, the IOC charter banned any form of activism inside Olympics venues, after sprinters Tommie Smith and John Carlos made a black power salute when receiving their medals.

All signs suggest that the UK will keep the Olympic torch of oppression, surveillance and gentrification burning strongly.

Sir Ian Blair, Metropolitan Police Commissioner, has already unveiled a £224 million security plan, but the eventual figure is likely to be far higher.

The surveillance operation will look impressive even by UK standards, which can already boast the title of most surveilled state in the Western world.

Already unveiled are plans to guard Olympic building sites by forcing more than 10,000 building workers to pass through a two-tier biometric access system featuring palm and facial recognition to gain entry to the sites.

The promise of redevelopment in reality spells compulsory purchase orders, with huge chunks of East London being swallowed up for venues.

The Olympic Parkland, for example, has used compulsory purchase orders - funded by the public - to destroy allotments, a cycle circuit, social housing and football pitches – all vital community resources.

London mayor Ken Livingstone has publicly stated that post-Olympics, most of this land will be sold to private developers.

These dodgy deals, brought about without public consultation, have led to widespread opposition from locals, despite a mass propaganda campaign to back the Games.

Hundreds marched last September from Hackney Town Hall to the security gates of the Olympics construction site, protesting against the destruction of community allotments, health risks (part of the construction is being carried out on a heavily contaminated ex-industrial site) and the erosion of community resources.

This resistance is likely to grow stronger as the effects of the Olympics become increasingly apparent.

Join the fight against this community-wrecking sporting façade and send a message to the government and IOC that we will not tolerate gung-ho gentrification for the sake of corporate enrichment.

EDINBURGH'S 'CALTONGATE' GENTRIFICATION APPROVED

THE HOTLY contested ‘Caltongate’ development was approved by Edinburgh Council on 13th February. The move will spell the destruction of two listed buildings. ‘Save Our Old Town’ protesters, who have been fighting against the proposed development, held a demo outside the city chambers all day. They vow to continue the battle against this gentrification, and plan to provoke a public enquiry.

GREAT-GRANDMA!



Hugs: the happy family

Squatters were surprised when the owner of a seemingly empty house returned. They were still more surprised when instead of ejecting them the elderly woman embraced her new friends welcoming them to stay in her home. This provides her with in-home care and company and they have a home and an adopted grandma. They all live happily ever after!

CHARIOTS FOR HIRE

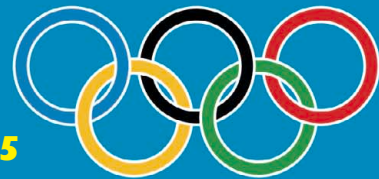
Olympics Minister Shuns New Neighbours

16 gypsy families have moved onto land they own about 200 metres from Tessa Jowell’s house in Warwickshire. Council officials were quick to condemn the move as contrary to planning regulations, but the gypsy families say they are fed up of being moved on all the time.

They have owned the land already for a year and started installing plumbing and drainage over Easter. The situation highlights the huge wealth gap within the UK, as the minister’s £1 million house sits alongside the caravans of 16 families on a 2 ½ acre field.

SPORT OLYMPIC BLIGHT FOR CAPITAL

See page 15



LOST THE PLOT!

THE MANOR Gardens allotments are an oasis of hope in one of the biggest industrial estates in London and are some of the oldest allotments in London; bequeathed to be allotments 'in perpetuity' at the turn of the last century.

The footpath for the Olympic games, which only last two weeks, will destroy a century of devoted cultivation created by a close-knit and diverse community of Turks, Cypriots, Greeks, Jamaicans, Africans and Brits, who have become rooted in this irreplaceable site.

If we are truly going to create a sustainable world we need to create more community run spaces like this, not less.

The allotments are a haven of calm and community surrounded by London's impersonal pandemonium.

The land was donated to the people of east London by a Major Villiers. He was disgusted by the treatment of the working class on the battlefields and after their return was so determined that

BY DOUG A. HOLL

the communities should have the land, that when Oxo offered to buy it in order to extend their factories, Villiers offered to buy their factory to extend the allotments. Now the new Olympic village looks destined to place a concrete path over the site. The Olympic authority were given the power to overhaul any allotment law to build the facilities and, apparently, the ability to ignore public opinion. The campaign to save the allotments collected 7,846 signatures which were totally ignored as the historic gardens were destroyed in October 2007.

These eighty plots, supplying fresh grown produce, facilitated the learning and sharing of skills to not only those holding the allotments but the wider community as well. A community sprouted from a self made paradise. This sustainable community run space, instead of being preserved and celebrated as an example of a unique tradition that

could be showcased to the Olympic visitors, has been bulldozed to make way for a path. A path that could have easily been diverted.

The people of Manor Garden allotments have been uprooted and relocated. The new land was once a field widely used by the public, a barren space with poor, and possibly contaminated, soil. Some trees and plants were salvaged but will probably be unable to grow here. The much loved sheds, nestled under towering fruit trees can eventually grow back but much of the community will not live to see this. Many allotment keepers despaired and gave up their plot. Gestures of moving trees and benches can be attempted but it is not this that made Manor Gardens a beautiful paradise.

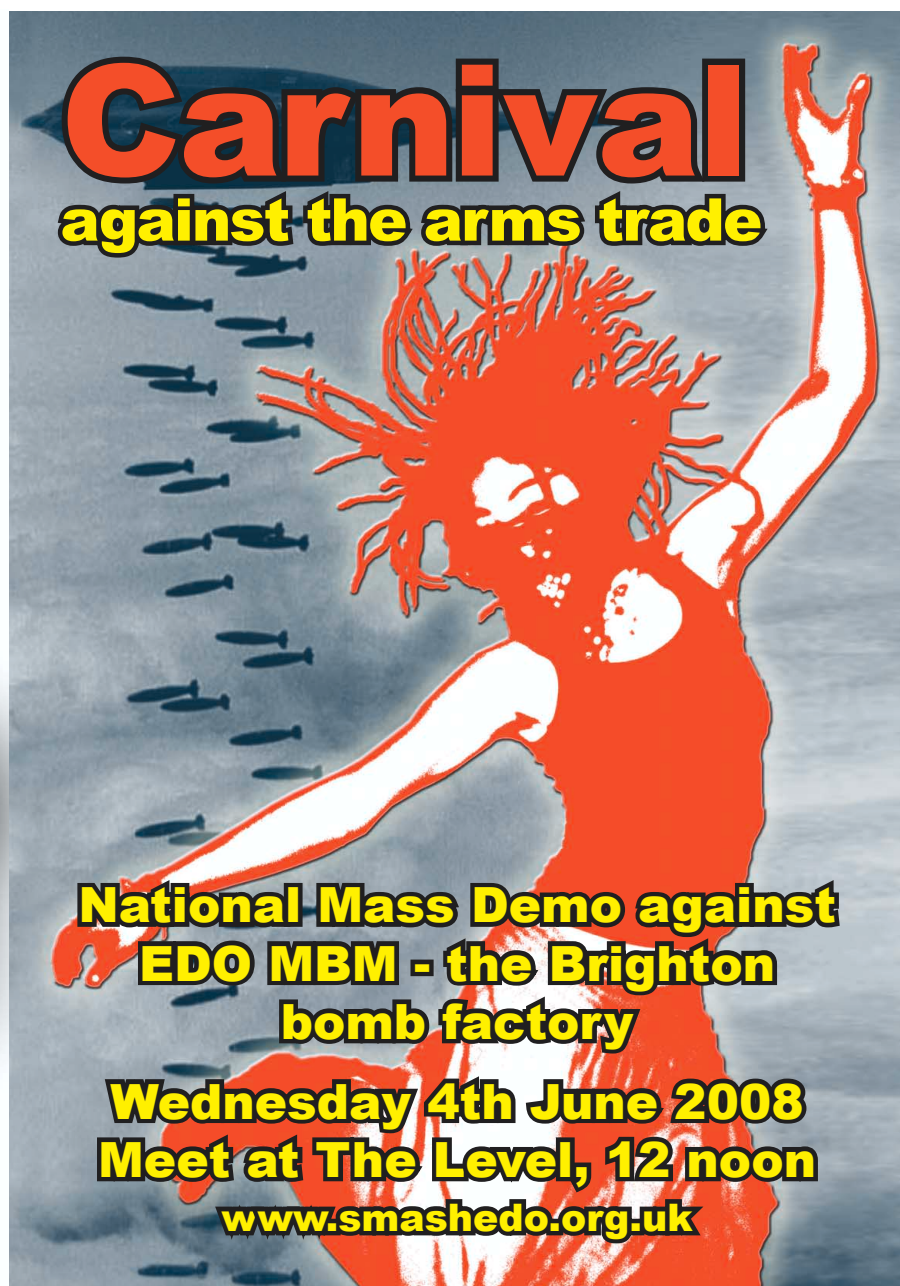
It was the deep rooted, long standing bonds of those in the community that had nurtured the sense of achievement and



Manor Garden allotment holders have been fighting to keep this vital community resource

pride in the little patch of paradise. This is an illustration of the misguided priority of profit over people which is part and parcel of the Olympic authority. As the government sets up ill-conceived and often failed projects aimed at enriching communities and promoting sustainability, here was one that was literally grown from scratch by the community, for the community. It will now be used by a few people for a few weeks in a poorly planned facility.

This land held by the people for a hundred years was enjoyed by people of all origins and walks of life; a self-made and sustainable community.



MESHO has been produced to raise awareness of squatting and related housing issues, and to inspire direct action within our communities. Rest assured that no bath water was used or abused during the creation of this publication, although several sets of lungs did sustain severe abuse. Oh yeah, and if you haven't worked it out for yourself yet, MESHO is an anagram of homes! Peace, love and mollies, the MESHO Collective xxx