

# Newsletter

of the Alliance for Green Socialism – March 2014  
www.greensocialist.org.uk



## GMP: IGAS' PRIVATE ARMY

At the "Frack Free Manchester" national demonstration on 9 March, the most telling chant was:

**"G, G, GMP - Igas' private army"**

Igas plc is the company seeking to frack for shale gas at Barton Moss near Manchester. GMP (Greater Manchester Police) are acting as their hired thugs.

So far GMP have spent around a million pounds on policing the fracking operation. Most weekdays they deploy some hundred police officers and ten to twenty vehicles. That million pounds has come out of the pockets of ordinary citizens who expected it to be spent protecting them from crime.

Yet GMP are running this operation entirely on private land and entirely for the benefit of Igas plc. What should be a purely civil matter between Igas and the protectors is instead being pursued by the police on behalf of the private company.

In looking after Igas, GMP have been happy to flout the law themselves. They have made dozens of wrongful arrests for obstructing vehicles on a footpath! The vehicles have no right of way and cannot possibly be obstructed under highway law.

The AGS has been able to help by proving and publicising the status of the path, making clear that the arrests were unlawful, and backing this up with a formal counsel's opinion. These charges have now (only after three months) been thrown out by the court.

Of course, the police have not restricted themselves to wrongful arrests. They have thrown an old woman into the hedge, broken a peaceful protester's leg, roughed up countless protesters and behaved like thugs - especially the "Tactical Aid Unit" bully boys, Manchester's equivalent of the Met's notorious SPG.

AGS members from Wigan, Leeds and Epping Forest have been regular attenders at the protest.

In addition, the AGS has opened up a new front - a legal counter attack against the frackers, the complicit land-owners, and the police.

We have brought a private prosecution against Igas, ironically for obstruction of the highway. Stupidly they have built their access road slap-bang across a little used public footpath, blocking the path with an eight-foot metal fence topped with razor wire. Sounds like obstruction to me! We are also prosecuting the landowners for blocking footpaths. And we have just launched a prosecution of the lorry companies supplying the Igas site.

More significantly, we have laid information against GMP officers for aiding and abetting obstruction of the highway. So far the magistrate has refused to issue summonses on this because "*it is not fair to prosecute the police - they are only following orders*". (Wasn't that the defence rejected at Nuremberg?) We are currently seeking judicial review of this decision, since there were no lawful grounds at all for the magistrate's refusal to issue.

Of course, none of this legal stuff is as important as the work of the brave people camping out through the winter at Barton Moss and making it difficult for Igas to operate.

However, it is important to oppose fracking, and the police abuse that goes with it, on all fronts. Protest camps, lobbying councillors, rallies, standing in elections, publicity, and legal challenges all help build the opposition.

### A BUDGET FOR THE WELL-OFF

At first sight a fairly bland budget - but not if you look at its politics. Every significant positive measure favoured those who were already adequately off or better. Pensioners' bonds (for those with spare cash); increased ISA limits (for those with spare cash); lifting restrictions on private pensions (for those with private pensions); and so on. And for the poor? Years more of ever-harsher cuts to benefits and services, while Osborne gives treats to the rich. A truly Tory budget.

### EUROPEAN ECOSOCIALIST ACTION NETWORK

This initiative was called by the French *Parti de Gauche*. So far we have attended two gatherings, mostly of groups from France, Belgium, Spain and Britain. We hope this may work. However it is not yet clear whether the PG intend this as a genuine network, operating democratically, or just as a PG-controlled "front" organisation.

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Meetings of the national committee are normally open to any member to observe. Meetings are on Saturdays, most often at the Calthorpe Arms or Lucas Arms in Kings Cross, London:

24 May 2014 Lucas Arms, London WC1X 8QY 13:15  
 12 Jul 2014 Calthorpe Arms, London WC1X 8JR 12:00  
 6 Sep 2014 Lucas Arms, London WC1X 8QY 13:15

**ANNUAL CONFERENCE Sat 18 Oct 2014**  
**Calthorpe Arms, Grays Inn Rd, WC1X 8QR**

15 Nov 2014 Calthorpe Arms, London WC1X 8JR 12:00

## ***EPPING FOREST***

Coming Epping Forest Green & Democratic Left events:-

Tue 8 Apr, 7.30, quiz night, Gunmakers Arms, Loughton  
 Fri 2 May, 8.00, public meeting on policies & principles for the Euro elections. Speakers from Greens and No2EU.  
 Sun 4 May, 2 till late, May Day Fest, Gunmakers Arms, Loughton

## ***NORTH LONDON***

North London AGS held a meeting in March on "Stand up for Education" with Bob Archer. The next meeting is in May on World War One with Bruce Kent. Details to follow.

## ***LEEDS***

Tue 15 Apr, 7.30, Implications of the Scottish referendum for the rest of Britain, Swarthmore Ctre, Woodhouse Sq.

This year's Leeds AGS Garden Party is at 2 - 5 pm on Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> June 2014 at Inkwell on Potternewton Lane, Chapel Allerton, LS7 3LW. Put it in your diary now. Stay over the weekend and link up with Leeds comrades.

## **PICK UP THEIR SWORDS**

Sadly, London comrade John Gritten has died. Son of a Conservative MP, he joined the Communist Party. For many years, he worked for the Morning Star.

## ***TAFTA/TTIP THREAT***

Probably not many of us will have heard of either the Trans-Atlantic Free Trade Agreement (TAFTA) nor the Transatlantic Trade & Investment Partnership (TTIP). But these two acronyms for the same projected EU-US treaty are a huge threat to us all.

The EU Commission has been holding secret negotiations with the US on a treaty with mind-boggling implications. It would open up the European Union to US trade and investment, over-ruling all the safeguards currently in place. The rule would be: "if it's OK in the USA, it's OK in the EU" regardless of what our laws say.

A good example is meat. In the USA chicken for human consumption is routinely "washed" in a bath of water containing dead chickens, feathers, chicken shit, other contaminants, and high levels of bacteria. In the USA, cattle are often cut up while still alive and conscious, because of failure of the process supposed to kill them. We would have to accept this - and much more.

Remember the "Multilateral Agreement on Investment" (MAI) that we saw off a few years ago? One of its main objectives was to give companies the right to sue states if they had "burdensome" regulations - like requiring food to be clean, or workers to be safe! This EU-US agreement will do exactly that: give companies legal parity with (or supremacy over) states.

Needless to say, these EU-US negotiations have been kept very, very quiet. The AGS will play its part in exposing what is going on and working to stop it.

## ***2013/14 National Committee members***

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