

Tales from the Planet

john johnson

2004

Sherman is Out, But not Free

Anarchist organizer Sherman Austin has been released from prison after serving most of a one year sentence after being framed for controversial content on his website RaiseTheFist.com. He faces three years of federal probation under terms which are a continuing attempt to silence him from exercising his right to organize with anarchist groups. Sherman will be intensely monitored to the extent that every phone, computer or other digital device he comes in contact with will be under strict supervision by his probation officers. For updates on Sherman, check freesherman.org.

Greeks Deporting Undesirables and Poisoning Dogs

Last-ditch efforts to “clean up” Athens before the Olympic games began included removing thousands of immigrants, beggars, drug addicts and homeless people from the capital’s streets. Human rights activists said vulnerable people, including asylum seekers from war-torn countries such as Iraq, were falling victim to the campaign. Underlining the concern, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees urged the Greek government to ensure that “international standards” were not being breached. The agency’s unusual intervention followed reports in the Greek media that mass deportations had soared in advance of the games.

Thousands of stray dogs have been poisoned despite a campaign by animal welfare activists to arrange for shelters and adoption. The Greek government is concerned with its public image as a “modern” and “civilized” nation.

In the countdown to the games, about 70,000 police and military personnel have been drafted to patrol the city.

Feds Harass Activists in the Midwest

In late July, anarchists in Kansas City, Lawrence, and Topeka, Kan., Kirksville and Columbia, Mo., Denver, and St. Louis were contacted directly, or through relatives, co-workers, neighbors, and friends by the FBI inquiring about protests at the Democratic and Republican National Conventions, as well as the Presidential Debates, and the election.

Several anarchists in the region were served with a federal grand jury subpoena. The grand jury has historically been used to divide and terrorize dissidents. There is an urgent need for legal defense funds and lawyers with federal grand jury experience. The state has raised the stakes to stifle dissent. Activists in the Midwest vow to fight the repression and keep up their political work.

Send Legal Funds to: Kansas Mutual Aid, c/o ARISE, P.O. Box 442438, Lawrence, KS 66044, kansasmutu-
alaid@hotmail.com, kcdirectaction.net.

Labor Notes...

The Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) are lending support to efforts of workers trying to form unions at Wild Oats health food stores. Wild Oats recently sold its Norwalk, Conn. store after a successful union drive. The chain recently fired an IWW member in Norwood, Ohio for organizing activity. Call Wild Oats Customer Service at 1-800-494-WILD and demand they reinstate the fired worker and accept unionization.

Starbucks workers in New York City successfully organized a union with the IWW and were poised to become the first Starbucks Baristas' union locally certified in the country. Workers at the Midtown Manhattan coffee shop came together to raise wages and to achieve respect and dignity on the job. However, two days before the union certification election, George W. Bush's Labor Board intervened on behalf of the company effectively destroying the right to a fair vote. Workers are fighting to win their demands without government certification but this attack on workers' rights must not go unanswered. See starbucksunion.org for details.

Anti-Imperialist out of Prison

In early August, Raymond Luc Levasseur, now 57, was released from federal prison in Atlanta. He returned to his native Maine, where he will live in a halfway house through November and remain on probation for years to come. Levasseur, a working class Vietnam Vet, was a member of the United Freedom Front, dubbed the "Ohio Seven," a group responsible for 19 bombings and 10 bank robberies over a nine-year period that began in the 1970s. These actions were carried out in solidarity with various anti-imperialist struggles across the globe. Arrested in the 1980s, Levasseur has spent the past 20 years in custody for his role in the actions. Portland Police Chief Michael Chitwood described Ray Luc Levasseur as "truly a revolutionary," and said they didn't want him in the city.

Sources: various emails, websites, mainstream and alternative press, including infoshop.org and indy-media.org

—Compiled by john johnson

Send us your stories, reports, and suggestions.

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