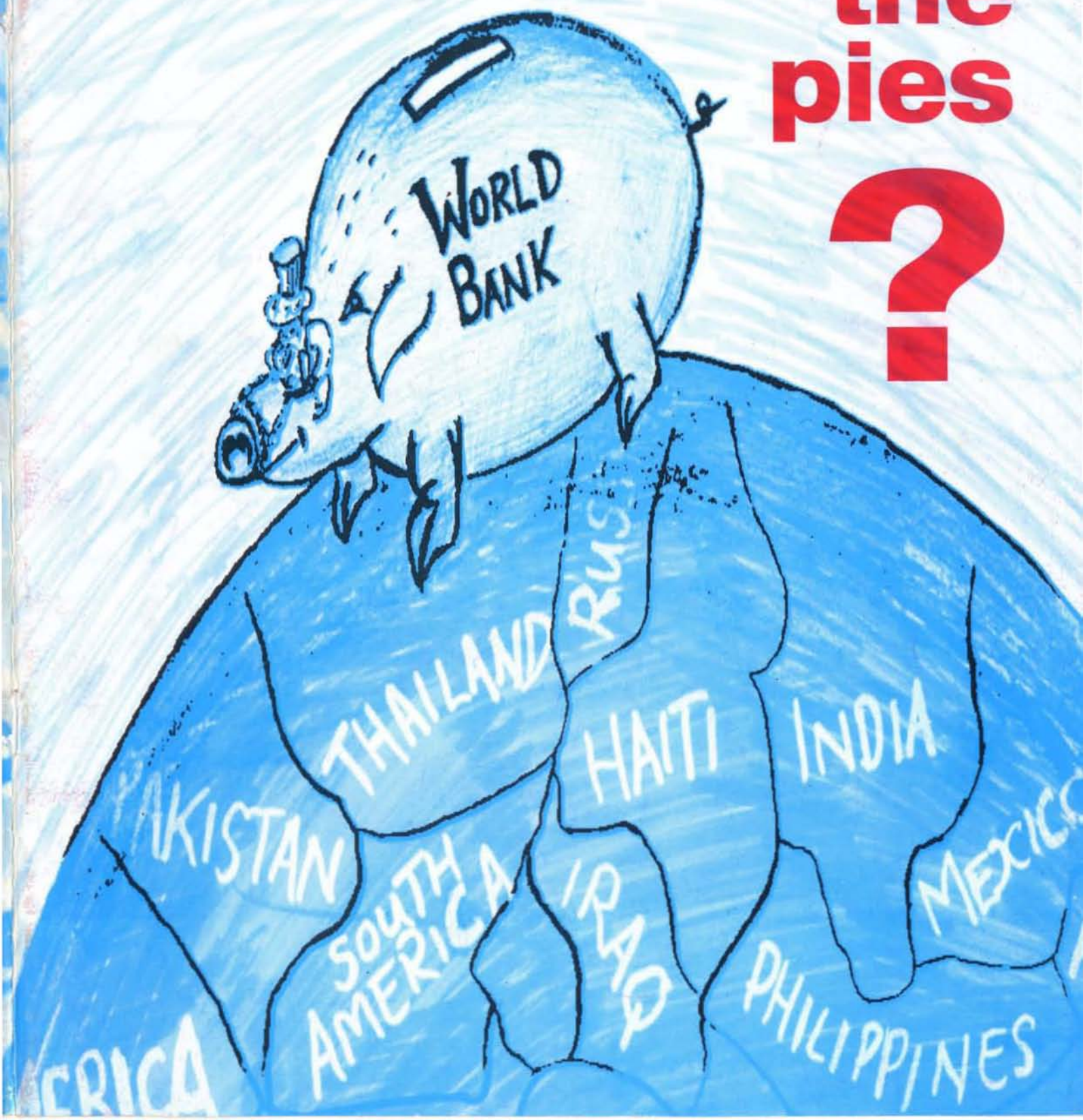


Direct Action

No.10 spring 1999 £1.50

**Who
ate
all
the
pies
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**Direct
Action**

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And then there were two. Academics, journalists, politicians and other general know-alls have got used to the idea of 3 worlds - until the last decade.

The first world - the great (sic!) colonisers - the ones who smashed and grabbed their way around the world and generally created mayhem, and a vast concentration of power and wealth along the way. These people still rule the roost, though they have jostled a bit among themselves. The Third World - well, we all know that they are the luckless ones who have been raped and pillaged by the first lot. And the Second World, based on soviet style communism - well, er, I think we can safely say that that particular world is dead, or, at the very least, in a permanent vegetative state.

But this rather rough and ready analysis leaves out the 'New World' - not the brave one, the American one. In particular, the modern equivalent of the first world - the good ol' US of A.

Why the geography lesson? Simply my attempt at an elegant comparison between a notion and a reality. The notion - that we are now back to a *2Worlds* rather

than 3. The reality - we knew all along really that there are *2Worlds* and have been for a long time; the 'haves' and the 'have nots'.

And forget the idea that the down-trodden are passive, stupid, undeserving or just too weak to help themselves. *Helpless and Hopeless?* (p.18-19) dispels that myth once and for all.

You can dress it up in as much academic study, political rhetoric, or pseudo-economics as you like, a few people have been shafting everyone else for a long time. And they are currently on the rampage with their latest game, called "Blame it on the Market". It would appear that the market is our new God - all powerful, unquestioningly almighty, and to be interfered with at your peril. Indeed, to interfere with the machinations and whims of this all-powerful being would be to incur wrath like never before. Reading through the Blair-speak; Market-God will pour untold misery down on all those who strive for fairness or take a stand against greed.

*The emperor's new wardrobe doesn't
disguise the fact that Uncle Sam is actually
butt-naked.*

*...there is no Market-God at all - it is just
Uncle Sam and his mates at the pie trough*

In fact, to state the obvious, there is no endemic, genetic, structural or physical reason why the world should remain split in two. Neither does luck, fate or latitude play a part. Pure and simple - the looters got there first and are keeping all the money to themselves. This is *How the South Was Done* (p.4-6). To this day, with their huge stolen cashpile, they hand out titbits to those who are prepared to sell their soul to the market and swear allegiance to Market-God. They hand out other titbits to those so desperate for food and basics that they will sign up to anything for a greenback's worth of rice. Yet more titbits are reserved for you, dear reader, if only you can push all this to the back of your mind, be a 'good' citizen and avoid rocking the boat.

The fact that Market-God (and titbit-seeking hangers on) tell us terms like 'Imperialism', 'Third World' and 'Working Class' are now 'so seventies' and generally old hat, doesn't mean these things have gone away. Global Market, Developing Countries, Productive Capacity and Jobs Markets are already passing their

sell-by-date.

Tomorrow's buzz words will mean the same things. *The Emperor's New Wardrobe* (p.31-33) doesn't disguise the fact that Uncle Sam is actually butt-naked. Imperialism is still

going on. In fact, there is no uncontrollable almighty Market-God at all - it is just Uncle Sam and his mates at the pie trough. Market-God is myth.

And reality? Reality is *The Plague of Locusts* (p.34). The more 'imperialism' goes out of fashion, the harder the 3rd world gets the last drops of blood squeezed out.

So, has everyone fallen for the oldest trick in the book - rebranding rhetoric? Are we really all this stupid? No, but everyone has to survive (the alternative is, rather obviously, not going to achieve much). When there is so much money in so few hands, we are all somewhere in the queue for the tit-bits.

There is only one way to make *2Worlds* one. Forget the queue, form an orderly riot and storm the bastards. Meanwhile, we can start preparing to sort things out more sensibly. *Social General Strike* (p.22) might be an old hat term, but sod it, it has meaning and it works for me. It 'does what it says on the tin', as they say up north. So, ignore the Government Health Warning - open it up. 

About DA

Views stated within these pages are not necessarily those of the Direct Action Collective or the Solidarity Federation. Contributions come from various places, and DA has a policy of not crediting these personally. If you want to know about authors or sources, write to the DA Collective. On any other issue, readers' views are welcome, whether opinions, additional information or letters responding to articles or raising issues of interest. If you want to help out with DA, or would like to know more about the Solidarity Federation, contact us. Do not expect high pressure sales, paper-selling quotas or demands for this or that; do expect a reasonably prompt reply. One more thing, the Direct Action Collective and Direct Action Magazine are not intended to incite illegal activity of any sort - in case you were wondering.

Notes for Contributors

If you would like to contribute more than brief opinions, we request you send articles (between 500 and 1500 words if possible) in hardcopy and on disk in either Word for Windows PC version not greater than 7 or ASCII format. Contact us for electronic mail addresses or alternative formats. Failing that, any decent typewritten script will do, or even neat handwriting, if necessary. While unsolicited articles are welcome, they can only be returned if a SAE is enclosed.

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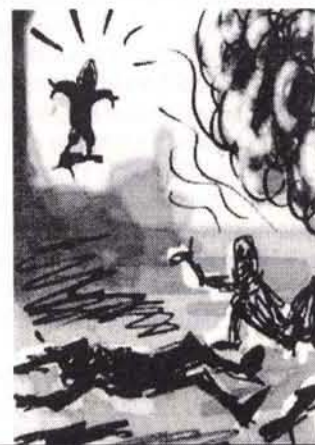
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The Ibogaine Story: Report on the Staten Island Project - Paul De Rienzo, Dana Beal, et al.

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Capitalism Colonialism Development

HOW THE SOUTH WAS DONE

Underdevelopment - history and present: Kenya and Tanzania

Poverty does not lurk in corners - it is running rampage across the so-called 'Third World' - most of Africa, South America, South and Southeast Asia and the South Pacific. This is no secret. But why? - the roots of this poverty is not dinner table conversation. Even less so is the scale and sorts of global bullying still going on in 1999.

The poverty and general lack of 'development' in the 'Third World' is typically thought to be closely related to the fact that it was colonised and controlled by a few countries in Western Europe (and now the US) for so long. But what is this link and how important is it?

All underdeveloped countries have, of course, felt the curse of colonialism, the robbery of the rest of the world for the benefit of European capitalism. But it would be over-simplistic to say that underdevelopment directly follows from colonialism. For sure, colonialism has produced some of the conditions that characterise underdeveloped countries, but these play a more or less indirect role in



relation to their present plight. However, it is international capitalism itself which has led directly to lack of development. The basic role that colonialism played was to introduce the capitalist form of production, and all that comes with it, such as the modern nation state and the class system, to new parts of the world.

First of all, it would be useful to look at what "development" means. What it actually refers to is economic development within the international capitalist system, as measured by such bodies as the IMF and OECD. Given that something must have a period of time over which to develop, and that capitalism did not develop in all places at the same time, it would be unreal to expect equal development throughout the world. At the beginning of the colonial period just over a century ago, European capitalism had already been going for two centuries, while it was unknown in Africa. So, to find that Africa hasn't yet caught up should cause no surprise. Moreover, given capitalism's inclinations towards massive inequality within even one state, that such inequalities are reflected on a global level is somewhat inevitable.

That Africa is the least developed region of the world cannot be disputed. Former colonial states in Asia and Latin America have developed economically over the last few decades, in some cases dramatically so - that is, until the troubles of the last couple of years. While the role of capitalism in unequal development is considered elsewhere in this issue, here some effects of colonialism in Kenya and Tanzania are outlined to highlight some of the different forms and methods used in different places at different times.

East Africa

Although the colonial period only lasted around three quarters of a century, contacts between Europe and sub-Saharan Africa are much older. European involvement with Arab slave traders is well known and goes back at least to the 16th Century. The Portuguese, meanwhile, were at the forefront of establishing trading posts around the African coast. Arab influence, on the other hand, goes back as far as the 8th Century and, by the beginning of the colonial period, a wealthy sultanate had long been established on Zanzibar and

adjacent parts of the Tanzanian coast.

Arab economic influence was carried along trading routes into the interior of Africa, and Zanzibar was the hub of this network. Influenced by Arabs, the Africans of Zanzibar, nearby islands and coastal areas were also traders, and their language, Swahili, became the language of long-distance trade within east and central Africa. However, the establishment of colonial empires had a profound disruptive effect on these economic relations.

When Belgium seized Zaïre and overthrew Zanzibari commercial domination, trade from eastern Zaïre turned away from the routes to the Indian Ocean towards the mouth of the River Congo, the Atlantic and ultimately Europe. This set in motion a chain of economic events which contributed to the eventual imposition of German rule in Tanzania. The Zanzibaris, facing bankruptcy, called in debts built up in the boom times by African chiefs, who in turn demanded huge tributes from their subjects, driving them in increasing numbers into christian mission stations and out of the reach of tax-gatherers. On the east African coast, meanwhile, Arab and Swahili traders, in increasing competition and conflict with the German East Africa Company, rebelled. This gave an excuse for armed German intervention and, with social and economic order breaking down, Germany took formal control in 1890.

Thus, European intervention in Africa destroyed already established economic relations. This is not to speculate about how African economies might have developed free from such overt interference. Nor is it to say that Arab influence in Africa was somehow benign. It wasn't, as their role in the slave trade makes abundantly clear. However, what took place was that European capitalism, in the form of colonialism, brought in a whole new set of economic relations.

oppressing types

The reasons for European interest often varied from one part of Africa to another. In Tanzania's case, Germany wanted supplies of raw materials - such as rubber, sisal fibre, cotton, gold and mica - that were beyond British and American control. To this end, German settlers were



encouraged to establish plantations on the best land which was forcibly confiscated from Africans.

By contrast, the Imperial British East Africa Company's interest in Kenya was as a route into the ivory trade of Uganda. This coincided with Britain's strategic preoccupation with controlling the Nile's headwaters. Only after completion of the railway to Uganda in 1901 was Kenya's potential realised. In fact, it was more a question of how best to make the railway earn back what it had cost to build.

So a policy of European settlement was implemented, with the best land being simply annexed through force, diplomacy, or a mixture of both. To increase the colonial administration's legitimacy among Africans various measures were adopted - seed for marketable crops was issued; collaborators were rewarded with minor administrative jobs; markets in the Empire were opened up for African household goods and Indian traders. Meanwhile, a hut tax on the African population was imposed and chiefs were required to build roads using unpaid labour.

However, the Kenyan economy came to be dominated by estate production of coffee and maize, relying upon cheap African labour. This was the true economic policy of the administration, and African production was only really encouraged insofar as it had a

Forced labour, land dispossession, hut taxes, and duties never persuaded enough Africans to leave the security, stability and degree of control afforded by traditional subsistence society

pacifying effect. In fact African agriculture was held back, notably through the forced recruitment of cheap labour for the estates, and through state economic management which protected the settlers' monopolies, by banning Africans from growing coffee, for instance.

Likewise, in Tanzania the German plantations needed cheap labour, but efforts to secure it were less successful than in Kenya. Forced labour, land dispossession, hut taxes, and duties on certain goods, all designed to increase African reliance on money, never persuaded enough Africans to leave the security, stability and degree of control afforded by traditional subsistence society for the harsh, unsanitary, and exploitative world of waged work on the plantations. The plantation system never came to dominate Tanzania's economy as the white estates did in Kenya.

With Germany's defeat in 1918, Tanzania, as a League of Nations mandate, came under the British Empire. However, uncertainty over its future within the Empire meant the new administration never developed a settlement policy such as Kenya's, nor indeed invested in infrastructure in any meaningful way. Although European plantations did remain, the basis of export production, in contrast with Kenya, was peasant smallholding.

(cont'd on page 6..)

BNRR Update



The turn of the year saw police and bailiffs using heavyhanded, underhanded and generally unwelcome tactics against camps and squats along the route of the proposed Birmingham Northern Relief Road. The Moneymore and Greenwood camps reported on in previous DAs were evicted in December, and the third site followed in January.

A new site has been set up at The Spinney, half a mile up the road, and the Camp mobile phone number is 07970 301978. All solidarity and support especially welcome given the fairly rough start to the new year. The appeal process continues so this will remain a hot issue on the anti-roads scene for at least the next few months. For up to date info. phone the camp or contact West Midlands SF, PO Box 6705, Redditch, Worcs. B97 6SQ. 

(cont'd from page 5..)

Thus, by independence in 1963, Kenya's emphasis on settler estate production had left it in a more developed state in terms of investment and infrastructure than Tanzania. This was reflected in the East African Community, which both countries participated in, along with Uganda, from 1963 until 1977, and which was based on a common colonial history, currency, transport and tax systems. Kenya, especially its industrialising capital, Nairobi, where multinational companies tended to be based, quickly came to dominate the EAC, despite mechanisms to regulate such differences.

It also meant that with much more formerly white-owned land up for grabs in Kenya, there is now a much larger class of large-scale farmers than in Tanzania. While much of this land was given over to the Kenyan peasantry, a large part ended up in the hands of the so-called "telephone farmers", black bourgeoisie working in the state bureaucracy or industrial management in Nairobi and organising their farming requirements by telephone.

land and 'freedom'

The Kikuyu people, Kenya's largest ethnic group (around 20%), had lost by far the most land to white settlers. Beginning in the 1920's and carrying on into the 1940's, land agitation had brought few results. By the end of the 1940's, enough Kikuyu were convinced that violence was the only way, and a campaign of intimidation through crop burning and ham-stringing of cattle got underway. This was the beginnings

the Mau Mau were rounded up by October 1956, ending 7 years of war in which over 13,500 were killed, less than 100 of them white

of the Mau Mau. By the end of 1952, the violence had escalated into killings of settlers. There were reprisals by the settlers; mass evictions of farm labourers from the estates; and half the Kikuyu population of Nairobi was detained in concentration camps. The gruesome nature of many Mau Mau killings quickly lost them support even among the majority of Kikuyu and, confined to a few heavily forested areas, they were rounded up by October 1956, ending 7 years of war in which over 13,500 were killed, less than 100 of them white.

Well after independence, and even today, the Mau Mau period has affected the economic, political and social life. It is complicated by the fact that the Kikuyu were split regarding their support for the Mau Mau. Thus, Mau Mau supporters, rather than "loyalists" within the Kikuyu were favoured when it came to the distribution of land and development projects. And likewise it tended to be Kikuyu areas, and those of their allies, that were favoured overall, leading to regional imbalances and inter-ethnic rivalry.

In Tanzania by contrast, no such dominant ethnic group ever emerged. As early as the Maji Maji rising of 1905-7 against the German authorities, there was a high degree of unity among the Africans throughout the whole territory, which has since remained a feature of Tanzanian political and social life. Thus, the independence movement which grew out of African agricultural co-operatives, first established in the 1920's, was not the exclusive preserve of just one, or a few, ethnic groups.

Africa today is characterised by "modern" states cobbled together through a series of lines drawn on a map in far off Europe. This process has often thrown together mutually hostile peoples, which was certainly the case in Kenya, although the country has been relatively stable since the early years of independence. Nevertheless, it is a stability which is maintained through a one-party state system, with state-run trade unions and no room for independent working class expression. Likewise, Tanzania, despite its enviable record of minimal inter-ethnic rivalry, is dominated by a one-party system and state-controlled unions.

After independence, the conditions for development did exist and some progress was being made. The direct legacy of colonialism lies in the economic and political relations imported from Europe. The result has been new nation states; the capitalist class system, accompanied by corruption and abuse of power; and economies based on the production for export of a handful of cash crops and raw materials. But, in themselves, these have not caused underdevelopment.

For this we don't have to look beyond the crises of international capitalism in the 1970's, which crippled the economies of both Kenya and Tanzania, among many others, a blow from which they have never recovered. Now both countries are characterised by huge foreign debts, massive foreign trade deficits, the export of wealth by multinationals, and IMF restructuring measures which attack the living standards of the poor. 

On 5th December, anti-fascists celebrated victory after the neo-Nazi National Front (NF) failed to hold a planned march in Dover. The NF had aimed to capitalise on hostility local racists have been whipping up against the 400 asylum-seekers currently housed in the area.

Twice before (in November 1997 and February 1998 - see previous DAs) the NF were bussed in from the West Midlands and elsewhere by Newbury Travel. This time the fascists were forced to abandon their march after Newbury Travel caved in under pressure from anti-fascists and cancelled the trip. Seven trade-union branches in the Birmingham area had passed resolutions condemning the company for transporting the NF to Dover.

On January 9, the National Front finally held their third march against asylum-seekers in Dover. Despite barely three days' notice, anti-fascists mobilised to outnumber the 35 fascists by more than 2:1.

Despite police protection including 300 officers, dogs, police horses, riot police and two boats, it still took the Nazis over an hour to push their way down the sea front. The fascists had no local support. Afterwards, they were escorted by the police back up the motorway to London. The NF say that they intend to keep holding marches in Dover every few months. Local anti-fascists will keep trying to stop them.



bus boycott

The fascists came in three minibuses on which the hire-company logo had been covered up. The company was S & B Car Hire Ltd ("Making Car Hire Simple"). Anti-fascists are urged to contact S & B Car Hire Ltd to ask them politely not to help the NF come to Dover to stir up racist hatred and violence. The firm's details are; <http://www.scoot.co.uk/s&b/index.htm>, information and enquiries; Tel: 01634 408300; Fax: 01634 408900.

As DA goes to press, it appears highly

likely that the British National Party intends to stand as many as 3 or 4 candidates in the Dover District Council elections in May 1999.

Send messages of support, donations and offers of help to: Dover Residents Against Racism c/o Refugee Link, PO Box 417, Folkestone, Kent CT19 4GT.

The campaign against the National Front in Dover has a homepage at <http://www.canterbury.u-net.com/Dover.html>

Who are the real spongers?

The Immigration and Asylum Bill, announced in November 1998, has expanded the process of dispersing refugees around the country, apparently to reduce the burden on local authorities in London and Dover, and in an attempt to clear a backlog of 52,000 asylum seekers. It also included new penalties for deception offences, to deter fraudulent applications.

Already, 17-year-old Kosovan refugees are being sent to seaside towns by London councils and stranded without even their communities for support. Small towns offer limited specialist legal advice and counselling services for victims of torture. Nick Hardwick, the chief executive of the Refugee Council, said: "The dispersal system leads to large numbers of young

men being dumped in hotels in seaside towns where they are the only non-English people."

Meanwhile, New Labour and local racists and conservatives are encouraging a nasty undercurrent of scapegoating, trying to turn people's anger at the system away from those at the top towards some of the most vulnerable in society. New Labour's "tough on refugees" attitude has given the green light to newspapers notorious for running scare stories. The Daily Mail has run a series of "investigations" into the "flood" of asylum seekers in Dover. One printed the full address of a refugee family, who were subsequently attacked and forced to move out. Attacks are now increasingly frequent and violent, as the papers get more racist.

The refugees are being blamed for an economic disaster that has nothing to do

with them. Unemployment is already running at 9.4% in the "Garden of England", and up to 25% in Folkestone. Not one aspect of this economic blight is down to the refugees. Following the 1984-5 Miners' Strike, the Tory government closed county's coal pits, throwing thousands on the dole. In 1988, the P&O dispute, centred in Dover, saw 2,000 seafarers sacked for going on strike. Thousands of people marched across Kent last year against hospital closures planned by East Kent Health Authority. Not one refugee sits on the authority board!

There is a small group of "spongers" and "parasites" in Britain. They move in and out of the country at will. They throw people out of work and refuse to fund basic services. They are not refugees from Kosovo or poor countries. They are the rich, supported by New Labour.

Shell OCCUPATION

Shell head office - Shell-Mex House in London - was occupied in January, to mark Ogoni Day (January 4th), which has been celebrated since Shell was forced out of Ogoni Lands through massive resistance. However, it was also designed to pile pressure on Shell to pull out of the Niger Delta, where oil corporate-sponsored military crackdown on the local Ijaw people has resulted in dozens of murders over the last couple of months.

The occupation ended when police smashed office walls causing considerable damage to Shell's plush upholstery. (See also international news and centre pages for focus on Nigerian anarcho-syndicalism).



education:

Watching the Watchers

The Education Workers Network Ofsted campaign is well underway with thousands of questionnaires distributed to schools.

The first step is to collect and share useful hints, tips and information regarding Ofsted inspections, as well as gathering all kinds of dirt on schools inspectors.

turning the tables

Some of the responses already in make interesting reading. Like the reply from a London school, where Ofsted inspectors did not take into account a recent murder at the school. On a lighter note, some of the comments from children about the inspectors have been particularly amusing. One child who observed an inspector eating cake with a fork (very posh) and said "excuse me, but at our school we eat our pudding with a spoon".

Anyone who has suffered or is suffering an inspection, please get in touch with EWN, likewise if you wish to help with the campaign (EWN, PO Box 29, SWPDO, Manchester M15 5HW).



An estimated 1,000 Oxford students took to the streets in January in support of five undergraduates facing suspension for refusing to pay their tuition fees.

Blair's New Labour government, who have been highly vocal about the importance of education, went down in history books this academic year as the first British government to introduce compulsory student fees for higher education. The policy has singlehandedly lurched British higher education in the opposite direction to the majority of Europe, where education is less talked about but more highly valued.

The general idea seems to be that the rich (who will still be able to afford to go to university) will get better higher education because there will be more money around.

In Oxford, resistance against fees has been stubborn and noteworthy. Unfortunately, it was also shortlived - the threat of expulsion brought the non-payers back into the fold.

Jubilee - not jubilation

The cost of the Jubilee Underground Line Extension in London has risen by £1 billion in 4 years, and will exceed £3 billion on completion. It should have been finished by March 1998. When complete, it will be 18 months late, and there are still no guarantees that the last section, between Green Park and Waterloo, will be open by the Millennium.

The drive to finish has produced a response from some of the workers on the site. 500 electricians are pressing for higher bonuses in exchange for the longer hours they are being required to work. A series of unofficial strikes in December led to negotiations and a partial settlement of demands, but the long term situation remains uncertain. Meanwhile, the strikes have led to further delays; any more action may be expected to seriously damage millennium celebrations at the dome.

However, these actions may be hopeful signs that a flood of old labour militancy could return after years of Thatcherite drought.



Events/Campaigns/Gatherings

Friends and Neighbours

Sick of Work? - Take a Break

World Phone in Sick Day is April 6th - the annual holiday for idlers, slackers, anarchists and workers of the world. All you have to do is not turn up for work. You can think up something original or just have the flu. Encourage work colleagues and friends to do the same. This year, the event will include mailings to large corporations and workplaces the world over. Send your illness pledges in advance with details of your job and your employer - you don't have to give your real name and your boss will never know. If you are a celebrity, why not pledge your sickness to the media? Excuses and pledges to Decadent Action, BM Decadence, London, WC1N 3XX, UK. <http://www.underbelly.demon.co.uk/decadent/docs/sickstar.htm>

Boycott Hillsborough

Boycott Liverpool-Sheffield Wednesday Game at Hillsborough, on 8th May 1999. Stay away in the name of justice for the 96 dead. Hillsborough Justice Campaign, 0151 260 5262.

Koln '99

In June, Koln (Cologne) in Germany will be the world capital. Leaders and Representatives from the richest and most powerful countries will meet in two separate Summits; the European Union Summit on 1st June and the G8 (including Russia) World Summit on 19th June. While they decide how to shape and control our lives, join the thousands of us who will descend on Koln on May 29th and June 19th to demonstrate against global capital and for a world of social justice and liberty for all. There will be an international March from Brussels, setting off on 25th May. Further info. on official arrangements from UK from EuroMarch Liaison, Tel: 0191-2220299 Email: EUROMUK@aol.com.

London '99

On Friday June 18th, there will be BIG Reclaim the Streets demonstrations in capitals around the world - for London details, contact RTS at 0171 281 4621, rts@gn.apc.org.

Ma'M '99

Movement against the Monarchy will march from Kennington Park, London, on May 1st, starting at 11am. More info; Ma'M, PO Box 14670, London E9 5UQ.

New project: Infoshops Network.

The main purposes of setting up the infoshops network are to:

1. Enable networking, skill and information sharing between autonomous groups who run info shops/cafes/etc.
2. Discuss how info. can best be disseminated on the web
3. Initiate a central information database
4. Inspire others to create their own autonomous spaces
5. To help put people in touch with others near them

A mailing list has been set up at: infoshops@tao.ca. Send the message 'subscribe infoshops' to majordomo@tao.ca. To make contact, Email teapot@worthing.eco-action.org, or write to PO Box 4144, Worthing, West Sussex, BN14 7NZ.

Solidarity Federation

Body Shop Campaign

Still going and still getting Body Shop all uncomfortable. For details of your nearest actions, contact; SF, PO Box 29, SW PDO, Manchester M15 5HW. 0161 232 7889.

Africa Solidarity Group

Supporting struggle in Nigeria, South Africa, Zambia, Sierra Leone and elsewhere. More people always welcome - Red & Black Club, PO Box 17773, London SE2 4WX. Tel. 0171 358 1854.

Self-Ed Education Collective

The SelfEd Collective is a group of people producing materials with revolutionary intent using collective means. Write to us to find out why we think self-education is essential. Try the correspondence course 'A History of Anarcho-syndicalism'. It consists of 24 pamphlet-sized Units, plus the opportunity to attend occasional Discussion meetings up and down the country. Only £18, or a total bargain £9 for DA Supporting Subscribers (cheques to SF). SelfEd also seeks to share and develop practical skills for revolutionary activity. Everything from writing and talking to printing and DTP and much more. Send an A5 sized SAE for a copy of our first pamphlet in the Skills for Action series 'Writing and Talking'. Self-Ed, PO Box 1095, Sheffield S2 4YR.

Network - The Bulletin for Public Service Workers

No.9 is now out. Contents include Single Status, UNISON's witchhunt, and pay for Care Workers. Send SAE for your copy or write for bulk copies to: PSWN, PO Box 1681, London, N8 7LE.

Norwich Solidarity Centre BOOKSHOP

For pamphlets, books, magazines, newspapers on: Workplace law - anarcho-syndicalism - health & safety info - anarchism - anti-fascism. Open every Saturday, 12 noon - 2pm. Rm 13, Muspole Workshops, Muspole St, Norwich NR3 1QD.

South Herts Solidarity Federation

Discussion Meetings 8pm, 2nd Wednesday of the month in St Albans (near main railway station). Contact South Herts SolFed, PO Box 493, St Albans AL1 5TW.

North & East London Solidarity Federation

Socials: Last Thursday of the month, 8pm, near Camden Tube. We also hold advice surgeries and have regular discussion meetings. For details of times and places, contact; SF, PO Box 1681, London N8 7DN. Tel. 0181 374 5027.

POSTAL WORKERS

Victimised or bullied at work? CWN-SF are collecting information for their anti-bullying campaign. Contact; Manchester SF (address below).

Manchester SolFed

Support and Advice Sessions

Victimised at work? Poor conditions?
Low wages? No union?
Drop in -
1st Tuesday of the month, 7pm

Discussion Meetings

8.30pm 1st Tuesday of the month.
Spring Topics:

- April 6th - Self-Destructive Behaviour;
- May 4th - Language & Power;
- June 1st - Gender & Employment;
- July 6th - Health & Safety at Work.

All sessions are open and free - just turn up to:

The Brow House, 1 Mabfield Road,
Fallowfield, Manchester.

Alternatively, contact us:

**Manchester SF, PO Box 29, SW
PDO, Manchester M15 5HW.
0161 232 7889**

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Ashworth Inaction

The New Labour Government have just announced new powers for the authorities to forcibly lock up people who may possibly have mental health problems. There will no longer have to be clear evidence that anyone is actually 'ill' or that they have done anything wrong.

This follows the recent announcement by Health Secretary Frank Dobson, rejecting a call for the closure of Ashworth Special Hospital. The calls came following the report of Peter Falton's recent Inquiry.

The Inquiry revealed that paedophilic porn activity, drugs and drink were for sale in units within the hospital - and several staff were closely involved. Thus, the allegations made by former Ashworth patient Stephen Daggett, who absconded in 1997 to blow the whistle, have been substantially proved.

The claim that a 7-year-old girl was

being abused by paedophiles in the wards was not substantiated in the Inquiry. However, it was confirmed that she was taken into the unit and left with paedophiles, one of whom had sexually abused, mutilated and murdered a 13-year-old boy.

It is more difficult to get a plastic bag into the hospital than a 7-year-old child into one of the wards. Plastic bags are totally banned.

Ashworth, Rampton and Broadmoor are special hospitals, dumping grounds where people suffering from severe, intractable mental health problems are mixed together. People with severe learning disabilities, people with personality disorders, people who harm themselves seriously, are treated alongside the dangerously mentally ill who have committed horrendous crimes against other people.

Over the years, Ashworth has been the subject of a number of inquiries and reports. Time has proved that Ashworth cannot be

reformed, and it and the other special hospitals should close down. They should be replaced with a network of smaller, flexible, manageable units, which would be responsive to the needs of the patients and of the community.

Unfortunately, New Labour is accelerating its mental health policy in the opposite direction - the 'lock 'em up and throw away the key' approach, thereby ensuring that outrages such as paedophile activity and various other atrocities can and will continue to occur. 



Single Status - don't lose out!

Single Status is a National/Local Agreement on Conditions of Service for Local Government workers. It is intended to harmonize manual and non-manual (APT&C) service conditions.

The problem for workers will be that the bosses will want to reduce our existing conditions. When the local union representatives (UNISON, TGWU, GMB) meet the Council to negotiate a local agreement, workers should make sure of the following:

1) At each step, union officials must be prevented from agreeing anything without the membership having the final say.

2) At first, only the reduction from a 39 to a 37 hour week and Job Evaluation should be discussed. Nothing else matters until after these two issues are settled.

3) Although Job Evaluation Schemes usually work against us, the National Joint Council Scheme is the least unfavourable, and can be helpful for lower-paid workers. No other

arrangement should be agreed (unless it really is an improvement - highly unlikely!) In Yorkshire's East Riding, the scheme adopted will mean that the vast majority of workers' salary points will go down by as much as £6,000 a year.

4) Make sure that union members are not balloted on individual service conditions. Workplace and Branch meetings should be held frequently but, if there is going to be a ballot at all, it should only be on the complete package at the end of negotiations. The choice should be

between acceptance or industrial action; the latter being chosen if workers would end up with lower pay rates and worse conditions.

For more information contact: PSWN, PO Box 29, SW PDO, Manchester, M15 5HW.

Network No.9 is now out, in a slimmed down format. Contents are Single Status, UNISON's witchhunt, and pay for Care Workers. Send SAE for your copy or write for bulk copies to: PSWN, PO Box 1681, London, N8 7LE. 

YOBWATCH: Exhume Tameside Labour Party!!

Roy Oldham, Labour Leader of Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council, got a lot of stick over Xmas for his barbaric treatment of the sacked Tameside care workers.

He has been widely booed and jostled in the street because of his inhuman conduct.

Rather than change his disgusting ways, he has grown a beard to go with his 'tache. Unfortunately, this disguise makes him look not unlike Dr Shipman, a local Tameside GP who is accused of murdering 8 of his patients. 

NEW LABOUR NEW RACISM

As DA goes to press, a national demonstration and rally in defence of asylum and immigration rights takes place in London.

The action was called by the Coalition for Asylum and Immigration Rights (CAIR), a broad coalition brought together by the National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns and the National Assembly Against Racism. It is in response to Jack Straw's Asylum Review, which takes the last round of Tory legislation in 1996 another step forward - backward, more like.

The clear aim is to further reduce the rights of asylum seekers and make their lives increasingly unbearable. In DA2 and DA3 we covered the measures brought in by Michael Howard in the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act of 1996. The point of this legislation was to get more people to claim asylum at their port of entry, rather than after they had already entered the country. What's the difference? Well, it's much easier to deport people from a port before entry. Otherwise asylum cases have to be handled through long-winded procedures. Hence the measures to remove and reduce asylum seekers' rights to benefits and services if they don't claim asylum at their port of entry. So the choice is between claiming asylum at port and risking immediate deportation, or claiming after entry and suffering state-imposed hardship. Now Straw wants to add detention and "designated" accommodation to the deterrents.

Labour would sum up its attitude to immigration controls as "firm but fair". This is a lie. We pointed out in DA3, and we repeat here: "The very idea of having controls to keep out those who are perceived as aliens, foreigners, non-British, non-white, or whatever, is racist through and through, and no amount of dressing up in liberal and 'fair'-minded language can change that". This Labour government, like the Tories before them, reflects the racism that pervades British society. In fact, it encourages it by pandering to the press: The spin doctors decree that retaining popularity requires a perfect public image, which in turn requires the press to be kept happy. The British press has waged an incessant campaign of racism against refugees, asylum-seekers and immigrants in general, and Straw's review is part of the service. With the Tories you got racism with a scowl. Now you get it with

Measures expected in new legislation on asylum and immigration will further reduce asylum rights, undermine civil liberties, human rights and exacerbate racism.

Unacceptable proposals in the Bill include those to:

1. Withdraw benefit rights from all asylum seekers and introduce a system of cashless vouchers
2. Compel asylum-seekers to live in "designated" accommodation in any part of the country
3. Extend the use of immigration detention and increase the powers of detention of custody officers
4. Require financial bonds from visitors needing a visa, a measure which discriminates disproportionately against black families
5. End the right of appeal against deportation for those who have been here for over 7 years
6. Grant police powers of search and arrest to the immigration service
7. Increase internal immigration controls, through immigration checks at work and encouraging marriage registrars to check immigration status

These measures will help legitimise the racist campaign against refugees and asylum seekers in the tabloid press, such as those in Dover, (see previous DAs and opposite page).

Tony and Jack's grins.

It's not actually very difficult to refute press claims about Britain being overwhelmed by floods of refugees and economic migrants. In fact, there are more people leaving Britain than entering. Over 60% of immigrants are white, yet the press associates immigration with black and Asian people. But politicians are only interested in popularity, not statistics, especially when those statistics disprove their policies.

Asian Dub Foundation, on "Facts and Fictions", sum it up aptly:

**Oh The Sun has got its facts wrong
Hip, hip, hip hooray (!)
The Sun has got its facts wrong
And its f***ing up my day.**

New Labour, New Britain, but same old racism for refugees and asylum-seekers. Come to think of it, same old Britain for all of us.

For more information on the campaign against Straw asylum review, contact: CAIR@ncadc.demon.co.uk or: National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns (NCADC), 101 Villa Road, Birmingham, B21 1NH (tel: 0121 554 6947; fax: 0870 055 4570).

Also, contact Solidarity Federation, with groups involved in anti-immigration law activity: SF, PO Box 29, SW PDO, Manchester M15 5HW. Ansaphone 0161 232 7889. 

The Summer 1999 issue of DA is on the theme of discrimination - including racism and immigration. Ensure your copy by ordering or subscribing now - details on Page 9. If you have material or want your anti-discrimination activities, work or research published, send it to DA, PO Box 1095, Sheffield S2 4YR, or email to da@directa.force9.co.uk.



The Windward Islands in the Caribbean sell their bananas on the British market, protected by the Lomé Treaty with the European Union (EU). Recently, the US challenged this agreement through the World Trade Organisation (WTO - see FAQs, p.21) on behalf of the American multinational, Chiquita.

Basically, the US complained that EU import regulations discriminate against so-called dollar-bananas grown by US multinationals in Latin America in favour of bananas produced in EU-member former colonies. In a preliminary ruling, the WTO has agreed with the US that this arrangement violates the WTO rules. The dismantling of

these special marketing arrangements will mean economic disaster for the Windward Islands and other banana producers in the Caribbean.

Looming behind the bananas issue are disputes in larger trade sectors, including the US pork producers, who are complaining about the EU ban on meat using growth hormones.

banana fight

In January, trade diplomats were to be seen working flat out trying to find a compromise deal that would stop the US imposing import duties of over \$520 million on a range of European import goods. None of these blatant retaliatory measures have anything to do with bananas. The hardest

hit sector targeted by the US will be the Scottish cashmere industry, where 2,000 jobs are at risk.

However, the US is determined to destroy the main industry on a number of the poorest islands in the Caribbean.

Honduras

Chiquita behaves in Central America and the Eastern Caribbean like a feudal King-maker, making presidents and dictators as it sees fit. In 1997, Chiquita paid only \$3 million in local taxes in Honduras, on a turnover of several hundreds of millions. The foreign debt in 1997 stood at over \$4,000 million. Foreign aid to Honduras was nearly \$400 million, and Honduras repaid \$264 million in debt service payments.

Nicaragua

Nicaragua's debt burden is \$6,000 billion, that is to say that 50% of the Government's revenues are devoted to paying back overseas debts. In April 1998 the Government arranged a 3-year enhanced structural adjustment facility with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. This secured \$1.8 billion for a financing program for health, education and rural development. In return, the Nicaraguan Government was forced to agree to cutting back even further on public expenditure, and to privatise public utilities and increase the cost of electricity by some 1.5% per month (18% per year). 

Multinational Monitor's 10 Worst Corporations:

1. Chevron, for continuing to do business with a brutal dictatorship in Nigeria and for alleged complicity in the killing of civilian protesters.
2. Coca-Cola, for hooking America's kids on sugar and soda water. Today, teenage boys and girls drink twice as much soda pop as milk, whereas 20 years ago they drank nearly twice as much milk as soda.
3. General Motors, for becoming an integral part of the Nazi war machine, and then years later, when documented proof emerges, denying it.
4. Loral and its chief executive Bernard Schwartz, for dumping \$2.2 million into Clinton/Gore and Democratic Party coffers. The Clinton administration responded by approving a human rights waiver to clear the way for technology transfers to China.
5. Mobil, for supporting the Indonesian military in crushing an indigenous uprising in Aceh province and allegedly allowing the military to use company machinery to dig mass graves.
6. Monsanto, for introducing genetically engineered foods into the foodstream without adequate safety testing and without labelling, thus exposing consumers to unknown risks.
7. Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines, for pleading guilty to felony crimes for dumping oil in the Atlantic Ocean and then lying to the Coast Guard about it.
8. Unocal, for engaging in numerous acts of pollution and law violations, to such a degree that citizens in California petitioned the state's attorney general to revoke the company's charter.
9. Wal-Mart, for crushing small town America, for paying low, low wages (a huge percentage of Wal-Mart workers are eligible for food stamps), for using Asian child labour and for homogenising the population.
10. Warner-Lambert, for marketing a hazardous diabetes drug, Rezulin, which has been linked to at least 33 deaths due to liver injuries.

Dont Go Bananas - Boycott Chiquita Instead

Write to them and tell them why - or even send them a photocopy of this page!!
Chiquita Brands International
250 East Fifth St, Cincinnati, OH 45202
USA. fax. 513 784 8030 www.chiquita.com/

Biotechnology: The Peasants Revolt

France

Last November, the French Government authorised the use of three types of genetically modified corn produced by Novartis, a Swiss multinational.

In January, around 200 activists, members of the Confédération Paysanne (Peasants' Confederation) invaded Novartis' warehouse at Nérac in southern France, the traditional centre for the country's 3.3m hectares devoted to corn.

They ripped open seed sacks and hosed them with water or fire extinguishers. Police intervened only after they had left the site, arresting three people for vandalising property. These three unrepentant activists used their arrests to heighten policy debate on the justifications for planting the new seeds. Though they were found guilty, the court left Novartis with the task of collecting damages from the three (unofficial estimates range up to FF7m, approx. £0.7m). "We would do it again if necessary", they said, confident Novartis will not risk the bad publicity of pursuing them for damages. 



India

Rural India is home to one of the largest, most dynamic and vocal environmental movements in the world.

Environmentalist Vandana Shiva has led the intellectual barrage against the patenting of traditional Indian seeds and plants by foreign corporations. "Patents on seeds would destroy 75 per cent of Indian livelihoods linked to the land and the free availability of and access to biodiversity," she says. "We see patents on seed as parallel to the Salt Laws of the British."

"Under the Salt Laws, Indians were forbidden from making salt, a move which transformed the industry into a British monopoly, generating revenues through exclusive rights to manufacture and distribution. Patents on seed are similar, with exclusive rights being claimed by multinationals."

Farmers from all over India are now forming collective seed banks as a form of

non-cooperation with intellectual property rights regimes. Despite pressure on the Indian government from the WTO, protests against patents on seed and indigenous knowledge have twice prevented the Patent Amendment Act from being passed into law.

The introduction of biotechnology has also led to massive protests. The Karnataka State Farmers, among other groups, burned fields planted with genetically modified crops during last November's "Cremate Monsanto" action.

Indian activists realise that communities around the world are facing similar pressures and issues. In the coming summer, Indian farmers are planning to tour Europe as part of the People's Global Action network (see www.agp.org) and meet with local campaigning groups to protest on the doorsteps of global decision-makers and corporations. 



Canada

Anger and frustration with Tory cutbacks erupted at a mass demonstration on January 23rd in Chatham, a south-western Ontario community, halfway between London and Windsor.

Some observers were drawing comparisons with a bygone era of labour militancy, when workers took matters into their own hands.

Local police bullies stood idly by, keeping their distance as a breakaway crowd of 500 cheering demonstrators burst into the lobby of the Best Western Wheel's Inn.

In the spontaneous action, the demonstrators showed solidarity against local police who have been harassing small

numbers of the young picketers seeking their first contract since the strike began on November 25th.

The action taken by about half of the crowd seemed to catch organisers by surprise, as the rest of the crowd, 1500 demonstrators listened to speeches at a massive rally which closed down the central part of this south-western Ontario town.

Innkeeper Stephen Bradley appeared surprised but calm as scabs ran in terror while the locked doors of the Inn were opened in response to a pounding which otherwise would have broken them in. Several local police officers inside remained in hiding as the crowd surged into the lobby,

overturning several benches and crumbling a few ceiling tiles, causing very minor damage.

The demonstration seemed to reflect growing frustration with the war on labour, social programs and the poor being conducted by the Tory government of Mike Harris and his cronies in Ottawa and the business community.

With an election expected this spring, the Tories are coming under increasing criticism for cuts to welfare, medicare and education programs. Increasingly, workers' rights such as scab protection and freedom to organise have been undermined. 

Highlights: GlobalAction'98

Indonesia

Since student and worker-led protests forced Suharto's resignation in May 1998, the world press has left, but the struggle has continued. Despite the proclaimed Reformasi or 'reformation' process in post-Suharto politics, the old regime is still intact, and any democratic reform is constantly under threat of violent reversal. This is most evident in the role of the military, where military involvement in politics and in the everyday lives of ordinary people continues. In particular, the military continues to be involved in labour issues, intervening in labour disputes to repress workers who have dared to assert their collective rights.

Barely two weeks into this new era of Reformasi, Lasimo, a worker at the PT. Maspion electrical goods factory in Sidoarjo, East Java, was killed by the military when a 5-day mass strike involving 25,000 workers was violently repressed.

Lasimo's death symbolises the divide between the rhetoric and the reality of Reformasi. Many more examples have presented themselves since.

Hundreds of soldiers, supported by tanks, rocket launchers, armed motor-cycle troops, blockaded the University of Indonesia to stop a rally of factory workers and students. More than 10,000 workers were confronted by soldiers and police when they attempted to leave their factories, while others were stopped from boarding buses hired to take them to the rally.

Following these events, and in response to a workers' rally planned by the independent trade union federation, SBSI, the military commander of Jakarta, Major-General Sjafrie Sjamsoeddin, deployed 25,000 troops and announced that labour protests and strikes would be severely repressed: "Anyone who wishes to disrupt security will confront my troops. I have given them orders to warn the protesters first and then cripple them if they have to."

Sure enough, less than a week later, the military violently repressed a strike by workers at a metal factory in Berkasi, PT. Gunung Garuda Cibitung. As the workers rallied to demand decent wages and an end to lay-offs, soldiers opened fire at close range with rubber bullets. Dozens of workers were seriously injured, leaving 23 hospitalised. The military and police then arrested 104 workers for interrogation. It was reported that one of the workers who was hospitalised later died.

The military also intervened to stop a two-day strike by 1,800 workers from PT

Deli Food and PT Mayora Indah in Jatiuwung, Tangerang. They were opposing mass lay-offs and demanded wages above the legal minimum to cope with rapidly rising living costs. Harassment continued after the action as 7 workers were interrogated.

At the mining site and port of PT. Freeport Indonesia in Timika, Irian Jaya, more than 5,000 struck to demand higher wages. The workers were locked out and armed soldiers were sent by the Central Military Command to end the strike. A number of workers are still missing.

Despite much political rhetoric from the new regime suggesting that military action in labour strikes is to be phased out, workers remain deeply skeptical. No concrete guarantees have yet been provided to protect workers, and no attempt has been made to rectify the laws and regulations which allow military intervention in the first place.

In most cases, striking workers are locked out as soon as a dispute begins, with employers refusing to negotiate. It remains common for workers to be dismissed before they even can sit down at the bargaining table. 

Argentina

In a pattern stretching back to the 1970's, trade unionists continue to be beaten up, attacked and even shot when they dare to protest about increasing unemployment or the lack of workers' rights.

The ICFTU report (January 1999) on labour standards describes many serious physical attacks. In 1996, a general strike against government proposals to reform family subsidies and the falling value of food vouchers was broken up by riot police using tear gas and batons. Police violence flared up again in April 1997, when police attacked teachers, parents and students during two months of violent social protests against high unemployment and social security cuts. At least one person was killed. A month later 80 people, including a number of children, were hospitalised after police used tear gas and rubber bullets against workers protesting over the loss of 4,000 jobs.

Police violence against workers continued throughout 1998, with more people injured after police attacks using rubber bullets, tear gas and sticks to disperse protests and peaceful marches. 

France

The massive mobilisation of the French unemployed movement during the winter of 1997-98 involved demonstrations, mass disturbances, and occupations - some of which were prolonged (see DA7). Media coverage was world-wide and the conflict only calmed down when the Prime Minister announced £1 billion would be distributed to those in urgent financial need.

In July, a new law on Social Exclusion was voted on, but it was clear to those who had been demonstrating the previous winter that nothing had changed.

Following the German experience of holding one-day actions every month, the unemployed started once again making their presence and demands felt, building up to major demonstrations in December. However, it quickly became clear that the social democratic left government was refusing to allow any occupation to last more than a couple of hours before sending in the riot police. All attempts to use occupations as a means to negotiate on hardship cases and on demands, whether in job centres, benefit offices or social affairs offices, was met with immediate ejection by the police.

Nevertheless, from October 1998, the monthly demonstrations and occupations went ahead, under the slogan "Nothing Has Changed!" Key dates were December 3rd and December 21st. The huge mobilisation for a "Christmas Bonus" of 3,000 francs started in Marseille with 20,000 demonstrators in the streets, and this led to actions in 50 towns and cities. Once again, Jospin stepped in to announce an increase to low-paid benefits, back-dated to January 1998. Just enough for a baguette a day.

Occupations and demonstrations are planned to continue throughout 1999. 

Dockers

From Liverpool to Australia...

Every year for the past three decades, co-operation has grown among transnational corporations, and their power to shape the global economy has increased. 1998 was no different. But this year, workers made some new efforts to respond to it. They took some hits, but also some important steps forward.

In 1998, the front line in this global battle was on the docks. As the year started, British longshoremen in the port of Liverpool finally conceded defeat, ending a strike which had gone on for over two years against the privatisation of Britain's ports, and the near-

total destruction of its dock unions. Many had hoped that a new Labour government would intervene and return dockers to their jobs, but Prime Minister Tony Blair declined to act on their behalf. Nevertheless, the cause of the Liverpool dockers became a rallying point for longshoremen in ports around the world. In the U.S., dockworkers on both coasts stopped work in their support.

Next, was Australia. Patrick Stevedoring Company, at the instigation of the country's Conservative government, decided to lock out union dockworkers and bring in scabs to take their jobs. Here again, striking longshoremen received support from co-workers in other countries. In the port of Los Angeles, members of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union refused to unload the Columbus Canada, a ship carrying Australian beef loaded by strike-breakers. The freighter sat offshore for weeks. Its fate became a key factor convincing Australian employers and governmental authorities to settle the dispute. Australian longshoremen returned to their jobs on the docks; solidarity from U.S. dockers helped win their victory.

In the US, the master contract between the ILWU and the Pacific Maritime Association expires in July 1999. If the shipowners take a hard line, dockworkers on the Pacific Coast may be appealing to Japanese, Australian and European longshoremen to refuse to work on the ships belonging to their common employers. 

Nigeria

Five years ago, Shell was involved in the killing of Ken Saro-Wiwa. In 1998, Chevron, a San Francisco-based oil company, responded to a protest against its business practices in Nigeria with murder, helicoptering in commandos to gun down unarmed protestors on an oil rig.

Report from Nigeria by Bola Oyinbo, one of the protestors

Over the years Chevron has consistently waged a war on our land, forests and waters. Go to Awoye community [Nigeria] and see what they have done. Everything there is dead: mangroves, tropical forests, fish, fresh water, wildlife. All killed by Chevron.

So, on May 25th, I led 121 youths from 42 communities to Parabe [oil] platform to protest against the continuing destruction of our environment by Chevron.

We met an officer of the Nigerian Navy. (Chevron uses the military and imported security people from abroad in all its operations in the Niger Delta.) He said he would have to take us to Mr. Davies, a Chevron representative. We all stood on the barge. I addressed them on the issues. I told them of the letters we had sent over the years, the numerous entreaties for meetings and how we had been ignored. They promised to do something immediately.

On May 28 we saw three helicopters. They came like eagles swooping on chickens. We never expected what followed. As the choppers landed one after the other discharging soldiers, we heard gunshots and fire. In fact, they started shooting commando-style at us even before they landed. More soldiers came and more shooting followed. Some of my colleagues jumped over board into the Atlantic; others ran onto the platform. There was pandemonium. They shot tear gas. White men flew all the helicopters. I was by this time on the platform with some of my colleagues. We were defenceless, harmless.

We got information that Chevron had lodged a complaint against us that we are pirates - and that the mobile police were to prosecute. My colleagues and I were in a cell until June 22.

See also Shell occupations and Interview with Nigerian Awareness League elsewhere in this issue of 

Romania

During the last week in January, miners clashed twice with police in violent stand-offs which injured 144, nine of them seriously. Several police generals were taken hostage. One policeman remains in a coma as DA goes to press. According to the ministry of defence, 28 riot police and one



officer were reported missing.

President Constantinescu dismissed two top police chiefs who were involved in the failed plans to stop the miners in their march on the capital. However, following the debacle, security forces began arresting and imprisoning those suspected of being organisers. In solidarity with the imprisoned, fresh mass protests broke out in mid February, and at least one protester was killed by security forces.

The miners were demanding wage rises of 35% and severance pay for those who are laid off as the country's mines are closed down as part of a nation-wide programme of economic overhaul. But the government had insisted that such wage increases would cripple economic reform. 

Greece

Attempts to reform higher education in Greece have thrown the government and much of the country into chaos as students have reacted with mass protests.

Teenagers, demonstrating against major changes to higher education and new assessment methods, have been responding defiantly to heavy police tactics. Teargas has been replied to with petrol bombs and stones - 40 were detained at the end of January.

Pupils - some as young as 10 - have moved onto the streets, erecting makeshift roadblocks with desks, chairs and rubbish bins. Often, the arbitrary barricades are set up along motorways and major arteries. Business people have complained that the tactic has quickly had devastating effects on local commerce.

Teaching methods and budgets in Greece lag far behind those of other EU states. The plans to remodel secondary schools on British comprehensives was the spark which ignited the dispute. Critics say the imposition of harsh year-end assessment tests is likely to turn schools into "academic sweatshops", where only those who make the grade survive. Under the new system, vocational training schools will be gradually abolished. "This law is anti-democratic. It will mean more students will have to seek private tuition if they want to keep up," snapped Antonis Pantazis, one of the activist teenagers co-ordinating the revolt. "We don't want violence; what we want is to protest until the government backs down on every article in this law."

Daily reports of injuries at schools and on the roads - where furious motorists have taken to driving through the barricades - have mounted. But the government has made it clear: It will not back down. 



Framed by Czech police



Two members of FSA-IWA, the Solidarity Federation's Czech sister organisation, were attacked in a club in Prague on Friday, 27th November 1998. At least five neo-nazis knocked out one comrade, and injured the second, Michal Patera, editor of the FSA paper "The Voice of Direct Action" and the veteran of many anti-fascist confrontations.

The ferocity of this second attack on him in six months convinced Michal that its aim was to kill him. He shot the leading nazi three times with his legally-held pistol, and was able to make his escape.

Shortly afterwards Michal was arrested by the police, and charged with "attempted

murder motivated by ideological conviction", which carries a sentence of 25 years' hard labour. The police claim that this well-known "leftist extremist" attacked an innocent group of "ordinary young men".

None of the nazis has been charged with any offence. Michal faces up to a year's "preliminary custody" before coming to trial.

Michal's only chance is to have a good defence lawyer, and the likely cost of his defence would be 130,000 CZK (£2,525) - equivalent to more than 20 months' wages for the average worker. This figure is based on the costs of defending another comrade, Vaclav Jez, jailed after a similar incident in July 1997. 70,000 CZK (£1,360) were raised for the former case, exclusively within the Czech Republic.

According to the Czech Ministry of Interior Affairs' own statistics, more than one third of police officers are members or active sympathisers of neo-fascist, racist and extreme nationalist organisations.

Direct co-operation between police and neo-nazis is well-known. Anarcho-syndicalists and anti-fascists in the Czech Republic are under constant threat from the growing and aggressive neo-nazi movement. Czech police say there are more than 30,000 organised neo-nazis and active supporters, with 3,000 in Prague alone.

On the day of Michal's arrest, more than 300 attended a "white music" gig near Pilsen.

The police stood by as anti-semitic and fascist slogans were shouted and nazi salutes given, in spite of the latter being a serious offence under Czech law.

URGENT APPEAL

Money is urgently needed to help defend Michal. All donations are welcome, and should be sent via the Solidarity Federation for security - we will make sure they get it.

Any amount, however small, is desperately needed. Benefit gigs and other fund-raising events especially welcome. Cheques should be made payable to "NELSF" and sent to:

SF-International Secretariat, PO Box 1681, London, N8 7LE.

Letters to Michael in prison to:

Michal Patera (1976), PO Box 5, 14057 PRAHA 4, Czech Republic.

The Defence Campaign can be contacted direct: FSA Praha, PO Box 5, 15006 PRAHA 56, Czech Republic.

You may wish to use e-mail and phone contacts, as the FSA's mail is regularly confiscated; E-mail: sam20uj@axpsu.slu.cz.

Tel. hotlines: 420-(0)602-224747/828361



Free Leonard Peltier

On 6th February, native American Leonard Peltier had spent 23 years behind bars. The anniversary has become an international day of action and this year, it has re-ignited the campaign to get him released.

Leonard was found guilty of killing two FBI agents at the Pine Ridge Reservation in 1975. Despite the fact that the government says they do not know who is responsible for the death of the agents, Leonard remains in prison, where he has endured an attempted assassination, harassment and physical brutality.

Between 1973 and 1976, over sixty Native people were murdered on Pine Ridge. Overwhelmingly, the victims were "Traditionals" and American Indian Movement (AIM) supporters at odds with the FBI backed "Tribal Government" and the establishment interests that they represented. AIM was born in the ghettos of Minneapolis in the late 60s, as the most recent manifestation of the 500-year native resistance to European domination. In direct conflict with the FBI and the Tribal Government's death squad (known as the GOONs, an acronym for "Guardians of the Ogala Nation"), they began organising on the Pine Ridge in the early 70s. The reservation at the time was the site of a low intensity war on tribal traditions, waged with the full force of state brutality. Leonard Peltier went there to help defend his people.

The FBI set a trap for an AIM group and the local traditional families. Two FBI agents were to set up an excuse to surround the AIM people and have them murdered. However, the FBI bungled the job and the two agents were shot dead during exchanges of fire before the planned backup arrived. The AIM group barely survived, and Leonard Peltier escaped to Canada with a price on his head.

In an effort to pin the death of the FBI



In the spirit of Pinochet

agents on an organiser, the US authorities extradited Leonard after the FBI fabricated evidence. He was tried in the US, and convicted on the strength of false evidence. He has been in prison for nearly a quarter of a century; despite the US authorities' admission that they don't know who shot the FBI agents. The only reason Leonard is being kept inside is that to let him out would be a tacit admission of the massive injustice done to him.

He is now in extremely poor health and can't chew his food because of problems with his jaw. He can only eat by forcing food through a gap in his front teeth and then massing it against them with his tongue. The prison will not blend his food. He suffers from excruciating headaches and jaw pain. However, despite a specialist offering to carry out surgery on his jaw, the prison authorities have repeatedly refused permission. Without this vital surgery, Leonard is at risk from death through blood poisoning.

The European Parliament and the governments of Italy and Belgium have passed resolutions calling for clemency and for investigations into the illegal FBI activities against the people of Pine Ridge.

Still, so far, Bill Clinton's administration has ignored letters and resolutions from foreign governments and millions of signatures and letters from people in the US. Sustained massive outrage just may make a difference.

To send solidarity messages, get involved with or organise benefits/protests for Leonard's release, contact:
Leonard Peltier Defense Committee,
PO Box 583 Lawrence, KS 66044,
USA.
Email: lpdc@idir.net

Contact Leonard direct at:
Leonard Peltier, #89637-132, PO Box
1000, Leavenworth, KS 66048, US.

The recent Pinochet extradition case brought Mad Thatcher and other apologists crawling out of the woodwork, protesting that making the dictator answer for his crimes would destroy "democracy" in Chile. However, just how "democratic" Chile is can be measured by abuses like those outlined here, and by the case of Héctor Pavelic Sanhueza. All of this typifies the treatment of over 200 opponents of Eduardo Frei's post-Pinochet regime.

In June 1998, while a military petition to close all investigations into past human rights violations was heard by the Supreme Court, death threats for human rights campaigners and reports of torture by the security forces continued unabated. Despite this, many cases concerning the "disappeared" and the murdered under Pinochet's regime have now been officially closed by both military and civilian courts applying the "Amnesty Law". The escapes of four political prisoners from the maximum security prison in Santiago were followed by ruthless reprisals by prison guards against remaining prisoners, who were threatened with further beatings should they submit complaints. Meanwhile, the remains have been found of an 18-year-old soldier, who had complained of the ill treatment meted out to conscripts by army

officers. Other abuses include young men being shot in both hands and, of course, the usual disappearances and prisoners shot whilst "trying to escape".

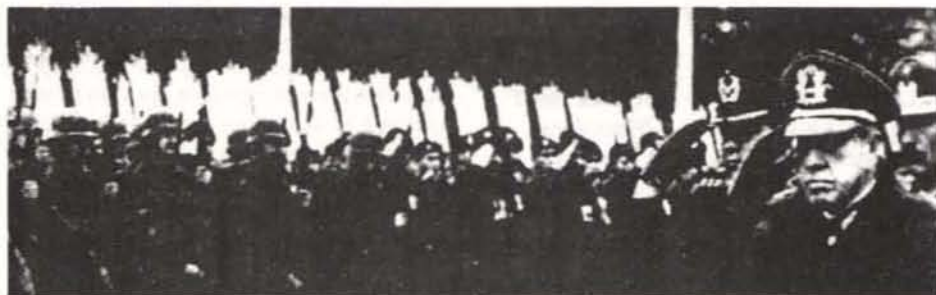
It is in this atmosphere that Héctor Pavelic Sanhueza, a member of Solidaridad Obrera, Chilean section of the IWA, has been forced into exile after a series of incidents culminating in serious death threats from the military intelligence service, the ex-CNI of Pinochet's day, now re-constituted as the clandestine DINA. Telephone calls describing his daily movements led to constant surveillance of his home. Then, in November, he

was followed in a car by thugs, who indicated he only had a few days left alive, and suggested they would break his neck.

Thanks to swift action by his comrades in Solidaridad Obrera, in contact with the IWA secretary, Héctor

disappeared and surfaced five days later in Buenos Aires among comrades of FORA-IWA. From there, Héctor has now made his way to Spain.

A survivor of Pinochet's torture camps, Héctor's close relatives number among the detained, the tortured, the disappeared and the murdered of that era. That someone who suffered so much in the 1970's has had to flee for his life, shows the reality of Chile today. It is a picture far removed from a society "putting its past behind it", as Pinochet's friends like to paint it. No, Chile's past is Héctor's present. 



AFRICA. Helpless &

No, the Ogoni people and Ken Saro-Wiwa were not the exception to the rule. Yes, Africa is fighting back against capitalism, ethnicism and nationalism. This interview with Sam Mbah of the Awareness League in Nigeria reveals the reality of African resistance.

It was always a myth. The archetypal liberal view that Africa is a continent without hope or the spirit for resistance to its western exploiters - imperialist, colonialist or global marketeers - never held true.

So, are you curious to know how a resistance group in Nigeria views the outside world and the task ahead? How they view the involvement of Shell in the Ogoni heartlands? Samuel Mbah was interviewed during his recent speaking tour of the United States. This is what he said.

Mbah is a member of the Awareness League, the Nigerian section of the International Workers Association (IWA) - sister organisation to the Solidarity Federation in Britain.

Members of the Awareness League do not often get the opportunity to travel outside Nigeria. And inside, they are regularly hounded by the paranoid military regime which governs the country by brute force and blatant corruption. Survival of an organisation in these conditions is itself an achievement - steady growth is near-miraculous. The Awareness League is living proof that - in Africa as well as anywhere - resistance can flourish in the face of adversity.

The Awareness League describes itself as anarcho-sindicalist. What does that mean in the Nigerian context?

The Awareness League proclaims itself to be anarcho-sindicalist. It has not always been so; originally the Awareness League was more or less Marxist-Leninist, but following the turmoil

and the collapse of state communism, we reassessed our position. The Awareness League is a social movement, it is not an official labour union. In Nigeria today there is a lot of frustration among the working class at the official labour unions because almost always they betray the cause of the workers at the last minute and so more voluntary unions like the Awareness League have begun to emerge. What we essentially do is we have outreaches in industrial organisations, the public service, the universities, and others. We take a stand on certain developments in the country, political, economic, and social. At times we just have to network with other left groups on specific issues. In the workplace, of course, our members are very active in trying to do political education, enlightenment, and lead in actual campaigns on issues - and these campaigns are usually against government because in Nigeria and Africa we find that the government is the largest employer of labour. Salaries are not paid for upwards of three months or more, and the official unions seem incapable of doing anything, so we come in and fill that gap and try to mobilise with the workers; maybe embark on a strike, maybe a demonstration, things like that.

Are you trying to build your own unions, or are you trying to invigorate and inspire workers in the existing unions?

We are trying to invigorate and inspire workers in the existing unions, but it has become apparent to us that we just have to build a beginning, an alternative to the official unions. It will take quite some time for it to be able to really mobilise and convince the workers of the need for this, but I think it is almost becoming inevitable in the context in which we find

ourselves. Unions are supposed to exist for the interest and welfare of workers, but we find that the contrary is the case in Nigeria. People actually see unions and union positions as a stepping stone to becoming a part of the elite, because once you get there the government gets to court you and give you bribes. It is no longer enough for us to just go ahead and reinvigorate the existing unions; we are moving beyond that to build an alternative union for the workers.

Could you describe the Awareness League?

Our membership is about 600 nationwide, that is, members who are paying dues. There are also people who come in and join in our activities. They are not really members but you could describe them as being friends or associates of the League. Now, if you call a meeting in Nigeria in a university, students will come. Although they may sympathise with your position and ideas, it does not mean that they are members. We find also that we can rely on them occasionally. If we're embarking upon a demonstration and they come it is good for us.

We have about 11 branches in different parts of the country, with at least 20 members in each. We try to see that each branch is autonomous, in the sense that it makes its own decisions within the specific environment. Then we have a working conference that brings together all the branches, and we have a national conference, which meets once a year. At this national conference we review the previous year's activities and set an agenda for the upcoming year. It is only where a decision taken by a branch is in conflict with our charter that it can be reversed, otherwise the branches are free to take their own decisions.

Hopeless?



The government allows you to meet without too much interference?

No. You wouldn't expect that, honestly. The government does not really allow people to meet freely. In the past five years it has been particularly difficult, but with the death of the former dictator Abacha, who died in June, the new man has been a lot more tolerant of activist organisations. We are now beginning now to meet openly but, prior to June (1998), most of our meetings had to contend with the activities of the security operatives who were all over the place. But this is not to say that unions and groups did not exist. In fact, the opposition groups in Nigeria are not just organisations like our own; there are pro-democracy groups and ethnic sub-national groups who are campaigning for autonomy, and the same treatment is given to all these groups. The government cannot possibly kill off all these organisations. So in our own way we continue to organise in defiance of government repression.

Could you say a few words about the political and economic conditions in Nigeria?

The economic situation in Nigeria today is very bad indeed - inflation is beyond control; there is massive unemployment; schools and hospitals are in very bad shape. In the midst of all this, the government and the military, which have been in power 31 out of 38 years of independence, we find that the military, the generals and top government functionaries are living in affluence. There is a lot of corruption. The defining characteristic of the Nigerian

government is primitive accumulation by means of corruption. A report in 'The Economist' in 1995 said that the then-government of Abacha was trying to achieve corruption parity with its predecessor; by 1998, when Abacha died, he had got around £3.6 billion over a 5-year period. So you can see the kind of looting and thieving that is going on in Nigeria.

What we are seeing is a crisis of the capitalist system and the failure of the state system on the African continent...

Too much of what goes into liberal democracy is alien to Africa. The whole concept of elections, a government party and an opposition is not in sync with our culture

If you want to really understand the economic problems in Nigeria you have to go back to the period of colonialism, and how the colonial powers sought to integrate Nigeria into the global capitalist system through the instrumentality of trade, investment, social-political interaction. By the time Nigeria and other African countries attained independence, the incorporation into the capitalist system was already halfway done, but the governments that came with independence - some of them were nationalistic - still tried to fight against it. The incorporation process was re-ignited again in the mid-1980s by the IMF and the World Bank, through the Structural Adjustment Program, which is an austerity program designed to re-colonise African countries once again.

The major plans of the Structural Adjustment Program are the deregulation of the economy, liberalisation of trade, devaluation of our currencies and withdrawal of subsidies. Two-

thirds of Africa is under some form of this program, even the so-called leftist regimes that have no option but to submit themselves to the IMF, and the results have been anything but cheering; increased unemployment, no drop in inflation, and massive corruption on the part of the government. So that is the situation we find ourselves in today on the African continent.

On the political side, what we are seeing is a crisis of the capitalist system and the failure of the state system on the African continent. Most of what you call African states today were creations of the Berlin Conference of 1884-85, where colonial powers divided Africa amongst themselves. We know that these divisions were arbitrary, they did not take into consideration the cultural, ethnic, religious and language differences among different groups; they just welded groups together.

The attempt to construct liberal democracy in Africa has not worked either. Too much of what goes into liberal democracy is alien to Africa. The whole concept of elections, a government party and an opposition is not in sync with our culture, because we find that, when you elect people, the only point at which the electorate comes into contact with the representatives is at the point of elections. For the next four or five years the representatives can do whatever they like, and the people have no means of sanctioning or recalling them (*sounds familiar?! - DA*).

In Nigeria today, there is an attempt on the part of the military to hand over power to civilians. Irrespective of the outcome of elections, I think the critical problem in Nigeria

(cont'd overleaf.)

2Worlds: Africa

(cont'd from page 19..)

today is economic - the poverty of the people, the inability of most families to have three square meals a day - and this is manifested everywhere in Nigeria. 90% of our foreign exchange revenue comes from oil, but over the past six or seven years there's been a lot of tension in these areas, which led to the trial and killing of Ken Saro-Wiwa in 1993, who was trying to mobilise his people against Shell and against government and the other oil companies.

Even with the killing of Saro-Wiwa and his colleagues, tension in the area is because the oil companies have succeeded in despoiling the environment. This area has a very difficult terrain, we're talking about a multiplicity of islands, swampy vegetation. The activities of the oil companies have only worsened this. They virtually wiped out the farming and the fishing, so that people have virtually no means of livelihood. People who went to school cannot get jobs, and meanwhile the oil companies and the Nigerian government make millions of dollars from this region. And so people are shutting down the flow stations, holding the staff hostage, and the government has responded by pushing more security into the region. A lot of people get killed and a lot of people get wounded in the process. Most of those who get killed we never hear about because the terrain of the region is such that there are areas that you cannot reach even in a day's time, sometimes you just have to rely on boats and ferries to reach them. So the crisis in the oil-producing region goes to underline the political and economic crisis in Nigeria.

The government is in alliance with the multinational oil corporations - notably Mobil, Shell, Chevron - especially Shell. Shell accounts for almost half of Nigeria's oil production. It is no longer a secret that Shell even purchases arms for the Nigerian military, they also arm the police. As a matter of fact they have their own police who guard the oil installations.

What's your goal for the kind of society you'd like to build?

We want to see autonomous communities, self-managing, self-accounting communities managing their own affairs. This is an approximation of the African village system that was in operation before colonialism. These villages were autonomous and independent, and functioned on their own to decide what to produce and distribute. The decision-making process was such that no single individual lorded over others. In fact, decision-making was by means of consensus. You did not have vertical structures enforced by force.

So we strive to elaborate on the relationship between anarchism and the village systems in

Africa, because by and large the village systems were democratic and autonomous and they delivered the goods. You know, the state system in Africa today has failed in delivering the goods. It has instead become an instrument of repression and the denial of freedoms of individuals and groups. So our focus is upon this basic principle of organisation of society, and we find that an attempt has been made in the past by the Tanzanian government to create these African traditional systems in what they called Ujamaa villages, where villages were invited to farm among themselves and shared the produce. Of course, whatever government

It is no longer a secret that Shell even purchases arms for the Nigerian military, they also arm the police. As a matter of fact they have their own police who guard the oil installations.

attempts always ends up in corruption and bureaucracy. Corruption and bureaucracy are the two basic factors that led to the collapse of the Ujamaa system.

But we believe that if government is removed from this process, it is surely going to work.

Would this work in the urban setting as well?

Yes, in the urban settings, actually, you still find elements of the village system, but of course the urban setting has its own logic. When people move to the urban area, life becomes governed

The tribe in Africa was constituted very much after the colonial state had come into being...it was the capitalist system and colonialism that led to what we now have as tribes and ethnic groups.

by capitalist principles, but there are of course other aspects of their life. When people in a town lose their jobs, they still rely on the extended family to cover for the period they are out of a job. In a situation where salaries are not paid for upwards of six months, what sustains them basically is the extended family. You find that even in urban areas you still have town meetings, village meetings, going on as a way of keeping in touch with the village.

There is a tendency in the west to see every crisis in Africa as being ethnic or tribal in character. But essentially, most of these crises actually are economic in character. The tribe in Africa was constituted very much after the colonial state had come into being. Prior to the coming of colonialism, groups were organised on a village basis. But with the coming of colonialism and the imposition of the capitalist economy, with the cutting of community ties, all

the groups begin to come together because you had a situation where every social group within the state was in direct competition with each other. The larger you were the more able you were to compete. So it was this capitalist system and colonialism that led to the rallying of all these groups into what we now have as tribes and ethnic groups.

What brought the Awareness League into the International Workers Association?

The IWA is the anarcho-syndicalist international, so we put in an application. The IWA Secretary had come to Nigeria in 1994 to assess our work. I believe they were impressed with what we were trying to do given our own limitations, the fact that we had a rough time with the security forces. In one of our meetings, they swooped on us and we had a number of people arrested. We were able to come out of it, and the determination and solidarity displayed by our members in the face of this assault was something that really impressed them. It was about two years after that the Awareness League was admitted into the International.

How has this worked out?

It has given us a kind of understanding, and exchange with the affiliates around the world in trying to exchange ideas, information, and they have also tried to assist us. WSA (US Section of the IWA) did a campaign to help us buy a computer. We had thought that by now we would have an email facility but acquiring a telephone is a difficult matter. We hope as time goes on we can acquire a telephone so that we can be in electronic communication with all groups, including the IWW.

We do not really want to be dogmatic about what we are trying to do. We believe that there is a need for working in co-operation among workers' groups around the world, all workers' groups that are opposed to capitalism, anti-authoritarian, and opposed to the state system. That should be enough common ground, instead of splitting on issues of ideology and doctrines that don't seem to advance the cause of the working class. That is our position. 

Contact the Nigerian Awareness League at: P.O. Box 1920 Enugu, Nigeria.

Note: This interview is a shortened version of that appearing in the US IWW magazine *Libertarian Labor Review* 24 (Winter 1998-99), for which it was originally given.

FAQs 2 Worlds

This issue's FAQs are drawn, adapted and generally changed from the One World website at: www.oneworld.org

Your 7 key
underdevelopment
questions
answered...

1. What is the origin of the global debt crisis?

Short answer: It started as rich capitalists' idea for saving rich capitalists' banks and profits.

Longer answer: In 1982, the Mexican government announced that it could no longer hope to repay the country's 80-billion dollar national debt, and that it intended to default on its interest payments. The idea that a country could simply declare itself bankrupt like a business horrified the capitalist world's financial institutions (Mexico's creditors), and they persuaded the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to bail them out. Dutifully, the IMF gave Mexico more money, denying it bankruptcy and imposing instead a strict programme of 'structural adjustment' to ensure that it would meet repayments in the future. Global finance was saved and, since then, more and more countries around the world have spiralled further and further into debt. The more loans you have, the more interest you have to pay, the more loans you need...

2. Why did they take on the loans in the first place?

In the IMF's own managing director Michel Camdessus' words, they were conned. Western banks were desperate to offload the mass of petrodollars deposited with them in the 1970s, and offered the loans at knock-down interest rates. The fact that those rates would soar once all the money had been lent out was conveniently forgotten. It got the rich out of a hole, and the poor into one.

3. What are the IMF and World Bank?

Short answer: Same, but different, like two heads of a dragon; both western profiteers.

Longer answer: The World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) function independently, but; (a) both were set up at the 1944 Bretton Woods conference as part of the post-war economic system; (b) both have since loaned billions of dollars to countries from all parts of the world and; (c) both now hold billions of dollars in 'Third World' debt. Despite the similarities, they have ostensibly different goals.

The IMF was set up to resolve the global financial problems which contributed to the Great Depression of the 1930s - its concern is the health of the global trade and financial systems. The World Bank is a development organisation. Its mandated goal is 'to reduce poverty and improve living standards by promoting sustainable growth

and investment in people'. In recent years, the Bank has confirmed its main aim to be 'substantial poverty reduction'. Both institutions share the same blueprint for achieving their aims. This is the model of 'free' trade, unrestricted investment, private enterprise - in short, a 'liberalised' global economy. In both institutions, countries have voting rights in proportion to the contributions they pay, so both are controlled by the rich countries of the north/west - the very countries which benefit from 'free' trade. The world's poorest nations are granted loans by the World Bank and IMF only on condition that they submit to strict 'structural adjustment' programmes, which open up their countries to exploitation and condemn millions of people to even greater poverty.

4. What are Structural Adjustment Programmes?

Short answer: 'Like making someone with no blood left bleed some more' (Thitinan Pongsudhirak, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand).

Longer Answer: SAPs date back to the 1982 Mexico debt crisis (see 1 above). The IMF forced it to accept a programme that would give supreme importance to debt repayment over other national expenditure, ensuring Mexico diverted its energies towards exports and the foreign currency it would earn from them - which could then be channelled back to its creditors, the western banks.

The world's financial institutions were so pleased with the scheme that SAPs soon became the common condition for developing countries requiring loans from either the IMF or World Bank. First, countries have to devalue their currency so as to make their exports cheaper and more attractive, and must convert domestic food production to cash crops for the foreign market. But world prices for cash crops have plummeted time and again, leaving national export figures worse than before. Then, SAPs identify a reduction in public spending as the answer, particularly in essential areas such as food subsidies, health and education. In country after country, cuts to these services have reversed the development successes of the 1960s and 1970s, with child mortality rising, school enrolment falling, and millions sliding into poverty every year.

5. Since SAPs are such a disaster, why are they still prescribed in every debt-rescheduling round today?

Simple; transnational corporations from the world's richest countries (which control both the World Bank and IMF) profit enormously from the steady supply of cheap commodities and the investment opportunities that SAPs guarantee. Added unemployment through public sector redundancies has allowed transnationals to relocate production to developing countries, paying workers less and shareholders more. SAPs were introduced for the sake of the world's rich. It is for their benefit SAPs continue to work and continue to be used.

6. What is the WTO?

The World Trade Organisation (WTO) was born on 1 January 1995 out of the Uruguay Round of GATT, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, which has governed the international trade system since the end of the Second World War. What it means is doing away with 'trade barriers'. This offers richer nations and transnational corporations a golden opportunity to take over new sectors in countries which were previously able to defend their own industries from such attacks. The WTO polices this new trade system.

Already, the USA, on behalf of American TNC Chiquita (see page 12), has challenged arrangements whereby bananas from the Windward Islands are marketed in Europe under the protection of the European Union's Lomé Treaty. Dismantling such arrangements would bring Chiquita greater profits, but would prove disastrous to the farmers and the economies of the Eastern Caribbean. The WTO has upheld the US complaint. No surprises there then.

7. What is the solution to underdevelopment?

Capitalism has led to massive widening differences between rich and poor. It is consciously sponsored, defended and controlled politically by the rich in order to ensure that the widening gaps continue to widen. Capitalism must end before debt and underdevelopment can end; it is beyond reform. 50 post-war years of welfarism have shown that capitalism cannot be 'reformed' away - simply because those in control have an interest in keeping the system we have - it makes them richer. No politician or capitalist will ever deliver an effective end to underdevelopment, because it is not in their interest. Only when we - the working people, the downtrodden and the debt-ridden can get ourselves together and collectively throw off the rich bullies and end capitalism in the process, can we hope to end underdevelopment. So, on with the social mutiny! (see p. 23).



Social Mutiny!

What is a Social General Strike?
Haven't strikes had their day?

One of the central ideas of anarcho-syndicalism is the 'Social General Strike'. In one form or another, it is the only foreseeable means of bringing about a successful revolution - that being the achievement of a libertarian communist society.

Belief in the necessity of the Social General Strike is the difference between those 'socialists' who believe that the seizing of state power is necessary to establish a socialist society; and those who believe that the state must be abolished before a libertarian communist society can be organised.

For anarcho-syndicalism, the Social General Strike is the 'Declaration of Independence' of the working class. It can only be brought about by the direct actions of working people. All independent direct action by workers contributes by inexorable logic to the process of the Social General Strike.

Acts of resistance and disobedience must be the first steps in the process of breaking the chain of command and of dismantling hierarchy.

The General Strike as a means of changing society is older than anarcho-syndicalism. It can be traced back to the 'Grand National Holiday', first suggested by William Benbow in 1832. The idea then was that, on a certain day, the workers would down tools and go on a picnic. As industry came to a halt, the capitalist class would realise that they would have no choice but to capitulate.

Later, anarcho-syndicalists developed this first simple idea into a more sophisticated strategy. It was recognised that capitalists and

the state will not sit idly by while working people take over industry. The state will intervene to break the strike with armed force. Secondly, the idea that the Social General Strike can be planned to start on a certain day is naive - the state would be prepared and take preventative action.

the Social General Strike is the 'Declaration of Independence' of the working class

The Social General Strike is likely to come after a series of labour strikes and social unrest, during which tension will mount and generally intensify. No doubt the state will respond with greater repression and, hopefully, the reply of working people will be to step up resistance. A revolutionary situation will develop when the Social General Strike becomes imminent. Workplaces, transport and communications will come under the control of people who work in them. The community will organise the distribution of food and other goods and services. Militias will be organised to defend the revolution - not consisting of the soldiers of the state, but instead, groups of directly democratically elected and controlled workers.

Anarcho-syndicalists see the necessity of organising to bring this about. Revolutionary organisations are necessary, not only to help

conduct our important everyday economic and social struggles, but also to prepare for a future libertarian communist society. Rather than following political parties intent on taking state power, anarcho-syndicalists are intent on the dissolution of state power. Politics and political activity are necessary, but professional politicians and political parties are of no use - irrespective of whether they claim to be 'reformist' or 'revolutionary'.

The Social General Strike will involve Mass Civil Disobedience, in many ways like civilian mutiny. Working people will no longer obey their managers and the chains of command will be broken. The orders of the bosses will be ignored, and equality and real order will be established. Power will no longer be concentrated in the hands of the bosses, but will be dispersed throughout society. The direct action methods of the Social General Strike that will bring about a revolutionary situation will also be the methods by which the revolution can be maintained and defended.

The Social General Strike is civil disobedience in the context of the world of work and community. Violence on the part of the bosses cannot be ruled out, and this will require firm defensive action. However, the main thrust is the establishment of a new social order and new social relationships.

Why not organise constructive indiscipline to the demands of your bosses?!! 



Building the new society in the shell of the old.

basic.action is..

...a new section in DA, incorporating 3 pieces on the fundamentals of direct action: FAQs, SolFed Info and Tools for Change. FAQs deal with basic questions around the theme of each issue and SolFed Info gets you in touch with Solidarity Federation groups and their basic ideas. Tools for Change is a new column which takes a key idea of anarcho-syndicalism and explains its meaning and relevance to today and tomorrow.

Who is Solidarity Federation?

Solidarity Federation is the new solidarity movement. Formed in March 1994, it consists of a federation of groups and individuals across England, Scotland & Wales. The basic foundation of Solidarity Federation is the Local.

Getting down the Local

People are getting together to form Locals – Solidarity Federation groups. Locals put solidarity into practice. In time, each Local will have a premises as a base for solidarity action in the local community. Locals are organising or getting involved in local campaigns across a wide range of issues – both in the community and in workplaces. Issues are wide-ranging: defending our natural and local environment and health; opposing racism, sexism and homophobia; in fact, anything which defends or contributes to our mutual quality of life. It is all part and parcel of building a solidarity movement.

Direct Action

Apart from being the name of this Quarterly, Direct Action is the tool which Locals use in all their work. At a basic level, this can be simply the spreading of information through leaflets, local bulletins and public meetings to raise awareness and involvement locally. However, Direct Action is not limited to spreading information. It means a physical presence in defending and promoting a better quality of life. Fundamental to Direct Action is the reality that we can only rely on ourselves to achieve our goals. While we reserve the right to take opportunities to fight for improvements to our quality of life now, the solidarity movement must always remain independent from those we are

demanding from. Solidarity Federation will accept neither leadership, charity, nor guidance from government or business – instead, we must couple our principle of solidarity with the practice of self-reliance.

Networks

Solidarity Federation members who work in the same work sector have formed Networks. Their purpose is to promote solidarity amongst workers. Networks also use Direct Action to fight for better pay and conditions. Networks form the basis of a completely new labour movement, nothing like the Trade Unions, which are weakened by having to abide by ridiculous laws, and by hierarchical power structures and self-interested paid officials. The fundamentally different nature of Networks fits their fundamentally different aim.

Where to?

As Locals and Networks grow, they practise community and workers' self-management. Eventually, industries will be run by producers and consumers. In other words, by workers (in Networks) and people in the wider community (Locals) who want the goods and services they provide. And this is no flight of fancy or text-book dream. As the solidarity movement grows in members and influence, so does the scope for action. Both the Locals and Networks have already established a reputation and are showing real results in membership & effectiveness.

Global Solidarity

Capitalism is international, so we need to be organised globally to oppose it and build a viable alternative.

Nationalism and patriotism lead to pointless and false divisions, used as tools to fuel economic and bloody wars. Solidarity Federation opposes these in favour of a movement built on global solidarity.

Solidarity Federation is the British section of the International Workers' Association (IWA), the anarcho-syndicalist association. This gives it essential international solidarity and experience from much larger sections such as the CNT (Spain) and USI (Italy). Founded in 1922, the IWA has a long history of solidarity in action; by the 2nd World War over 5 million people worldwide were affiliated. A combination of war, fascism, and soviet 'communism' all but destroyed the movement, but after the Spanish CNT re-emerged in the late 70's, the IWA had a new lease of life. Today, there are sections ranging from a few dozen to thousands of members, and growth is rapid. At the last IWA Congress in Madrid, another 7 new sections were affiliated from South America, Africa, Ireland, Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

Getting Involved

A global solidarity movement can only gather strength as many more people who share the same aims get involved. Contacting Solidarity Federation offers the possibility of contributing to this growing momentum. It is not like joining a club, union or political party – rather, it is an opportunity to channel your efforts for change and, at the same time, benefit yourself from the experience. It might just be worth it. For more info., write to the SolFed Contact Point below.

Aims and Principles

The Solidarity Federation is an organisation of people who seek to destroy capitalism and the state. Capitalism because it exploits, oppresses and kills working people and wrecks the environment for profit world-wide. The state because it can only maintain hierarchy and privilege for the classes who control it and their servants; it cannot be used to fight the oppression and exploitation that are the consequences of hierarchy and the source of privilege.

In their place, we want a society based on solidarity, mutual aid and libertarian communism. That society can only be achieved by working class organisations based on similar principles – revolutionary unions. These are not Trade Unions only concerned with "bread and butter" issues like pay and conditions. Revolutionary unions are means for working people to organise and fight all the issues – both in the workplace and outside – which arise from our oppression.

We recognise that not all oppression is economic, but can be based on gender, race, sexuality, or anything our rulers find useful. Unless we organise in this way, politicians – some claiming to be revolutionary – will be able to exploit us for their own ends.

The Solidarity Federation consists of Industrial Networks and Locals which are the nuclei of future revolutionary unions and centres for working class struggle on a local level. Our activities are based on Direct Action – action by workers ourselves, not through intermediaries like politicians and union officials; our decisions are made through direct participation of the membership. We welcome all who agree with our aims and principles and want to work to achieve social revolution. We recognise that the class struggle is world-wide, and are affiliated to the International Workers' Association (IWA), whose Principles we share.

Solidarity Federation Addresses

**SF Contact Point: SF, PO Box 29, SW PDO, Manchester, M15 5HW.
Tel. 0161 232 7889**

Networks - make contact with others in your type of work -

Education Workers' Network, PO Box 29, SW PDO, Manchester M15 5HW.
Public Service Workers' Network, PO Box 1681, London N8 7DN.
Communication Workers' Network, PO Box 29, SW PDO, Manchester M15 5HW.

Locals - get involved locally in regular meetings and action -

North & East London SF, PO Box 1681, London N8 7DN. Tel. 0181 374 5027
Red & Black Club, PO Box 17773, London SE2 4WX. Tel. 0171 358 1854
South Herts SF, PO Box 493, St Albans AL1 5TW.
West Midlands SF, PO Box 6705, Redditch, Worcs. B97 6SQ
Norfolk & Norwich SF (Norwich Solidarity Centre), Rm 13, Muspole Workshops, Muspole St, Norwich NR3 1QD.
Manchester SF, PO Box 29, SW PDO, Manchester, M15 511W.
Tel. 0161 232 7889.
Sheffield SF, PO Box 1095, Sheffield S2 4YR.

To make contact with groups and individuals in the following areas, get in touch through the SF Contact Point: Preston, Liverpool, West Yorkshire, Middlesbrough, Chester-le-Street, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Somerset, Cardiff, Aberystwyth, Cambridge and Kent. 



Sky Management

A man piloting a hot air balloon realises he is lost. He spots a man below, lowers the balloon and shouts: "Excuse me, can you help me? I promised my friend I would meet him half an hour ago, but I don't know where I am."

The man below says: "Yes, I can help you."

"You are in a hot air balloon, hovering approximately 30 feet above a vacant field. You are between 40 and 42 Degrees N latitude, and 58 and 60 Degrees W longitude. There is a 5 knot south-westerly wind and the air temperature is 75 Degrees Fahrenheit."

"You must be an engineer", says the balloonist.

"Yes, I am", replies the man. "How did you know?"

"Well", says the balloonist, "everything you have told me is technically correct, but I have no idea what to make of your information, and the fact is I am still lost. You have yet to help me in a meaningful way."

The man below says, "You must be a manager."

"I am," replies the balloonist, "but how did you know?"

The engineer replies, "You don't know where you are or how to achieve your objective. You made a promise to someone with no idea of how to keep it and now that you are in a desperate position, you expect me to solve your problem. Even more revealing is that you are in the exact same position you were in before we met, but have somehow deluded yourself into believing that your situation is somehow my fault."

Football or fantasy?

With Glen Hoddle gone (neither he, his God, nor his mystic seem to have predicted that one), there's only one question left worth asking in football: Can you be a revolutionary and still support a big bucks Premier League side?

Or even a big bucks lowly club like Fulham? It's clear that our game has been in a terrible state for years. Ticket prices are rising at an alarming rate, while Murdoch and co. tighten their grip. The demands of the market take precedence over the fans'. And if that wasn't enough we've got Nick

Hornby and all manner of academics pontificating as only the self-important know how. Maybe it's time to go "back to basics"? Forget the bloated fat cats at megabucks United and their overpaid prima donna players – the future is bright, the future is NON LEAGUE! See comparison below of relative merits of 2 clubs from the two extremes of the footballing spectrum but who are geographically within spitting distance (down the road from each other to you).

The table may show a few marginal advantages for Premier League games, but your local Non-League team can offer some other important pluses. People living in Exeter will no longer have

to travel to Manchester for home games, and Coventry City fans can watch the same standard of football for less than half the price. Then again, there is always the chance of getting a game yourself when your side realises that their goalie has to work Saturday afternoon at Asda. And at a Non-League game you can always say without fear of contradiction "I can bloody well do better than that!" Most importantly though, you can sleep soundly at night knowing that you are not putting your hard earned cash into the pockets of greedy corporate bastards. So go on, liberate yourself from the blood suckers, get back to your roots...and don't forget to wrap up warm. 

	VILLA	REDDITCH UTD
FOOD	Very expensive, totally inedible and sold out by half time.	Bring your own sandwiches and a flask.
ALCOHOL	Not sold in ground.	See flask above.
ATMOSPHERE	Expect 30,000+ to turn up to watch the reserve team's shirts dry. Very noisy.	Two fans banned last season for making too much noise (true!)
PROGRAMMES	Expensive, glossy and full of pointless details about the latest over paid signing.	Cheap, nasty but reassuringly proletarian.
FACILITIES FOR CHILDREN	Family "enclosure", the chance to be a mascot and meet all your favourite stars.	The chance to run on the pitch at half time and get chased by an irate steward.
COMFORT	Lots of nice comfy seats in the dry.	Lots of character building exposure to the elements.
TRANSPORT AND PARKING	Regular bus service, nearby parking. Get your car broken into at least once a season.	Bike shed and field but no bus service so lots of healthy walking to get there.
POLITICS	Good anti-fascist contingents with own fanzine.	Revolutionary potential not tested to date.
THE GROUND	Large, imposing, expensive "continental" style.	Small, intimate, draughty "cow shed" style.
STYLE OF PLAY	Fast, skilful, exciting.	Slow, laboured – like football used to be played!

Letters

Send letters to: DA-SF (letters), PO Box 1095, Sheffield S2 4YR.
All letters are welcome but space is always very short. Make yours incisive, brief and questioning if you want it printed.

Porn

Dear DA,

Let's challenge a few myths about the hardcore porn industry.

1. Were you aware that, although the emphasis is on the men to perform and to 'cum on cue', in money terms, women are generally far better rewarded and much more likely to achieve star status within their chosen profession.
2. Coercion, violence and the gradual wearing down of the body do exist within the porn industry, just like in every other industry.
3. The vast majority of hard-core porn videos are financed and distributed by huge, modern companies. They employ people (actors, actresses, film directors, writers, sales people, etc.) to produce and sell a product for which there is a demand. As an employer, companies like 'Private', 'Manga', 'Seventeen' are no better or worse than any western company. In fact, the majority make the conditions in most British companies look medieval.
4. If you feel that the exploitation of a person's labour in order that someone else can gain profit is wrong - then I agree. Just don't single out the porn industry because someone is being sexually penetrated.
5. As with prohibition and outdated drug laws, outlawing something which is in high demand leads to a trade which operates in a climate of violence.
6. Child exploitation is child exploitation, and it exists within every sector of capitalist society. Don't confuse 2 separate issues. The vast majority of professional and amateur hard-core porn is between consenting adults, many of whom are very well rewarded, either in money or self-satisfaction. Fight child exploitation everywhere, don't believe it is a hard-core porn problem; look around, children are being forced into degrading situations everywhere that profit rules. Nike sweatshops, famine in debt-ridden countries, British inner-city shitty housing with an unemployed, pissed-up Dad.

Porn is an easy target and one which most on the left have a field day with. Don't show your ignorance, judge it like any other industry, and importantly, remember that people generally enjoy sex and enjoy watching other people having sex. Nudity sells magazines and boosts TV ratings.

Dammit, we are all perverts!! - JP.



Crude Business

A year ago, the price of Brent oil was more than \$17 per barrel. Now, it's less than \$10. Faced with this fact, do you think Shell has decided to cut:
 (a) the price of petrol; or (b) the workforce?

Genetically Modified Lifestyles

Dear DA,

JW (DA9 Letters) suggests genetically engineered foods are likely to be safer than the current food we eat, the strains of which have been selectively-bred for centuries. Now, I am very wary of lifestyle anti-technology but to maintain that corporate greed (Monsanto, etc.) is regulated enough to ensure that these foods will be relatively safe is naïve. Are you suggesting new high-tech animal feeds (with BSE in) are safe? - In fact, the BSE case proves that the stakes for politicians and profiteers are very low - the worst they get is 'the chance to spend more time with the kids'. And there is a scientific case against GM food - at least one study has shown that GM potato damages rats in an unpredicted way and it was blatantly suppressed to stop the reality getting out.

Let us get away from the technology argument - high-tech can be excellent in our hands, and will always be disastrous (for us) in the hands of the rich. The point is GM foods are yet another opportunity for so-called 'free market' corporations creating massive monopolies. By this I don't just mean destroying consumer choice and deliberately confusing labelling. Farmers and the environment will have no choice either. GM seed is hybrid so farmers will not be able to keep and use their own seed from year to year - as they have always done, e.g. in rural India. They will have to buy new seed each year - from the only patent holder - Monstanto (or whoever).

Lord Sainsbury has one of the most-used food gene patents and he is a senior advisor in Blair's Government; Monsanto funds Clinton. The world's politicians are in the GM profitmongers pockets and they make the testing regulations - do you think these are regulations in the interests of people? - RM

New Labour - New Dictionary

There used to be a saying that you don't hear any more called "working for a living." You don't hear that much any more. That saying has been superseded by the term "working poor." Working Poor. Not being politically correct, I don't think I could have ever come up with that one. Working poor - people who work, and yet are still poor. It used to be that the two didn't go together. Not too long ago a person could be poor and not have to be inconvenienced by working. Now you can work and be poor too.

The simple old-fashioned straightforward term was "slaves". Slaves worked and were poor. That's what a slave is, someone who works but doesn't have to be paid enough to make a living. What is that pay called? Slave wages! Too bad the southern plantation owners didn't come up with "working poor" instead of the politically incorrect term of slavery. Then the Civil War might have been avoided. Who would go to war over the working poor? Southerners didn't menace words; they called it as they saw it, "slavery". And they fought and lost a war over it. If they could have only thought of the term "working poor"!

Abraham Lincoln would still not have approved. He couldn't have freed the slaves because they were working poor, not slaves. The only solution would have been to move traditional slavery offshore - to the 3rd World...

Now with globalisation, we are headed for a New World Order Global Village Economy. Now we can have our slaves right here again. And that's what's happening. There's lots of work available for starvation wages here, but if you want to make a living then hey, nothing doing I'm afraid.

lite.action is...

a new section for DA - for all those who've written in saying DA is excellent but can we have some shorter, fluffier, and possibly even funnier bits - we have finally given in. Satire, cynicism and the odd rib-tickler, plus bits and pieces which are probably unfunny and unfathomable but of some vague passing interest - all in bite-size chunks. As the DA Collective have had their sense of humour removed, we need your snippets, snide comments and potential grin-juice. Send Lite Action tit-bits and letters to DA, PO Box 1095, Sheffield, S2 4YR, England or email to: da@directa.force9.co.uk



African Anarchism

The History of a Movement

Sam Mbah and I. E. Igariwey

See Sharp Press, Arizona, 1997

It is not often possible to say with any confidence that a book is 'the first of its kind', but **African Anarchism** comes pretty close. While the book seems to set out to be primarily historically based (hence the title), the overall feel is definitely contemporary, positive and forward-looking.

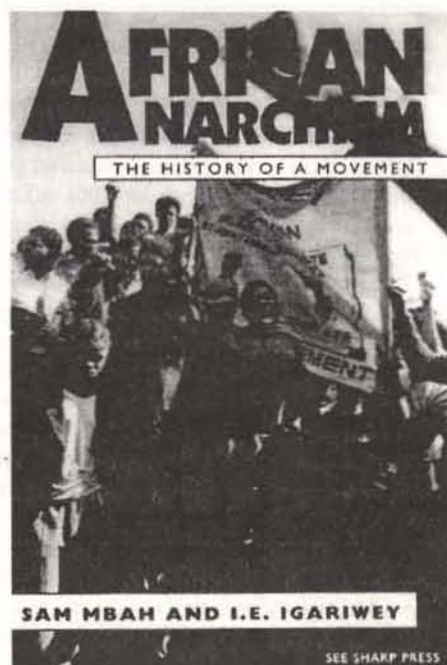
The main thesis is that the village and township system of pre-colonial, pre-capitalist Africa had basic collective decision-making structures which have more than a passing resemblance to some of the central ideas of anarcho-syndicalism. This idea is researched and illustrated through an investigation of both the pre-colonial African systems and the ideas of anarchism and collectivism within anarcho-syndicalism today. Thus, you get an introduction to two subject areas, which are not often related elsewhere - in fact, they have never before been brought together in this way.

A note of caution - while the authors are positive about the strength of communalism, co-operation, non-authoritarian wisdom and mutual aid in pre-colonial Africa, they are not about to take you down the blind alley of primitivism or eco-retro-neo-(lithic) environmentalism or whatever, so if this is what

you are after, look elsewhere. The reality and benefit of technology is not fundamentally in question - looking back to the 'roots' of pre-colonial African societies is primarily interpreted (by me, anyway) as putting anarchism in an African context, rather than (entirely) in the western context of industrial revolutions, the First International, etc. Also, this view back and beyond is not all through rose-tinted spectacles - the roots of tribalism, authority, are exposed as the key connection which the capitalist colonisers were able to make with Africa in order to spread their privileged class-based system.

Africa is big - and the diversity of its people and their various social and political systems has a richness and breadth that is emphasised here. However, it is impossible to detail this diversity in this relatively modest volume (120 pages), especially, when there is all the anarcho-syndicalism to fit in. The result is a mix of general descriptions with well-researched cases, which extend well beyond the Nigerian base of the authors.

Indeed, the main chunk of the book, which deals with the development and failure of the various 'socialist' experiments in Africa of the recent past, is where the richness of the book really shows. Here, Mbah and Igariwey deal with a wide geographical spread from the Communist Party in South Africa to the Guinean 'revolution'



in the west, to the regimes of Libya in the north and Ethiopia in the east. Topics range from religion, corruption and depoliticisation to the military, Marxism and the national question.

While newcomers to anarcho-syndicalism or African socio-politics will undoubtedly find this book to be a useful introduction to both topics, the real strength and originality lies in the concluding chapters, which bring these two strands together, in a consideration of the problems and prospects for Africa - and particularly, African anarchism. 

Peace News January 1999

Monthly from Peace News, 5 Caledonian Road, London N1 9DY. Subscriptions £10 UK (other rates available).

The subtitle proudly states the main purpose - for nonviolent revolution. For those against violence, but realistic about the possibility of the bosses actually resisting the revolution (like myself), the immediate thought is 'woolly, pacifist, hopelessly out-of-touch with reality', etc.

But Peace News is actually excellent. The key is the 'revolution' bit - and this ensures that every issue carries incisive accounts of direct actions (pacifist ones).

Regular sections include international news, often the type not seen in the mainstream press, prisoners for peace, a few reviews, and events and campaigns. This issue had features on Pinochet, Palestine and the resistance to Monsanto in India.

Peace News is uncompromisingly pacifist, but for all that, it is also (fairly politely) uncompromisingly revolutionary too. Well worth it, especially for the news and contacts pages. 



Government and Politics in Africa

William Tordoff

Macmillan, 1997, 3rd edition. ISBN 0333 694740

Tordoff is a liberal academic who has been writing about government and politics in Africa for donkey's years, and it shows. His descriptions of African communities in the grip of post-colonial global capitalism are detailed and well-sourced. His message is clear - it is a case of 'out of the frying pan into the fire' for most African states since independence around 1960.

However, inspiration is in short supply. The book reads like a student textbook from the days before universities were supposed to have started being interesting. His style is as dry as an Eritrean Danakil salt flat.

Tordoff's politics are primarily rooted in classic marxist-dominated underdevelopment theory. The well-meaning western academic view abounds that Africans are basically not class conscious, or that the massed ranks of the destitute, living next to the few African rich as they do, do not have the wherewithall or awareness to better themselves and bring about the revolution. Hence, Tordoff typically understresses the role of the state in the control and maintenance of mass-poverty.

Undoubtedly, as he maintains, crippling debts and the fall of the Soviet Empire have ruled out state capitalism as a way forward (thankfully), and he is right to stress that the west should not dictate to Africa through IMF policies. But in the final analysis, the detailed descriptions do not lead us much further along the path towards a workable solution for Africa. 



The Crisis of Global Capitalism

George Soros
Little Brown, £17.99



Soros is the single most well-known of the current select bunch of filthy-rich global investors. Reading his book, far from contaminating you into becoming a selfish 'fuck the world I'm doing what the market tells me to' type person, it is more likely (I hope) to give you an insight into his twisted brain. It did me.

Soros' fame stems primarily from his pivotal role in causing the Bank of England crash in 1992, the SE Asian currency crashes of 1997-8, and the Rouble collapse in Russia in August 1998. In the latter, Soros' Quantum investment fund allegedly lost \$2 billion. Shame. Presumably, this book will build the balance back up a bit (but not so much my library copy).

The most engaging aspect of the book is unravelling Soros' politics as you read. Undoubtedly, his knowledge of classical market economic theory is pretty solid - it is this which has presumably allowed him to detect the flaws in investment banking theory, and to second-guess these and (literally) capitalise on them. He has certainly near-perfected the 'art' of detecting error and predicting resultant fluctuation and movement in markets. But back to his politics.

First and foremost, he must know deep down inside what the effect of what he does is and the bankruptcy of the 'if I didn't do it, someone else would' argument. He is, after all, quite a clever bloke. But he sees the role of the political system almost entirely in terms of 'correcting' the flawed market. While this is logical and predictable from

a greedy man in his position, it never ceases to shock the merry reader how deeply he assumes the rightness of wealth accumulation and market economics as a fundamentally right concept. I can only assume he is governed by some sort of internal brainwash - though I should show my true colours here and confess that I can only explain the equally-bizarre (to me) internal logic of fundamentalist religious types in the same way. The world reality doesn't fit the theory. But I feel however loud I shouted this in his ear, his brain would not detect the signal.

Soros' political solution to 'the crisis of global capitalism' is not endowed with a single shred of the 'genius' of his investment practices - however, it has the same degree of self-centredness. Basically, he thinks western investors and their capital should be protected by all economic and political means. Then, they will not withdraw all their cash at the first jitter, and the jittery currency will not crash. In other words, look after the investors (Soros and mates), reduce their risks and 'guarantee' their deals, and they won't go around causing mayhem.

Soros thinks it is time to stop the opening up of markets - in fact, to close them with a lot more regulation. He thinks the way out of currency crises is to cut interest rates, not raise them (but surely George, the raising of rates is a desperate attempt to keep your cash in the market of the crumbling economy?) And this is where the guarantees come in. Soros wants a new

international credit guarantee corporation backed by the West to ensure that investors do alright whatever happens - so they will keep their money on

Soros' political solution to the crisis of global capitalism' contains not a single shred of the 'genius' of his investment practices - however, it has the same degree of self-centredness

the jittery periphery when it matters most, rather than scurrying back to the reliable (rich) centre of the world economy at the first sign of losing out on a deal or two.

But who will pay George? Who always pays?

Soros also goes on about the rise of the only currency which could potentially challenge the US\$ world domination - the Euro, and predicts the £ will be tossed to and fro between, but this is (even) less interesting stuff.

I was disappointed that Soros' book turns out to be the work of a spoiled and self-possessed brat rather than a genius. All his 'solutions' would appear to make him richer with less stress than he currently has (shame). He didn't, as it happens, mention the idea of getting rid of currency markets, investors, inflation, profit and the world's top scroungers (i.e. himself) and getting them to work for a crust like everyone else has to. 

Rudolf Rocker Anarcho-syndicalism

Pluto Classics, ISBN 074531 3922. £11.99. 1998 Edition.

This edition, published by Pluto, is one of the classics of anarcho-syndicalism and is a 'must' for any comrade's library! While it is enhanced by the inclusion of a preface by Noam Chomsky, I can only think of one reason why Pluto Press saw fit to have an introduction by Nicholas Walter. The man knows his history but, when he comes nearer to the present day, he is utterly lost. He demonstrates little or no knowledge of the British, or any other labour movement.

There is a nod in the direction of the IWA, the Anarcho-syndicalist international, and mention of a pamphlet by Col Longmore, but any ideas of the practical application of anarcho-syndicalist ideas in the here and now is totally alien to his mentality which is that of an academic of the worst sort. This is no doubt why Pluto Press saw fit to include this irrelevant offering. Perhaps next time Pluto should invite one of the Manchester 'Piccadilly Four' to write an introduction, or even evaluate the ideas, opinions and methods outlined in the pamphlet *Anarchosyndicalism in Puerto Real*, which graphically describes more recent struggles (title available from DA). 

Great Parliamentary Scandals

Four centuries of Calumny, Smear and Innuendo

Mathew Parris

Robson Books, ISBN 18610515522

Mathew Parris is a former Member of Parliament, openly gay, and treats his former colleagues with compassion.

The Forword is by David Mellor and the Epilogue by David Ashby, both of whose sex lives lead to their leaving Parliament (or rather the media's coverage of their sex lives). As far as financial impropriety is concerned, the British Parliament is probably far less corrupt than its continental counterparts, thus recent scandals such as those involving Neil Hamilton and Jonathan Aitken are the exception rather than the rule. In Britain, we specialise in other scandals.

In particular, sex. Most of the scandals covered in the book are of a sexual nature - either homosexual, like David Ashby, or heterosexual, such as Paddy 'pantsdown' Ashdown.

Apparently, long and stressful hours plus separation from their families in their constituency play a major part in marriage

breakdown. However, it is worth noting that only one of 63 cases involved women MPs. Despite the understandable effect of there not being many women MPs until very recently, they are notably absent from sex scandals. Do they get less stressed?

Contrary to what you may have expected, the book is not primarily set in the long-past historical context. One exception is the Profumo affair, which featured Christine Keeler, and was set in the 1960's at the height of Cold War spy fever. Harold Wilson depicted a government enmeshed in 'the London underworld of vice, dope, blackmail, counter-blackmail, violence and petty crime'.

Modern day issues seem more than ever to be driven by the press' lust for personal and 'sordid' sex stories. Homosexuality is no longer illegal, even for MPs, and there are openly gay ministers such as Chris Smith. Despite this, casual gay encounters still appear to be resigning matters, with all the apparent hypocrisy that this

implies.

The book does not offer any clues of how to handle scandal. On the whole, it seems best to resign quickly, like Ron Davies did after his encounter on Wimbledon common. However, certain cases certainly do not support this - Paddy Ashdown's popularity actually increased after it was revealed he had had an affair some years before. He gained the sympathy vote - it is certainly important to have the backing of the family when scandal breaks.

Parris' advice on keeping marriages intact, etc. is equally sparse. Sarah Keays came back to haunt Cecil Parkinson after he refused to leave his wife and family, and live with her and her daughter. On the other hand, Robin Cook has been pilloried by his wife Margaret, for leaving her for his Diary Secretary, Gaynor.

One thing is certain; none of the political parties have any right to talk about morality, family values, etc.

They all live in glass houses... 

Direct Action

No.10, Summer 1998/9.

AUS\$1 (no overseas info. - write to PO Box 78, Bellingen, NSW 2454, Australia or see <http://www.iww.org.au/australia/da>)

Anamesake from the other side of the world, Direct Action is the paper of the Australian Industrial Workers of the World (IWW).

Not surprisingly, it is primarily about Australia, which is great because it's a long way away and disputes, activism and related ideas do not tend to fill the global commercial press, so I had very little idea what is going on down under. Until now.

The format is 20 pages of news and articles from various groups across Australia - the content is, by and large, excellent. The ongoing struggle of the Melbourne tram conductors, logging and environmentalism, work for dole and various other Government attacks on social security are covered in this issue. Also of particular interest is an article about attempts to organise a sex workers' union. The fact that prostitution remains illegal in many parts of Australia (though variations between states are considerable) appears to be the biggest single barrier to improving working conditions. Various aspects are considered, including health and safety, shifts imposed by brothel owners, anti-social hours and skill levels...

Another piece caught my eye - a history of

the Direct Action paper in Australia. It started out as a monthly in

1914, became a regular weekly (8,000 run) by 1915, and the press was confiscated and members charged with treason in 1916. Several got to long hard labour sentences, but others took up the paper, despite it being made illegal to send it in the mail. However, in 1917 the state swooped again and Direct Action was stopped in its tracks. Notwithstanding relaunches in 1921 and a couple of times in the late '20s, it didn't reappear until the period 1970-90, when the name was taken for a Socialist Workers' Party paper, which had precious little promotion of direct action at all. Now it's back with the Wobblies and, along with Rebel Worker, it is the best I've seen of down under activism propaganda. 



Anarchist Studies
Vol. 6, No. 2,
October 1998

White Horse Press, Cambridge

This academic journal, now in its 6th year, goes from strength to strength.

Anarchist
Studies



October 1998

Its image problem is that it is seen as too academic - not in the sense of too intellectual (of course!) - but irrelevant to present debates. This issue covers articles on anarchist theories of morality with a critique of postmodern sociology; an essay on aesthetics; and another on the relation between Daoism and anarchism. There is also a large section of book reviews and free essays on writing anarchist history and politics.

In this sense, *Anarchist Studies* does what it is supposed to do: provide an academic forum for ideas. A particularly well ethos is forming in this journal, which is well grounded in anarchist theory, both past and present.

In a country where part of the anarchist movement has despised ideas and the 'academy', its reception is a mixed one. But, if it's got ideas, and they're worth using, why not use them? 

Film Preview

VIGO: a passion for life

Dir. Julian Temple

Channel Four Films, 1998. London Film Festival; for release in 1999.

This film suggests a welcome renewal of interest in the work of Jean Vigo, a French anarchist film maker who died at the age of 29 in 1934. Vigo already has his followers in the film-making world, with directors Sally Potter and François Truffaut citing him as a major influence, while Lindsey Anderson based his anti-school feature *If on Vigo's Zero de Conduit*.

Jean Vigo was the son of Almeredy, an active campaigner and publisher against the First World War. After his father's arrest and assassination, Vigo was sent away to boarding school by his mother, who also changed his name to avoid victimisation. It was only much later than Vigo discovered his father's death in prison was not suicide, as he had been informed, but was the result of an attack by French government agents. His father's shadow was to haunt him all his young life.

Although afflicted by TB for most of his life, Vigo was determined to make films. He married Lydou Lozinska, whom he met at a sanatorium, and together with the cinematographer Boris Kaufman, formed a

group of friends who produced some of the most memorable films this century - *A Propos de Nice*, *Zero de Conduit*, and *L'Atalante*.

A Propos de Nice was a documentary, inspired by Russian montage, which playfully exposed the contradictions of this most bourgeois of resorts, where gambling and wealth contrasted with cultural sterility and exploitation.

Zero de Conduit (Nought for Conduct) was clearly autobiographical in its challenge to the absurdities of schooling, and many of the incidents and characters evolved out of his own early experiences. He toured the streets of Paris picking out truants to play the parts of schoolboys who revolt against the hierarchical order. The film's attack on discipline, authority and ageism led to the government censor banning it outright.

L'Atalante was Vigo's last film, and he died before it achieved international acclaim. Vigo felt obliged to accept the script because of the political and financial difficulties he faced both as the son of the 'notorious anarchist' Almeredy, and the banning of *Zero*. A young married couple share a working barge with an older sailor and a

young apprentice. Vigo rewrote the script so that this incongruous and contradictory community provide the characters for a portrayal of attraction, jealousy, individuality and loyalty, in a style which was influenced by surrealism.

Julien Temple's *Vigo: A Passion for Life* does capture the energy and resourcefulness of Jean Vigo, while truthfully recounting the significant chapters of his life and works. Temple avoids significant use of the films' footage, but

The film's attack on discipline, authority and ageism led to the government censor banning it outright

playfully re-enacts some scenes as if they were Vigo's life - Vigo diving into the canal after his camera mirrors the underwater scene in *L'Atalante*; a family friend and anarchist strips off his top to reveal full body tattoos identical to those of the barge's *Le père Jules*. Temple relies frequently on the practical jokes which Salles Gomes recounts in his excellent biography to illustrate Vigo's indomitable spirit. But there is also an uneasy contrast between the styles and energy of temple's film and Vigo's work. In comparison to Vigo's lyrical realism, we have Temple's mainstream narrative, we have Vigo's humanitarianism and Temple's sentimentalism, and we have Vigo's imagination and Temple's predictability.

On several occasions, the director has a character declare what we see, e.g. as the characters are thrown out of a casino. Vigo calls out 'Let's get out of here', yet we can see they are already getting out of there. The anarchist family friend is stereotypically raucous and bullish. There is an unnecessary heavy-handedness about a misunderstanding during a telephone conversation, when Lydou returns to the phone to find Jean has hung up.

It would be unfair to expect Temple to achieve the lyricism of Jean Vigo, but Temple's predictability cannot but be contrasted unfavourably with his subject's lightness and sureness of touch. This film, then, may disappoint those who are acquainted with Vigo's work, but until you get access to his films, it at least acts as a useful introduction. Also recommended are Salles Gomes' biography 'Jean Vigo' and Marina Warner's 'L'Atalante'.

My Name is Joe

Dir. Ken Loach

Channel Four Films, 1998.

The latest offering from Ken Loach is, well, pretty good by his standards, and unmissable by anyone else's.

I usually look forward to Ken Loach films with a feeling that they will hit the mark in some way. In fact, when I look back at some of his more recent ones, they haven't always been on target. Still, my expectations on picking up the tickets for *My Name is Joe* were high for some reason, possibly too high.

All the now-essential Loach trademarks are there; the almost-more-like-a-documentary-than-most-documentaries gritty acting, the social politics, and the naïve slushy bit. Unfortunately, as on several occasions in recent years, I came out feeling the latter was too big and the social politics



content slightly underplayed as a result.

Still, the script is plenty stronger than *Carla's Song*, and Loach gets the pace and spontaneity really spot on.

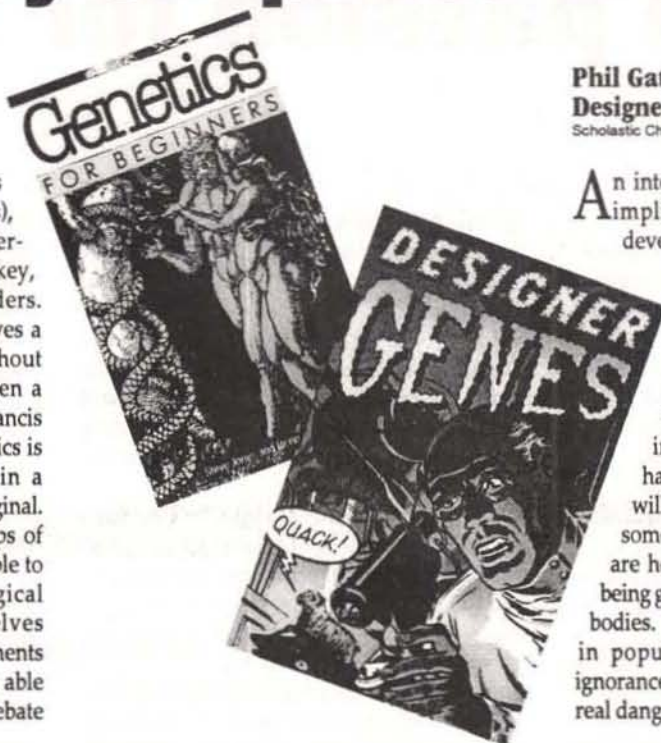
My Name is Joe has been a success in Britain - box office receipts suggest it is the most popular Loach film since *Kes* (though *Kes* managed it without the slightly far-fetched love story). This is Loach's best work since *Land and Freedom* - and proves he is still well worth it.

Genetically Simplified Brainfood

Steve Jones and Boris van Loon
Genetics for Beginners

Icon Books, ISBN 1874166 129, £7.99.

The cover is not as good, but the contents are crisper than *Designer Genes* (across), although it may appear somewhat over-illustrated and comic-like. It tries to be jokey, which will no doubt irritate some readers. However, the text is sophisticated and gives a good idea of what genetics is about without talking down to the reader. There is even a couple of pages devoted to the ideas of Francis Galton, ideas now called eugenics. Eugenics is set to make a major comeback, but in a completely different form from Galton's original. Sociology, which is no longer in the grips of Marxist theory, will be extremely vulnerable to invasion by eugenic and sociobiological thinking, so we had better get ourselves conversant with the new genetic developments and genetic engineering. Then, we will be able to make a meaningful intervention in the debate which already rages around us. 



Phil Gates
Designer genes

Scholastic Children's Books, ISBN 0 590 190172, £3.99

An interesting introduction to the modern implications of genetics and the development of genetic engineering aimed at the younger reader. It could perhaps be useful to some older readers as a first introduction to the subject of genetic engineering. This science is going to have a major impact on our lives and those to come in the 21st century, and most people haven't the slightest idea about what it will entail. Usually, when they do have some knowledge of what is involved, they are horrified. People don't like their food being genetically meddled with, let alone their bodies. Domesday scenarios are widespread in popular culture, not only because of ignorance of the topic, but because of the very real dangers. 

The Ibogaine Story: Report on the Staten Island Project
Paul De Rienzo, Dana Beal, et al

Autonomedia, \$20.

The first mention of Ibogaine I saw was in an article in the *New Scientist*, where it was mentioned in passing as a cure for heroin addiction. Later, I read a review somewhere, and then obtained a review copy from AK Press. It proved to be a very interesting but strange read.

The main researcher took a dose of Ibogaine in the late 1960s. He began experimenting with his friends when cocaine and heroin were both first circulating on the fringes of 'alternative' culture. He was soon to find out that Ibogaine could cure heroin addiction without the horrendous experience of 'cold turkey'. The cure really looked like it worked, even if the former addicts still lived cheek by jowl with users.

Ibogaine, however, is a psychedelic drug in its own right. Those who take it experience a trip which lasts about a day and a half in which they have strange (quasi-religious?) experiences. This does not seem to go down well with the powers-that-be. The arguments against its use are that a small number of people have died under its influence, and that it is a drug. However, these arguments can be used along with others against the established methadone treatment but this doesn't seem to have the same effect on the anti-addiction experts and industry.

Some cynics think that Ibogaine's major drawback is that it is not just a cure for heroin addiction but a cure for addiction itself. Consequently, the use and knowledge of its efficacy has to be suppressed. One cannot have a situation where the consumers give up consuming.

Anti-drug campaigning and drug czars are a con and a sham: and the establishment does not want to end addiction and the cure of addicts. Governments, in spite of their rhetoric, quite approve of the demoralisation that addiction brings. It keeps the people quiet and compliant. True, there is violence associated with the drugs trade but this type of violence is acceptable to the boss class, after all it is the polar opposite of revolutionary class violence.

The book is fascinating - and the cure for addiction is only one of the themes and theories explored within its 348 pages. Look no further for anthropology, west African religion, the God Bwiti, the birth of Christianity, gnostic heresy and many other things you have always wanted to know (!)

Unfortunately, the wide sweep of subject matter diverts the reader away from the main issue - the exposé on the phoney war against drugs. But the message remains, and hence the book is a useful antidote to the official ineffective posturings about the much-trumpeted all-out war on drugs. 

Participating in Transformation:
Towards a working model
of community development
Margaret Ledwith

Venture Press, ISBN 1873 878 486, £11.50

Margaret Ledwith used to be a community worker on Hattersley Council Estate, Tameside, Greater Manchester, now she is a senior lecturer in community work.

The theory she advocates is drawn from Paulo Freire and Antonio Gramsci.

She draws from Gramsci the idea that revolution is a process in which ordinary people undermine the old order gradually. Is this a kind of slow revolution, or is it what anarchosyndicalists mean by building the new society within the shell of the old?

Ledwith shows how her theories informed her practices on the Hattersley Estate. Anyone with any knowledge of the Estate cannot fail to be underwhelmed. While she rightly seems to believe that all sectors of society can be involved in the 'revolution', she seems also to suffer from the delusion that those in power can remain true to these ideals by adopting a lifestyle which keeps them close to the powerless.

Unfortunately, as indeed I have said to Tameside MP Andrew Bennett, "You're either part of the solution or part of the problem". Put another way, to empower the community you will have to take the power away from the powerful. Lenin and Robespierre lived frugal lives exercising tremendous power - we learned this lesson long ago. 



The Emperor's New Wardrobe

reinventing imperialism



Sorry mate, you can't buck the market. Old clichés die hard, especially when they still have some use in them. The current line is that we cannot do anything about the 'poor, unfortunate' Brazilians, Indonesians, Thais, etc., etc., it's just the whim of the market. Back in the middle-ages, some Godlike being was supposed to be looking over us and dealing out lessons wherever 'he' (sic) willed. More recently, it was Imperialism that was to blame. Now it's Mr. Global Market that steals from the poor and gives to the rich. Just how many outfits have these filthy rich emperors really got?

Imperialism is based on inequality, on capitalists using their economic power, backed by state military power if necessary, to exploit the weaker countries. Reduced to basic economics, it is the transfer of wealth from the poor to the rich. For every dollar capitalists invest in the Third World, more than a

dollar returns in the form of repatriated profits, royalties, debt repayments, interest and so on.

In recent years, however, this notion of imperialism has become clichéd and outdated. Capitalism is portrayed as a liberating force which, having defeated communism, will go on to free the world. The social and economic model for poor nations to follow is the advanced capitalist free market coupled to social democracy.

Behind this free-market hype, we find nothing more than a smokescreen designed to obscure the fact that the rich still get richer and the poor still get poorer.

key concept

One of the key concepts of this post-communist new world order is the global market, which has literally changed the way we view the world. It has negated the concept of imperialism. Rich states no longer exploit the poor, for it is argued that the global market has made the nation state redundant. Instead, there is a new world of individual firms competing on equal terms in one vast market. It is self-regulating market forces

basic economics - for every dollar invested in the Third World, more than a dollar returns in the form of repatriated profits, royalties, debt repayments, interest and so on

that drive the global economy, not governments - who are increasingly portrayed as powerless.

The global market is crucial to capitalism's rehabilitation ensuring that poor countries can now compete on equal terms with the rich ones. Furthermore, being poor in this new era has its advantage. It provides the competitive edge of cheaper labour costs. Free of human control, footloose capitalism can flood into underdeveloped countries drawn by the prospects of higher returns, and in so doing it begins to eliminate world poverty.

As capital flows into the underdeveloped world, wages will rise and the labour market will tighten. This capitalist relocation will continue until labour costs are equal throughout the world. Only then will the incentive to relocate disappear. This is in line with the basic tenets of free market theory. Competition drives companies to produce goods at the lowest possible cost. They will therefore take advantage of cheaper labour costs in the underdeveloped world. The free market claim that capitalism can make the most efficient use of the world's scarce



resources depends on this principle that it will always produce at the lowest possible cost.

do as we say

The IMF and the World Bank operate in line with this free market orthodoxy. For the global market to be efficient, barriers that prevent the movement of capitalism must be swept aside. Accordingly, they have imposed restructuring programmes across Africa, Latin America and, in recent years, Asia. This has involved privatisation, cuts in state spending, liberalisation of finance and trade, and the opening up of domestic industry to foreign competition, all in return for aid.

But will this new world order work? Are we heading for a social democratic utopia where market forces eradicate the gap between rich and poor nations? Not quite. The truth is that free market theory bears little resemblance to reality. Crucially, it omits the human factor, reducing the market to mathematical formulae which take no account of human behaviour. In reality, the economy is political; it does not operate according to economic laws but by human decisions. As such, who makes the decision, and to what end, matters far more than the laws of supply and demand, as we shall see.

cash machine

Before looking at how human behaviour shapes economic activity, we can also challenge the global market thesis on purely economic grounds. The argument that the prospect of lower costs due to cheaper labour will force industry to relocate is flawed. It assumes that labour cost is the most important factor

in determining overall costs. However, in an advanced economy, the level of technology is far more important.

This is easily proved. US wage levels are far higher than in Latin America. Yet, Latin American productivity levels are only 30% of those in the USA. The 70% difference is a reflection of the technology gap. When the technology factor is added in, the idea that poor countries have a competitive edge in the global market soon falls apart. Since technology levels are so crucial in determining profit, companies will locate where there is the best hope of technological advance. The global market thesis expects us to believe that multinationals will abandon the massive scientific base of rich countries in favour of the scientific underdevelopment of the poorer nations.

We can take the arguments surrounding relocation much further. Multinational companies do not operate according to free market theory. In the modern world, they are state-subsidised and state-protected private power centres. The idea that they are about to abandon the protection and privileges offered by the advanced states in favour of those on offer in the Third World is nothing short of ludicrous.

Having established the fact that productivity is the main factor in determining cost, let us now consider another global market myth - that poor nations can compete on equal terms. In reality, a free trade system has only one outcome. Goods produced much cheaper in the developed world flood into underdeveloped countries, consequently holding back the domestic economy and making poor countries dependent on these imports.

There are a number of major flaws in the global market idea. The notion that it can ever close the gap between rich and poor is simply untrue. For a start, such a notion fails to take any account of human decision making. Poverty exists across the world because it suits the interests of the rich and powerful.

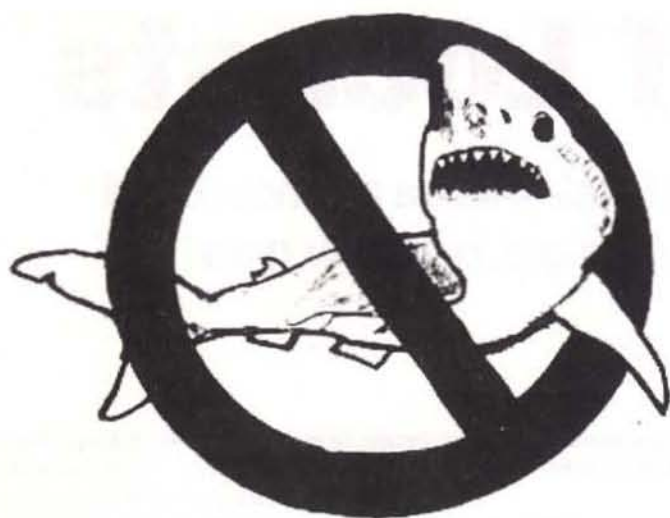
dynasty

After World War II, the economic victors, the USA, took responsibility for the welfare of world capitalism in the face of the growing communist threat. To help ensure capitalism's long term survival underdeveloped nations were assigned "major functions", primarily to provide the industrial world with raw materials and help absorb the massive surpluses of capitalist overproduction. There was no ambiguity in this. Third World raw materials were described as "ours" by the first world planners. The thought that they might be used by the indigenous populations to meet their own needs was not even entertained.

Implicit in this was the idea that the underdeveloped world would remain so and would not develop its own industry. Since World War II, capitalism has done its best to halt Third World development by attempting to restrict underdeveloped nations' access to technology. With their near-monopoly on technology, developed countries can put all sorts of barriers in the way of development in the poorer nations.

With the increasing importance of advanced technology came greater restrictions. For all the talk of free trade, protectionism regarding technology has actually increased in the last twenty years. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the role of multinational

*the
economy is
political; it
does not
operate
according to
economic
laws*



World Bank - loan sharks

companies. Under the global market, underdeveloped countries are supposed to gain access to new technology. Here again, free market theory couldn't be further from reality. Even when multinationals do relocate to underdeveloped parts of the world, that relocation is limited and strictly controlled.

holding power

Multinationals tend to create economic enclaves that are almost entirely independent of the domestic economy. These enclaves use cheap labour to assemble components imported from the developed countries. Attempts by Third World governments to impose quotas for finished goods including domestically produced components have totally failed. The result is virtually no linkage to the domestic economy and therefore no technology transfer, except between companies where it can be tightly controlled, preventing dispersal into the wider domestic economy.

This helps explain the productivity gap between rich and poor countries. Industrialisation that has occurred in the Third World remains low-tech and low skilled, generating low incomes. For instance, the likes of Australia, Ireland, Denmark and Norway have a manufacturing share of GDP of 20% or less, yet they generate incomes per capita that Latin American countries like Mexico, Argentina and Brazil, with higher manufacturing shares, can only dream about.

So, on paper, in terms of industrialisation, the gap between rich and poor is narrowing - but in terms of income, the gap is actually widening. Furthermore, with the development of

microelectronic technology, there is evidence that multinational companies are shutting down labour intensive assembly in the underdeveloped world and relocating back to the developed world threatening even this low-tech industrialisation.

underdog's new tricks

Underdeveloped nations are aware of the role capitalism has allocated them and have introduced economic reform aimed at breaking free of first world dominance, especially their dependence on first world imports by building up production for domestic consumption - so-called import substituting industrialisation. This process involved import controls and financial regulation in order to shelter the economy while domestic production grew. A crucial task was to stimulate the consumption of and demand for home-produced goods. This required wealth redistribution and agrarian reform to provide the mass of the population with the required buying power.

This flew in the face of capitalist post-war strategy. By the late 1940's, as recently declassified records show, the CIA was alarmed at the growth in the world's poor nations of "new nationalism", which aimed "to bring about broader distribution of wealth and to raise the standard of living of the masses". Thus, by 1955, the main threat to capitalist interests was no longer Soviet communism, but "nationalistic regimes", whose populist message was winning mass support, and threatening "our raw materials".

Attempts to develop through import-

substituting industrialisation were quickly ended by US military intervention, notably in Latin America. Just a few examples will illustrate the point. In 1954, there was the overthrow of the "democratically" elected Guatemalan government, whose social and economic policy was described by the CIA as a "virus" that might spread. In 1960, there was the coup in Brazil, described by Kennedy as "the single most decisive victory of freedom in the mid-twentieth century". In 1973, our new friend, General Pinochet, saved Chile from Marxism.

Nor should we be fooled into thinking that the new "democratic" world order has made coups a thing of the past. The 1990's have seen a mildly reforming government in Haiti prove too much for the US. One coup later, the dogs of war were called off, but only after the reforms were dropped in favour of the World Bank's free market strategy.

old dog's old tricks

What could be a better argument against the global market myth of mysterious uncontrollable economic laws driving the world we live in today? It is not the law of supply and demand that despatches military might to protect capitalist interests, but the decisions of the rich and powerful. The reality is that it is unelected human beings who control the world economy for the benefit of the few and the disadvantage of the many.

In some ways, however, disproving the idea that the global market will lead to greater equality misses the point, for the aim of those who argue for global market theory has little to do with greater equality. Instead, it is to intellectually underpin free market ideas, to provide the theoretical abstractions to justify extracting greater wealth from the world's poor. This, of course, can never be admitted. As such, the global market thesis should be seen more as a capitalist propaganda tool than an explanation of how the world works. For a truer explanation, that over-used cliché, "imperialism", still has much to offer. 

global market theory provides the theoretical abstractions to justify extracting greater wealth from the world's poor

For more information about issues raised in Closer Look articles, write to DA. The next issue focuses on discrimination - sex, race, sexuality & more. Bargain sub. and contact details are on p.9

A Plague of Locusts

A plague of locusts has swept across SE Asia, Russia and now Brazil - unlike other locusts, these act not out of hunger, but sheer greed

Super-rich investors and bankers are driving the Third World further into poverty. Judging by some media coverage, you might think these people have lost vast fortunes as currencies fall and economies are tipped into recession. But the only losers are ordinary people condemned to poverty - while western speculators laugh all the way to the next crisis.

The Brazilian working class are the latest victims in this series of crises that goes back to the 1997 devaluation of the Thai baht. Back then, currency collapses quickly followed in Malaysia, South Korea, Hong Kong and Indonesia, all caused by western speculators. In 1996, \$100 billion flowed into Asia, most destined for short-term investments in shares, bonds, and land speculation, rather than direct investments like plant, machinery or infrastructure. However, these short-term, fast-buck merchants panicked and, by the following summer, the money was flowing out as fast as it had flowed in.

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) statistics for south east Asia now show a 30% malnutrition rate among under 5's - comparable with Africa. Meanwhile, 80 million Indonesians have sunk below the poverty line as food prices have doubled following devaluation of the rupiah. Wages and welfare benefits have been slashed across the whole region.

The culprits for this poverty are the big investment banks and brokerages like Merrill Lynch, Goldman Sachs and Morgan Stanley. Of just over 110,000 Americans who earned over \$1 million in 1996, a disproportionate number of them worked on Wall Street. Such undeserved prosperity is reflected in an orgy of mindless

consumerism - sports car sales up, yacht sales more than doubled, and a rash of 8 and 9,000 square foot "trophy homes".

Investing in south east Asia promised massive profits from the exploitation of low waged workers. Stockmarkets took off as foreign money poured in and the speculative frenzy took hold. To build factories and hire labour, local capitalists borrowed vast quantities of US dollars, converting them into local currencies, thus maintaining their value against the dollar. What happened in 1997 was that the speculators realised that no amount of super-exploitation of Asian workers could generate profits high enough to justify the huge investment. That's when the tide turned.

And now a practically identical situation has occurred in Brazil, the largest country in South America and, as such, crucial to the economic future of the whole continent. With 50% of Latin America's total GDP, Brazil is vital to both American continents, including the US. Hence, western institutions attempted to prop up the Brazilian economy leading to heavy falls in equity markets due to the collapse in the currency, the real. At one point, 3% was wiped off the UK stock market. In January, despite 50% interest rates, massive lay-offs, and vicious pay and welfare cuts, speculation finally forced the devaluation of the real, leading to immediate price rises in food imports. This failure to convince foreign investors of Brazil's financial and political credibility will inevitably lead to yet more deaths from hunger.

So, do investors get their fingers burnt through stupidity and greed? No, they actually lose very little, if at all. They lobby the IMF as soon as currency collapses

begin. Since the IMF only lends to countries on condition that they adopt IMF policies, those with currencies under attack are forced to raise interest rates to insane levels. This is to give investors a higher return, and therefore stem the outflow of capital. But whatever the currency, experience shows that collapse cannot be delayed once investors have lost confidence. For

instance, the sterling devaluation of 1992 occurred amid desperate interest rate hikes. However, what such responses do achieve is to give investors just enough time to get their money out without sustaining heavy losses. So, high interest rates are good for the short-term investor but disastrous for the working class who, as usual, end up paying, as the economy nose dives.

In Brazil's case, the IMF arranged \$41 million of

No sooner is one emergency sorted out, than stock markets start crashing elsewhere. Global capitalism is haemorrhaging

assistance, designed to relieve not only the pressure on Brazil, but on the whole of Latin America, hoping to prevent the contagion spreading northwards into the US. However, all it achieves is a safety net for investors rushing to get their interests out of the Brazilian real, which continues its downward spiral.

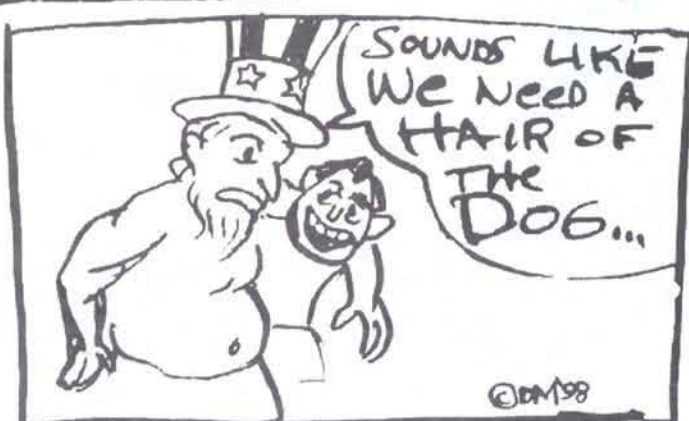
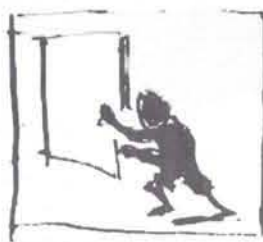
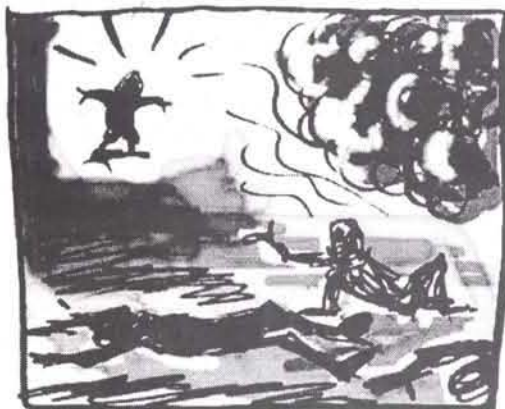
Capitalism survives by lending money and raking in the interest. But it has now over-stretched itself by lending vast amounts to countries with no hope of repaying the interest without driving their people to poverty and beyond. Capitalist institutions regularly devise 'rescue packages', which mean lending even more money. And Brazil, despite being very rich in resources, is being sucked dry by debt repayments.

It is becoming increasingly impossible for developing countries to keep up. The crisis resembles the Hydra of Greek mythology which, having had one head chopped off, immediately sprouted two more. No sooner is one emergency sorted out, than stock markets start crashing elsewhere. Global capitalism is haemorrhaging.

Campaigners call for debt cancellation and, following horrific hurricane damage in central America and the Caribbean, tentative progress has been made in this direction. But debt repayments are capitalism's life blood and cannot simply be wiped away, if it is to survive. However, the situation is becoming one of "can't pay" rather than "won't pay". It is inevitable that the rot will spread sooner or later to the US and on to the rest of the developed world. And when it does, capitalism will squeeze us all more than ever before to keep its profits up. Meanwhile, the locust speculators go on, descending on nation after nation, stripping whole economies bare to satisfy their never-ending greed. They leave behind countries bereft of work and affordable food, their health and education systems in tatters. 



HAIR OF THE DOG





2Worlds

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