

Direct Action

No.11 summer 1999 £1.50

**Why
those
who
cause
wars
don't die
in them**



Them&us Issue:

Racism@UK

The New Ageism

Language Militia Manifesto

Why Women do it for Less

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**Direct
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When the Direct Action Collective set out on the discrimination project, no-one realised what they were getting into. This is not to say ignorance is rife here (well, not completely anyway), but that the sheer scale of discrimination in our society defies all reasonable effort to take it all in. With virtually no soliciting or commissioning, we were quickly inundated with material for DA11, so obviously lots of people have things to say about it. Hopefully, we've picked out the very best for you.

It is hopeless to try to summarise the vast range of types of discrimination in any meaningful way in an introductory editorial. So I won't. Instead, the menu consists of a few starters, to whet the appetite for the main course articles served up in these pages. First, let's start with what discrimination is in its simplest terms (not because I'm trying to be patronising, but because that's how I like to understand it myself - by cutting the academic claptrap and getting down to the basics).

Discrimination is nebulous, verging on the omnipotent, and often not 'in-your-face' (though there are plenty of extreme and literal exceptions). To be racist, you don't need to have a swastika tattoo - a New Labour rose will do (see *Globalfocus*, p.17). At the core is the notion of you/me/us and them/the rest, and the implication is that the interests of each are mutually exclusive. In other words, the very existence or actions of them is somehow threatening, and must be opposed, undermined, or otherwise controlled to protect you/me/our interests.

So, women are discriminated against to keep men on top; children so that adults remain in power; black people so that whites remain top dogs; the poor so the rich remain so; the illiterate so that those with key communication skills rule the roost; and so on. But there are a great many motivations for participating in discrimination and being a bigot; not least, need for security, feeling of insecurity, unthinking ignorance, and mistaken

identity - confusion over who the real enemy is and why. It is a hotchpotch of gut feelings that produce discriminatory behaviour.

There is no point in discussing which part of our psyche it comes from - except as a musing, academic exercise. Even the nature-nurture issue of whether we are genetically programmed discriminatory or we learn it in childhood is of little relevance. The simple fact is, we know it, we understand it, and we stamp it out. End of story. Even if we were programmed to be racist (not that we are) we could stop it by thinking 'that's wrong, I don't think I'll do that'.

If it is so simple, why haven't we all sorted it out long ago and started to be fair and square with each other? That's where leaders, government, and the state come in. Firstly, capitalists didn't invent discrimination - it's been around for eons - but they have found it to be a useful device to help divide and rule and otherwise further their ends.

There are two main reasons to encourage discrimination; more 'efficiency' (profit for leaders/the rich) or furthering/

there is no point in discussing which part of our psyche it comes from... we know it, we get to understand it, and we stamp it out. End of story

maintaining privilege. In other words, money and power. A few quick examples: *Why Women do it for Less* (p.31): women stay at home (no wages - good for 'efficiency'); single women go to work (no welfare, low wages - more profits); *Globalfocus* (p.17): Milosovic's ethnic cleansing ('race card' - really just glorification of past capitalist-sponsored wars - for political power); New Labour anti-immigration (underhand race card - political power); *Racism@UK* (p.18): institutionalised racism (both economic exploitation and political power); *Language Militia Manifesto* (p.20) and *Lost Innocence* (p.34): class-based language system and child exploitation (again, both economic but mainly political power); *The New Ageism* (p.11): ending state pensions (purely for profits). The enduring conclusion; discrimination cannot end while capitalism reigns.

Now that's summarised the content, you don't need to read the rest, so just relax and look at the pictures. Then get up and join the fight against *Them&us*. 

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Equality or liberation?

Discrimination conveniently divides us so the real source of exploitation, bosses over us, can continue. Equality initiatives haven't worked; it's time for more serious measures.

The traditional Left viewpoint on issues such as racism, sexism and homophobia is that they divide the working class, and therefore we must oppose them so that we can all unite and get on with the real business of fighting the bosses. It assumes that prejudices are simply encouraged among the working class by the ruling class in order to divide us, and that by emphasising our common (economic) interests as workers we can unite and consign them to history.

Reality is more difficult. For a start, oppression is wrong not because it is divisive, but because it is oppressive. For example, many black people resent the dismissal of racism as "divisive" by the traditional Left. If I were to tell my fellow workers that unity on economic issues will make discrimination go away, they will rightly dismiss me as clueless. Oppression is not simply economic; it is at the heart of the problem, but other forms of discrimination are also directly oppressive.

The most visible means of discrimination - ostracism, verbal abuse, harassment, violence - are those that working class bigots use. They are easy to identify, and can be readily condemned and organised against. Unless, that is, you are the police, in which case feigned ignorance is more likely than either identifying or doing anything about it.

However, most people are not discriminated against by relatively powerless bigots, but by institutions, and

by powerful, respectable individuals and groups within them. This is not some conspiracy theory or other; look no further than the police as just one example among many of institutionalised discrimination.

The response to discrimination must operate at different levels - just as the threat does. As well as working for unity on economic issues, we all need to combat prejudice within the working class directly. In addition, we need to expose and oppose the root of discrimination at an institutional level - again, not just in economic boss-worker terms, but in its own right.

ignorance isn't bliss

Where discrimination is unintentional, lack of conscious intent does not make it any less oppressive. Institutional discrimination creates an environment where those who seek to discriminate can flourish. We should be wary of the "no fault" approach. Institutional, legal and economic discrimination are rooted in the dominant culture - the culture of the capitalist class. Of course, this does not mean discrimination was invented by capitalism. Many aspects predate capitalism, but they have proved useful to capitalism, and so have become integrated into its ideology.

In multi-racial Britain, a person is assumed to be English, white, male, middle class, Christian, able-bodied and overtly heterosexual. Anyone different has to argue or fight to get their

perspectives or needs recognised. To do so is to be accused of demanding "special rights", and of being divisive by raising issues ignored by those not directly affected. Some discrimination is active, e.g. discriminatory gay sex offences; other discrimination is passive, e.g. not allowing same-sex couples access to the privileges of marriage.

As the whole world now knows, the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Report forced Metropolitan Police (Met) Commissioner Paul Condon to recognise/admit that institutionalised racism exists in the Met. But there was an obvious omission from the media coverage. What was established was the link between the role of the police in dealing with black people as suspects and criminals and their inability to see them as anything else. However, what was ignored was the Met's role in policing group-specific immigration, the Prevention of Terrorism Act and the masses of other legislation aimed at specific communities on the basis of their colour, orientation, religion, etc.

more than skin deep

The police (and come to that, benefits, housing and social services departments) are about social control. Their operations select targets on the assumption that particular groups are the primary (or sole) perpetrators of some offence - black youths for mugging, West Africans for fraud, etc. This is "legitimate policing", and the assumption that Stephen Lawrence's murder was the

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result of criminal activity on his part is an example of its effects.

Reform of the police is supposed to separate the causes of discrimination from their effects, without actually removing those causes. For example, Condon has not apologised for Operation Eagle Eye, the recent anti-mugging drive explicitly targeted at black youth, yet he is talking about coppers seeing black youths as people, not just criminals. No wonder representatives of the Met's rank-and-file are confused and angry!

Failure to take hate crime seriously is inextricably linked to the policing of discriminatory laws. This is true of policing "public morals" as well as immigration, street crime and "terrorism". The regulation of prostitution and gay sex is linked to hate crimes against women and gay men. The policing of rape and violence against women, and of homophobic crime, goes hand-in-hand with the policing of sex offences.

Discrimination is not restricted to policing and regulation, of course, but these are crucial areas where the state either intervenes directly, or it fails to prevent, tolerates or supports hate crimes against the same groups. Active legal and institutional discrimination are probably the most devastating means of oppression where a state does not overtly use physical violence.

Passive legal and institutional discrimination is also rife. Much of the latter is to do with funding priorities for public services, and the "decision-maker's" idea of what matters. Since there is no direct democratic control over service providers, what counts in deciding who gets them are media campaigns, rich lobby groups, "income generation", prejudices and internal politics - in fact, anything except the actual people and their service needs.

equality in court?

Reformists seek "equality" through the introduction, or strengthening, of anti-discrimination legislation. The Equal Pay Act (EPA) was passed in 1970 (with Equal Value Amendment Regulations in 1983), Race Discrimination Acts (RDA) in 1975 and 1986, the Sex Discrimination Act (SDA) in 1976, and the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) in 1995. More recently, gay rights campaigners introduced the Sexual Orientation Discrimination (SOD!) Bill, which was defeated last year.

Social mobility allows capitalism to use those not born into privilege. Lack

of discrimination allows it to use those who aren't white, male or able-bodied. The DDA, as an example of anti-discrimination legislation, states that employers must make "reasonable adjustments" to the working environment for disabled workers. The aim of this is to prevent the bosses from discarding workers they need through discrimination. The workers' rights are secondary to the needs of capitalism.

turning on the power

Discrimination is regulated so it supports capitalism without harming it. If you have any doubts about the need for/ability of the state to modify the dominant ideology when it needs to, look no further than World War II for an example. Women were drafted into jobs and industries that had hitherto been supposedly against their nature. This 'miraculous' change of course was needed to help the war effort. However, immediately after the war, they were also driven out of those jobs, with the connivance of the trade union movement. Suddenly, the discriminatory toolkit was again called for, in the interests of supporting the capitalist state (for more on discrimination against women at work, see *closerlook*, page 31).

The 'breadwinner' pay structure which was established to drive women back into the home still exists. It means that jobs that are seen to be female, or which are predominantly done by women, are undervalued, because it is assumed that such jobs are 'second' incomes, supplementary to the (male) breadwinner's. The fact that traditionally male jobs have been exported and replaced by new jobs often dominated by women has not changed the ideological underpinning of the pay structure.

So, capitalism exploits women's labour more cheaply because they are not supposed to earn a 'family' income, while simultaneously scrapping breadwinner jobs. Any idea that capitalism does not need sexism, and that the exploitation of female labour (the 'right to work') will lead to equality for women is laughable. "Equality" might work for middle class women in professions dominated by men (and therefore with "male" incomes) but, for the vast majority, it's a myth.

beyond equality

Our goal must be liberation, not the partial, false equality for the middle classes. This does not mean the law cannot be useful to us now. (Incidentally,

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the definitive guides here are the Codes of Practice issued by the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) on Equal Pay and Employment, the Commission of Racial Equality (CRE) on Employment, and the Department for Education and Employment (DEE) on the Employment of Disabled People).

The law can be used as a basis for collective action and solidarity. It can be used to illustrate and fight against discrimination at various levels. But, crucially, the law cannot and must not be relied upon to deliver solutions. At the end of the day, it is there to support and strengthen capitalism and the state. While successful anti-discrimination cases can be fought, the judicial process individualises the issues and separates their resolution from the fight against injustice. Our approach should be to use the law as a tool where this is possible, but to combine it with pressure through direct action.

Outrage!'s "zaps" have been very effective, combined with grassroots lobbying, in changing the way gay sex offences and hate crimes against gay men are policed. The very act of taking such direct action helps us gain a sense that we can have a say denied us by the "usual channels". Even this limited form of direct action can build a sense of power and achievement. As more people experience this, we can go on from here to build and take part in more direct action. Eventually, who knows, we could be organising for direct action to challenge the whole capitalist state machinery and replace it with something more agreeable to all of us.

It is only by getting involved in struggles, rather than standing aside because we don't think they go far enough, that we can debate the aims of those struggles, and the methods used. This does not involve a great leap of imagination: if discrimination and inequality are wrong (and they surely are), why is anyone considered better than the rest of us? The contradictions between the aims of the law and the rhetoric of equality are also there to be exploited.

Similarly, reforming or repealing discriminatory laws gains nothing in itself, but it removes weapons which are used against sections of the working class, and which harm us all. We have to recognise our own diversity, and revive the idea that an injury to one is an injury to all. If we don't all fight discrimination collectively, those of us affected by it will not be able to fight anything else. 

Tameside's Over

Tameside Care Workers (see DA10, DA11) have voted narrowly to accept a cash settlement from their employers, the Tameside Care Group.

This ends the dispute after well over a year of sustained strike and solidarity action from the militant left and anarchosyndicalists. The action started when staff refused to sign new contracts which would have ended sick pay, reduced holidays and cut pay directly by up to and over £2 per hour. The ludicrous contracts were drawn up by a management insistent that the Tameside Care Group was in financial trouble and just had to cut costs. Despite the action and the management rhetoric, the Group has since reported a healthy £250,000 profits.

The settlement means strikers who had worked for TCG for under 2 years get a £500 one-off cash payment, those with more get a week's wages for each year of service, plus 60% of the total. Those seeking reinstatement will be considered.

Both the settlement and outcome are derisory given the effort the workers have put in - the blame for this must be shared between TCG and Unison, the union, who have been less than pro-active in their support for the workers and their struggle. 

Norwich Solidarity Centre

Treat yourself or a friend - we have 'solidarity' long-sleeved T-shirts in stock at £9.95 + £1.50 p&p. (cheques to Norwich Solidarity Centre). Quality brand, grey with small left breast graphic in red and black. State your size - M/L/XL.



Norwich Solidarity Centre, Rm 13, Muspole Workshops, Muspole St, Norwich NR3 1QD.

Royal Mail - canvassing for BNP

The first many people knew of it was when the leaflets started dropping on the doormat.

Many postal workers had no idea that their employers had accepted the lucrative job of handing out British National Party Leaflets up and down the country, in advance of the Euro-elections. The only snag for the Royal Mail management was that they weren't going to be doing the work (as usual) - and many of the postal workers themselves who were expected to do this dirty work just weren't having it.

The SolFed Communication Workers' Network report 's that workers in Edinburgh have refused *en masse* to handle the leaflets, while in Sheffield, bosses have agreed they cannot force staff to distribute the material.

The general public, on the receiving end of the racist diatribe, have also had plenty to say. In one letter to a local paper, an angry resident reported that they had changed their mind about Royal Mail privatisation - they were now in favour of it as soon as possible, so that they could choose to boycott Royal Mail for willingly distributing fascist literature for money.

In Dover, where there is a very active anti-fascist community built around defence of Roma and other refugees (see DA 8 and DA9), there was outrage as local people opened their government voting blurb (Euro-election Guide) to find the BNP leaflet slipped neatly inside. At first, the outrage was directed at a long-standing BNP activist Alistair Noremac, who works as a postman in Ashford, Kent, but it soon turned out that he hadn't had to do a thing - the Royal Mail were only too eager to do the job for him.

Send your opinion to Royal Mail Customer Service (don't bother with a stamp or address). You can contact Communication Workers' Network at: CWN, PO Box 29, SWPDO, Manchester, M15 5HW. 



MayDay '99

With the Little Nora sound system playing *Fight the Power*, many of the fifty protesters moved into the National Westminster corporate HQ in Birmingham city centre to seek out a senior member of staff and ask some pointed questions concerning the bank's Third World exploitation policy and its £24m funding to vivisectionists Huntingdon Life Sciences. So started the tenth week in planning Brum non-violent direct action.

Pushed out of NatWest by the police who then guarded the doors, it was dancing on to the highway for a visit to Chamberlain Square McDonald's. Straight in here, no fear, McGarbage banner first. The entrance was blockaded,

SF Anti-Discrimination Dayschool

If you want to discuss/find out ways of Fighting Discrimination - this DaySchool discussion should be ideal. **Less analysis, more tactics:** Rather than trying to come up with exhaustive lists of every kind of discrimination, the focus will be on basic principles of why we are against it and how to build on experience to fight it most effectively.

Experienced activists confirmed so far will speak/kick off discussions on:
equal opportunities
gay rights
anti-racism/ asylum seekers support

More topics and speakers to follow.

Date: Saturday, 17th July, in SE London. Details of venue and registration from:
Red and Black Club, PO Box 17773, London, SE8 4WX (Tel. 0171 358 1854)



May 1st, Birmingham, Resist Globalisation



No to GMO, London, April 10th

security men gobsacked, the police struggling to keep pace.

Thirty minutes later behind the Resist Globalisation banner it was moving again. With Little Nora pumping up the volume it was down a one way street on to the inner ring road. With the police pushing and shoving protesters back onto the pavement, the action stopped outside the Birmingham Labour Party HQ to give them a megaphoning on the BNRR, animal experiments and the Nato bombing of Serbia.

Then it was on to another of the day's targets, a car showroom. Despite the main Jaguar/Ferrari entrance being locked, some protesters found a way in via a side door, where shouts of "cars my arse!" could be heard with sales staff looking decidedly worried. All city centre showrooms had closed up for two hours.

The grand finale was at the Bristol Road McDonald's Drive-In. Bringing traffic to a stop, the demonstration steamed across a major junction into the burger bar. Disruption and chaos for twenty minutes before police called in a second riot van to force everyone outside. They then had to protect the entrance for 40 minutes until the action moved off to chill out and share food and drinks on the nearby Lee Bank housing estate.

ONE FOR YOUR DIARY: Tony Blair, Gordon Brown & Jack Straw are attending the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) conference in Birmingham on Sunday, October 31. Custard pies for lunch !!! Birmingham action alliance weekly informal meetings, 0961 810356. 

Genetically Modified Days Out

The long hot anti-GM summer started early this year with a demo in London on April 10th. Several hundred people marched from Hyde Park to Trafalgar Square in a polite but determined attempt to get the anti-GM message across.

The following weekend (April 17th) saw the start of the GenetiX Snowball-inspired Silent Spring offensive. Many GM trial sites across the country were targeted, including one in South Worcestershire, where local SF members were in attendance.

Owing to a High Court injunction against GenetiX Snowball on behalf of agro-giant Monsanto, most actions that weekend were fairly "fluffy". The aim was to gain maximum publicity through symbolic action, while employing discretion as the better part of valour. The South Worcs action was a great success in this - it was the top news item on the local TV and Radio, and local people showed interest in the leaflets.

Since then, up to the end of May, at least 7 trial sites have been decontaminated, including ones in Essex, Cambridgeshire and Worcestershire.

Action against retailers and food producers has also been quite successful recently. In April, Tesco finally agreed to remove GMOs from its own label products, the last big supermarket to

do so. Also Nestle and Lever, the two largest food producers in the UK, agreed to follow suit.

Meanwhile, at the High Court, GM activists are due to take on the might of Monsanto in a trial reminiscent of the MLibel case. The agro-corporation will effectively be on trial as the defendants will highlight not only GM safety, but also Monsanto's sharp practices.

In an attempt to reassure the public, the Government have set up two new quangos. GMOs are safe, they tell us, yet how can they be sure, when their own tests are not complete? Remember the "British Beef is safe" routine?

It is clear that the campaign against GMOs has gained strength and momentum while fighting on a number of different fronts, but there is still a long way to go. As we go to press, Indian farmers from the "Cremate Monsanto" campaign are touring the UK. There is plenty to do, so why not get involved? Organise a local consumer boycott or do a bit of "gardening" yourself!

For more information on anti-GM actions near you, contact:
Genetic Engineering Network on
0181 374 9516 or GenetiX Snowball
on 0161 834 0295
<http://www.qn.apc.org/pmhp/gs> 

More doing less dreaming

Less electioneering, more street-centred community action: The Independent Working Class Association marks a fresh approach to organising for the left

The IWCA was conceived in 1995 as a non-sectarian strategy. The idea was to unite the anti-Labour left against the imminent Labour government, and with the class most of the left has nonchalantly cut itself adrift from.

The growth of the far-right and depletion of the left in Europe still serve as a reminder that, while the left may choose to look backwards or inwards, the political climate continues to rapidly change, with or without us, indifferent to our divisions and inadequacies.

The IWCA is, by its very nature, a permanently formative long-term strategy, aiming to adapt to the demands set by constantly evolving circumstances. There is no plan written in stone - we only have the shortcomings of our previous varied political backgrounds as a lesson, the pitfalls and mindsets that are effectively strangling what remains of the European left. In areas where pilot projects have already been launched, the IWCA has set out to be relevant to the immediate needs of the working class. This essentially means listening to what our communities are saying, people's real problems, and subsequently devising from that, strategies that are both effective and progressive. This means not working to a manifesto, not jumping on predictable opportunist bandwagons and not shying away from difficult issues, most of which are avoided like the plague by the left. The remnants of the North Birmingham left have most recently immersed themselves in the campaign against the Birmingham Northern Relief Road - a noble cause, but only done in the absence of a will to tackle

the numerous issues of local working class concern. This may sound harsh, but it's true.

For example, when the IWCA launched a residents' association off the back of its anti-mugging campaign in north Birmingham, many of the left condemned it for being 'reactionary' and 'racist'. The Labour party told anyone that would listen that the residents' campaign was a cover for the National Front. The reality was that the mugging epidemic stopped overnight, and by the IWCA's efforts, so was the widespread racism that had been set to erupt across the area. So who was actually wrong? And who was the most reactionary? With anti-Labour/anti-police meetings of up to 250 people, the so-called left could only sneer from the sidelines.

Another ambitious IWCA pilot scheme is taking place in Islington, north London, where the IWCA has played a key role in the FACTS campaign against council sell-offs, £60,000,000 service cuts and Labour's gentrification programme. Again, the IWCA has hit a nerve - and support on the estates is strong, with large public meetings and a local IWCA newsletter with a circulation of 20,000. In Hatfield, the IWCA exposed Labour council corruption, which resulted in council debts to the tune of £48,000,000, in a council whose annual budget is only £9,000,000. The IWCA took 50% of the Labour vote in one by-election, forcing the council leadership to fall on their swords and resign. In nearby Welwyn, the IWCA cost Labour their seat around the same issue. In the Midlands and South-west, other hands-on projects are being launched in working class areas riddled with drugs, gangsterism and social decay.

The remit of the IWCA is as broad as the communities it has worked in. Though still in its infancy, it has proved contentious

the remit of the IWCA is as broad as the communities it has worked in. Though still in its infancy, it has proved contentious and unconventional

and unconventional. Campaigns have ranged from opposing swimming bath and day centre closures, to countering anti-social crime and high level corruption head-on. The pilot period has proved that, where there is a serious and concerted challenge, the status quo exhibits both vulnerability and ineptitude. They're so vulnerable because they're so corrupt. They are so inept that so far, without exception, they simply haven't been able to comprehend such a simple, logical approach to politics. Labour must be challenged on all levels, issue to issue, estate by estate, and right into the electoral arena - not as an end in itself, but as a means to an end - progressive self-determination for our communities.

The IWCA is non-sectarian and not concerned with who belongs to what; on the scale of things it's not important. The importance is in what difference we make, and what new ground we break - opening the way for working class control in working class areas.

This article was written by an individual from IWCA, West Midlands. Contact details: IWCA, BM IWCA, London WC1N 3XX. Tel. 0345 585 485. 

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[To get listed here, write to DA Editorial & Production, address on p.2]

GMO Rally

August 10th - No GMO Rally in London. Turn up times: 1.30pm at Hyde Park, 4pm in Trafalgar Square.

Andy Ward Benefit Fraud Campaign

Practising class solidarity, supporting victims of benefit fraud investigations. Campaigning for abolition of 'fraud hotlines', more control over investigators, and full legal rights for victims to pursue libel cases against grasses. Contact: AWWFC, c/o Brighton Against Benefit Cuts, PO Box 2536, Rottingdean, Brighton, BN2 6LX.

London Anarchist Forum & Bookfair

LAF Meets Fridays, 8pm, Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq, London. Forthcoming talks include: 2nd July, Individualist Anarchism, Richard Garner; 16th July, The Babymilk Scandal, Edmund McArthur. The London Bookfair is on 16th October, starting 10am in Conway Hall. For info., 0171 247 9249.

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.

Campaign Against the Arms Trade

Join CAAT for action against the big arms exhibition, 14th-17th September. For details, contact CAAT, 0171 281 0297, caat@gn.apc.org

Anarchist Trade Union Network

Not a union, but a new forum group for workplace issues and 'platform for debate' - Info. from ATUN, Box EMAB, 88 Abbey St, Derby, DE22 3SQ. Grp7763@aol.com

Corporate Watch

CW produces some excellent material through a variety of sources, including their periodical, Multinational Monitor and a superb website at www.corpwatch.org. Action side mainly limited to lobbying and exposures over issues like Nike Sweatshops, Global Climate Change and Agribusiness. Contact: Corporate Watch, PO Box 29344, San Francisco, CA 94129, US. corpwatch@igc.org

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.

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, SE8 4WX. Tel. 0171 358 1854.

Manchester SolFed

Support and Advice Sessions Drop in, 1st Tuesday of the month, 7pm, followed by Discussion Meeting, same day, 8.30pm. Summer Topics: July 6th - Health & Safety at Work; August 3rd - Alienation; September 7th - Nationalism. All sessions open & free at: The Brow House, 1 Mabfield Road, Fallowfield, Manchester. Or contact Manchester SF, PO Box 29, SW PDO, Manchester, M15 5HW. 0161 232 7889

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'. 24 pamphlet-sized Units, plus the opportunity to attend 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. Also, 'Solidarity' long-sleeved T-shirts currently in stock at £9.95 + £1.50 p&p. 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.

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-More Bodies!-

The DA Collective is pleased to welcome 2 new Solidarity Federation groups this month;

South-west Solidarity

Swindon-Bristol based but looking for contacts across SW England. Write for a free newsletter, visit the website! South-west Solidarity Federation PO Box 741, Swindon, SN1 3UG www.re-creation.ndirect.co.uk/sws.html

West Yorks SolFed

Members & contacts already in Hebden Bridge, Bradford, Leeds and York areas. More welcome in W. Yorks/E. Lancs. For info. on meetings etc., contact: West Yorks Solidarity Federation, PO Box 5, Hebden Bridge, W. Yorks, HX7 8YN. 0161 232 7889

The New Ageism

Taking the piss out of fat, black or gay people is certainly not allowed by Tony Blair, and quite right too. But discrimination against the old, especially if they are female or not well-off, is the new fad in town. It is at the centre of Labour's pension plans.

Last year an article appeared in DA which predicted that, despite pre-election promises to the contrary, Labour would not restore the link between pensions and average earnings (DA6). This link was severed by Thatcher in 1979, and now the basic state pension is worth only 14% of average earnings - a figure which will likely further fall to 9% by 2030.

The article also predicted that, instead of restoring the link, Labour would incorporate the basic pension into the means-tested benefit system.

It was suggested that Blair would find this a useful back door method of ending the 'pay as you earn' pension system, under which for 50 years, each new generation of workers has paid for the pensions of the generation who have gone before them.

This 'solution' would ensure that the rising cost of pensions caused by the ageing of the population would be met by people not government, by forcing them to turn to private pensions, as the state pension withers away to worthlessness.

Just before last Christmas, with the cunning idea that it would receive limited coverage due to the festivities, Labour slipped out its proposals on pensions in a document entitled "Partnership in Pensions." In this, Labour committed itself to "a minimum income guarantee" for pensioners, of £75 a week (single) or £116 a week (married couples). This "minimum income" is to be delivered through the means-tested income support benefit.

Under these proposals, the basic state pension is to remain lower than the minimum entitlement pensioners can claim through income support (the basic state pension for single people is set at £66.75). In other words, if you only have your state pension, you will have to claim

income support to ensure you get the extra £8.25 "minimum income" entitlement.

So Labour has incorporated into the benefit system the position that developed under Thatcher, whereby some 3 million pensioners were (and still are) forced to claim income support because of the pitifully low level of state pension. This figure is now set to increase as the real value of pensions continues to decline, forcing ever-increasing numbers of pensioners with a lifetime of work and 'pay as you earn' National Insurance taxes behind them to claim income support.

changing rules

Under the post war settlement that led to the creation of the welfare state, workers were informed that, by paying into the new National Insurance scheme, they would receive in return a state pension which would provide them with security in old age. The scheme was introduced to replace the hated means-tested poor relief, under which retirement meant surviving through old age in abject poverty. The state pension was seen as providing a decent standard of living in old age, after a lifetime of work. Labour's proposals ensure that the pension will effectively disappear, to be replaced with means-tested income support - an updated name for poor relief. In fact, the only difference is that, under poor relief, at least you didn't have to pay National Insurance to cover a promised future pension.

Even if you have managed to save twice for old age by paying for both National Insurance and a second pension, you may well find yourself losing out under Labour's "Partnership in

Pensions." Again, it is the worst off who will suffer. If you have a small amount of savings or a small second pension, you will find it disqualifies you from claiming the means-tested income support. Your private/second pension will have to top up what is left of your basic pension just to get to the levels you would get anyway under Labour's "minimum income guarantee".

For example, upon retiring with £10,000 saved in a personal scheme a man will receive just £800 a year pension - even less for a woman because it will be assumed she will live longer. After tax, this is just about the £8.25 they would have received from income support under Labour's minimum income guarantee. In effect, they have been robbed of their extra savings. Experts are now stating that, unless people can manage to save a lump sum above £40,000 in their personal pension scheme, under Labour's proposals, they may as well not have bothered.

The obvious way around wrecking small savings would have been to lift the state pension scheme to the same levels as the "minimum income" received under income support. This would have avoided penalising those on low income who have managed to scrape together a small income from a second pension. It would also have spared those dependent on the state pension having to claim income support which, being means-tested, involves itemising their income and spending. This is so traumatic and degrading that people often prefer to avoid it, proven by the fact that a large number of pensioners are unwilling to claim the income support they are entitled to. Aside from this is the considerable saving on administration

costs, by avoiding means-testing.

However, even the modest guarantee that the basic pension would be kept at the same levels as income support would have breathed new life into the state pension system - something Labour is keen to avoid. For this would ensure that the state pension would keep some value as it rose in line with income support. By contrast, under their proposals, Labour can allow the state pension to wither away, while arguing that minimum income support is there to act as a safety net for pensioners. Labour couches their proposals in terms of 'choice'; you can be in dire poverty in old age, receiving minimal income support, or invest in a personal pension scheme to have a reasonable retirement. In reality, few will get the second choice. Undoubtedly, we are witnessing the slow death of the state pension.

game plan

As indicated between the lines of the rest of Labour's "Partnership in Pensions", there is a whole game plan to be introduced to ensure the decline of the state pension. One of the centrepieces of the proposals is the so-called "stakeholder" pension, targeted at low to middle income groups. The level at which Labour expect people to begin switching to private provision can be gauged by the fact that the stakeholder pension will even be targeted at those earning less than £9,000 p.a. By way of encouragement, various tax breaks and cuts in National Insurance payments will be offered to those switching to private pensions. It is estimated that this direct move away from state funding will cost the treasury some £5 billion. This compares to the £2.5 billion Labour intends to spend on minimum income support - a figure which will fall considerably if large numbers of those in receipt of state benefit fail to claim their £8.25 entitlement. Clearly, Labour is keener on priming the private sector than supporting pensioners.

The real gains for the state under Labour's plan are in the long term. They expect the number of people with a private pension to increase from the current 40% to 60%. This will ensure that Britain alone in the industrialised world will avoid the financial time bomb built into the 'pay as you earn' system.

freedom to be poor

With Labour's plan, future generations will finance their retirement through personal pensions. This will

mean gross inequality in old age, with the very low paid, long term unemployed, long term sick and carers who have been unable to build up a private pension all dependent upon income support. This income support will itself be squeezed relentlessly. To ensure people are forced to go for and maintain private pensions, levels of income support will have to be kept ridiculously low, to maximise the incentive (similar ideas have already been found to work by Labour, forcing younger people to take desperately low paid jobs).

Clearly, Blair feels gross inequality is a price worth paying to avoid the problem faced by countries like France, where private pension is rare and over 80% of the population are dependent upon state pensions funded by the 'pay as you earn' model financed through taxation. As the French live longer and the number in work falls compared to the number of pensioners, the burden of tax on those in work can but increase in order to maintain adequate state pensions.

The reality is that greater equality through taxation flies in the face of Labour's free market orthodoxy. This is why they have gone for private provision. While unsurprising, this contradicts their claim to be the party of equality - and specifically, their claim to be the party which favours greater women's equality.

worse for women

Women, who still carry the burden of raising children, while increasingly caring for the elderly and infirm, have long been discriminated against through the pension system, because they face long periods out of the labour market or in part-time employment.

In the past, many women have been unable to pay enough National Insurance contributions to qualify for the basic state pension, let alone save in the form of a second pension. Rightly, this was one of the criticisms of the state pension. The new proposals make matters even worse, since built-in inequality will particularly victimise the many women who are carers and mothers, and so cannot save for old age with a private pension. The vast majority of people facing an old age of poverty will be women.

If, as a way of squeezing welfare, the retirement age were to be lifted at some future point (not out of the question - you saw it here first!), the situation for women would get even worse. For those with private pensions, the option would be there to take early retirement. The better



off you are, the greater your options to retire earlier with better pension income. However, those without a private pension would simply be eligible for work for much longer. If Labour are still using the same rhetoric as they are today, no doubt these unfortunate people will be constantly being empowered back into work by enabling them to keep a percentage of their benefit whilst working.

the unthinkable

Under Labour's pre-election talk, the massive shift to greater inequality was not supposed to happen. Though unequivocal commitment to restoring the full link between pensions and earnings was avoided, a full pension review was promised, headed by Frank Field. Blair duly gave Field the job, telling him to "think the unthinkable" when approaching welfare reform. Well, Field did just that, and came up with a scheme which proved completely "unthinkable" to the Labour leadership.

Field's pension proposals did away with the state pension, but the replacement was based on universal pension provision and did seek to ensure equality for the long term unemployed, carers, part-time workers, etc. He also proposed setting up a new national pension scheme, into which both employers and workers would be legally obliged to contribute. His scheme would require those on higher earnings to contribute more, and the state to make up the contributions of those not in full-time work, thus ensuring adequate pension provision for them.

Field is a Catholic and a staunch supporter of the family. He hoped this would encourage women to stay at home to look after the family, the threat of being penalised in later life through having no pension having been removed. His approach was radical in that, although the fund was dependant on being invested on the stock market to ensure it maintained value, he proposed that it be placed under the trusteeship of building societies and trade unions. He also hinted

Labour couches their proposals in terms of 'choice'; dire poverty, or invest in a personal pension scheme to have a reasonable retirement. In reality, few will get the second choice

continued from page 11...

that ways could be found of ensuring that the national pension funds could be invested for the national good.

The City was immediately hostile to Field's proposal on two counts. Firstly, it threatened the growing private financial sector, not least, the money gained by the private sector from the massive £12.2 billion handed out by the state in the form of tax breaks, without which the lucrative private pensions sector would not have such well-lined pockets. Secondly, it threatened to take control of the massive pension fund out of the City, from which they gain both vast profits and not inconsiderable financial power.

There was no need to worry. The City has such a grip on Blair, that there was no question of Field's proposals getting anywhere with Labour. He is now an ex-minister.

scandals ahead

In what amounts to a massive climb-down, Labour's "Partnership in Pensions" announces that Labour has decided to entrust the management of its new flagship 'stakeholder' pension to the very people who brought us the pension miss-selling scandal. They will also be allowed to 'charge' handsomely for the work of managing the fund (perhaps 'defraud' would be a better word). The fact that investments will remain in the hands of the City is also a blow to those who had argued that the fund generated by the new stakeholder scheme could be used to promote national investment, or even brought under state regulation to ensure ethical and sustainable investment.

To make matters worse, there is little sign of Labour reforming the trust laws governing the management of the so-called 'final salary' schemes which still make up the majority of company pension schemes. These date back to the 17th Century, when they were developed to govern the management of funds of those deemed incapable of managing their own affairs, such as 'minors', 'lunatics' and (wait for it)... 'women'!

The trust laws have been used to muddy the waters, ensuring that individuals have little say in how pension surpluses built up due to rising stock markets should be utilised. It is these which have allowed large-scale fraud such as the Maxwell scandal, plus other legal fraud such as pension holidays, the utilisation of pension funds to pay for redundancies (such as recently in British Telecom), the seizing of surplus funds

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after privatisation (such as the government is now doing with the National Bus Company funds), and so on. It is estimated that, at present, some £60 billion of surplus funds are sitting there waiting to be snatched.

In refusing to change the law, Labour has argued that these schemes are in decline and are gradually being replaced with the so-called "money purchase" schemes. Though it is true that most new schemes are of this type, there remains the no small matter of £60 billion held in surplus pension funds. The way the law stands (and will now remain), this can be effectively stolen or misused by the holding companies at any time.

new scheme new fraud

Nor has Labour so far said much about the obvious failings that are already coming to light concerning the still-new money purchase schemes. The most obvious problem is the enormous amount of money charged by private pension companies to manage them. Typically, these 'administration' charges can eat up a third of the total money saved by the individual policy holder over a lifetime. This outrageous situation is being worsened by wider changes in the economy - most notably the onset of lower interest rates.

Money purchase schemes are based on the idea that people put money into a scheme, which is invested on their behalf. On retirement, the policy is "cashed in" to provide a lump sum which is exchanged for guaranteed annuity or dividend payable on a monthly basis. This annuity is calculated on current interest rates, which are now so low that pensioners are finding their annuity consisting of next-to-nothing. For example, at current levels, a money purchase pension saved over the years which totals £100,000, would currently generate an annuity of just £5,500.

Nor can pensioners simply take their lump sum and run. Under the money purchase scheme, the lump sum remains under the control of the company. Many people are astonished to find that they are forced to accept an even lower annuity to ensure the lump sum is not confiscated by the company, should the policy holder die prematurely.

big picture

The problems with individual private pension schemes pale into insignificance compared to the fact that it is the stock market that underpins all pension schemes, whether personal or company.

Pension funds are based on the idea that, over the long term, the stock market will only go in one direction - up. This is one massive assumption. Should the stock market collapse, a whole generation of pensioners may find themselves queuing for income support.

The effect of pension funds on international finance is rarely mentioned. At present, there is some \$10,000 billion of pension fund sloshing around the world's financial markets in search of higher returns. The management of this colossal piggy bank is in the hands of a small number of financial consultants. A recent study found that 65% of pension fund transfers in Britain were made on the advice of just four such consultants. Not only do they all operate on the same investment criteria (leading to the so-called herd instinct), they are also notoriously short-termist, forever moving money around in search of higher returns.

Short-term transfer of huge funds was one of the major factors in the currency turmoil that engulfed East Asia last year. In return for massive return, pension fund managers lent money on weak security, much of which went into property development, which promptly collapsed, creating panic and hasty withdrawal of funds. The massive investment followed by even more massive withdrawal created financial turmoil that threatened "meltdown" of financial markets worldwide.

So, we are left with the paradox of individuals contributing to pension funds which are managed in such a way as to bring markets to their knees, wrecking the long-term security of the individual pensioner. The decision by Labour to plunge further down the road of privatising pensions has already led to a backlash. The state pensions lobby has mobilised support for the link between pensions and wages to be restored, bringing the prospect of forcing at least a partial climb-down by Labour prior to the next election.

Through direct action, there remains the possibility of forcing a more permanent change of direction. In this, all possible support is needed for the state pensions lobby, for not only does the issue of pensions affect us all, in many ways, the issue gets to the heart of what kind of society we want. The state pension scheme is based on the idea of social solidarity. Until a society based on true equality and solidarity is secured, this is a principle that must be defiantly defended. 

Europe '99

As this issue of DA goes to press, final preparations are being made for the world-wide protests against global corporate greed on June 18th. In the centre of the events is Cologne, Germany, where the G8 superstate leaders are meeting on 18-20th for the last big meeting of global capitalists of the millennium.

In the build up, several big demonstrations have already kicked off. A large march started on May 11th in Brussels and, on arrival in Cologne, more than 35,000 people gathered in a colourful demonstration against the EU summit. The participants came from many different countries, including France, Spain, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden, Finland, the Philippines and elsewhere. A delegation of the Intercontinental Caravan (ICC) was also taking part, a tour of peasants, fisherfolk and representatives of social movements from India, Nepal and other states, as well as the bicycle caravan "Money or Life", which travelled from Prague, Berlin and the Wendland to Cologne, and drove a tractor during the demonstration.

The action was led by people from the European Marches against Unemployment, Precarious Work, Exclusion and Racism. The demonstration consisted of European radical left and anti-fascist groups, an anarchist-syndicalist block, a womens' block for the worldwide women's march 2000, a Kurdish block, and other

Against Global Greed

groups from the Caravan for the Right of the Refugees and Migrants, etc.

During the afternoon, the police accompanied the anti-fascists and, on several occasions, apparently unprovoked, they attacked marchers, beating up several participants and attempting to break up and arrest groups of peaceful demonstrators. Four people were injured and police finally brutally enforced a split of the march; the second half (with the anti-fascist block) being halted until the first half of the demonstration arrived at its destination.

The tractor and wagon of the "Money or Life" caravan was stopped by the police, who noted down their identity and took photos (presumably for their scrapbooks). The police claimed individuals in the caravan had been carrying small catapults and distributing "throwing items".

Amongst the addresses at the rally came the news of a Sudanese refugee who was murdered by police the previous night while being deported from Frankfurt airport. The border police put a motorbike helmet on him, tied up his hands and feet and dragged him to the plane, where he died from heart failure - a bitter metaphor of the aggressive non-asylum policy of the European Union and an additional reason



to oppose anti-immigration policies. 

Euskal Herria

On Friday April 9th, at noon, local people and visitors from 20 different countries showed unusual interest in the Navarra Government building in Pamplona, Spain. Seconds later, activists were climbing the walls and chaining themselves to windows and doors.

The action was to protest against the Itoiz dam, an ecologically and socially destructive project financed by the regional government of Navarra. Ostensibly for irrigation purposes, the project is actually part of a National Hydrological Plan to satisfy the water demands of tourism in the Southeast. The Navarra government has approved the project even though it violates 3 national laws and will have devastating effects on the livelihoods of many people in the Basque Country, flooding 7 villages, 3 Nature Reserves and 2 EU-designated Bird Protection Zones.

The local population is familiar with the project's impact through the work of 'Coordinadora de Itoiz'. Since 1985, they have mobilised thousands of people in protest, collected signatures, produced technical reports and taken the government to court. Despite 2 court rulings against it, the project is continuing so far. The Navarra government has even stooped low enough to hire Burson Marsteller,

an international public relations company, to polish up its image.

But the April demo certainly won't help in the image stakes. As soon as the national police arrived, the local police were encouraged into action. Those locked on to windows and doors were dragged into the building, with some police hitting out at random. The climbers were eventually brought down with use of a crane, beaten, arrested and taken into custody.

The Navarra government, worried that their notorious project will get international publicity, then apparently decided to try and stamp out the international angle by sending a signal to any would-be future such events. The activists from abroad were not permitted a lawyer, a reliable interpreter or acknowledgement of their rights,

and were kept in custody over night and denied medical attention. In contrast, the Basque activists were released the same day, after medical attention where needed. All the international activists were then subject to a 5-year expulsion by the Navarra police.

The Pamplona courts didn't uphold any serious charges, but the police threats of expulsion were extremely serious. Luckily, the Basque activist group have access to very good lawyers, and were able to help the protesters from Korea, New Zealand, the US and all over Europe.

The net result is that the Itoiz struggle has entered a new phase, with wide media coverage, including newspapers, TV and radio, and wide international support. 

Spain - dinner table direct action

When the Madrid restaurant 'El Chalet' closed in October last year, it sacked 4 workers. When it re-opened 10 days later, it did not re-employ 3 of them, who had been involved in fighting for a shorter working week, better conditions, and holidays. The CNT-AIT's Hotel and Tourism Union met with the bosses and have taken up their case. In support of the workers affected, a group of workers enjoyed a very satisfying meal at the restaurant, then left without paying. The bill was 72,708 pesetas (about £300 - since eating out is cheaper in Spain than in the UK, it was obviously a good night). 

Michal Patera

Michal Patera, held since November 1998 on a trumped up charge for defending himself against fascists (see DA9 and DA10) was released on bail at the end of May - due at least in part to the massive solidarity and lobbying campaign carried out by IWA and other libertarian groups worldwide on his behalf



Groups involved include the IWA in Britain (SF-IWA), France (CNT-AIT), Germany (FAU-IWA), Russia (KRAS-IWA) and Portugal (ASAUL-AIT), all of whose actions have not gone unnoticed by the Czech media.

The Czech government, keen to join the European Union, finds such coverage of its failure to deal with racism and xenophobia embarrassing. A particular target of criticism is the State Citizenship Act, which effectively made thousands of Roma people homeless when the Czech and Slovak Republics separated in 1992.

Even before the granting of bail, the "ideological motivation" of Michal's charge was

dropped, reducing the maximum sentence he faces from 25 to 15 years. This is part of a strategy of trying to depoliticise the case, portraying Michal as a common criminal, and the fight as a personal dispute. FSA (the Czech section of IWA) would like everyone to stress the political aspects of the case.

In Britain, solidarity action for Michal has included a picket of Czech Airlines in London's West End and a successful fundraising campaign to help meet the essential legal costs. So far (to end May) the Solidarity Federation has raised £770 for Michal's defence fund, with donations from: Haringey Solidarity Group £50; R, Somerset £15; T, Liverpool £10; South Herts SF £15; R, Hants £10; J, Liverpool £25; London Class

War £10; Sheffield SF £50; Chris £5; Manchester SF £50; P, Cardiff £25; M, London £25; MT, London £50; N, London £25; Oi Polloi £50; P, York £5; NE London SF £25; Red & Black Club £25; NE London SF MayDay Benefit £275.

Thanks on behalf of Michal to all donors - help is still needed; please make cheques payable to NELSF. All donations will be acknowledged and published in DA (unless you don't want!). We are especially interested in anyone who can organise benefits.

Leaflets and further information are available from:
SF-International Secretariat, PO BOX 1681, LONDON, N8 7LE

Thailand

Thailand, which less than 5 years ago was the fifth "tiger" of Asia, continues to do what economists thought was impossible - regress from a newly developed country into an under-developed country again. It is all part of giving up culture and history to become a part of the globalised system favoured by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank.

As everywhere, in times of economic difficulties, workers bear the full brunt. In the past year, employers have used various aggressive tactics to destroy labour unions and undermine pay and working conditions, the familiar excuse being economic necessity (in other words, the IMF and profit-takers say so).

Employers distribute work that used to be done in the factory to outside shoestring sub-contractors. This process is widespread, from the garments to artificial flowers to electronic circuits

industries. Other employer tactics are to temporarily close down the workplace, force workers to withdraw from labour unions, or try to create a situation where workers are left with no alternative but to go on strike illegally, so that they can be dismissed without compensation.

In temporary closure cases, employers must pay workers 50% of their wages during closure. With high inflation and spiralling food prices, employers know if they do this, workers cannot survive for long and have to resign.

Local labour disputes are numerous, particularly around the capital, in Prapadaeng district of Bangkok, in Omnoi, Omyai districts of Nakhin Prathom province, and in Ayutthaya province. Nationally, the labour movement is focused on 4 issues; opposition to state privatisation (starting this year); opposition to restructuring; lobbying for child care and a new Work Safety Institute; and opposition to the new draft Labour Relations Act, designed to attract foreign investors and control labour unions.

Iran

On 26th of April, Iran's Ministry of Interior imposed a blanket ban on May Day demonstrations across the country. In response, tens of thousands of workers demonstrated in Tehran on May Day, demanding payment of unpaid wages, an end to mass redundancies, wages in line with the rate of inflation and reversal of an amendment to the "Labour Law" exempting small firms from its requirements. Some radio stations put the number of demonstrators at 100,000.

During the demonstration, security forces attacked demonstrators as they were dispersing, injuring some and arresting others. According to some reports, confrontation between the workers and security forces lasted till late afternoon.

Preview: India

People's Global Action are having a second conference (23-26th August), this time in Bangalore, India. The plan is to launch discussions among peoples' movements from around the world on the role and functions that an international co-ordination and communication network like the PGA should play. Among other things, plans will be made for massive mobilisations against the Third WTO Ministerial Conference (to take place at the end of the year). The conference will be hosted by the Karnataka State Farmers' Association (KRRS), one of the biggest social movements in South Asia, which will enable all who travel to Bangalore to get acquainted with the work of this very inspiring grassroots movement. If you are planning a summer holiday and can make it to Kerala, make time for the series of exposure trips before and after the conference (15th-19th and 27th-31st August) to rural areas where important struggles are taking or have taken place. For more information about the conference and the events that it will be linked to, write to pga@agp.org or visit <http://www.agp.org>. 

South Africa

"Water for all!" is a campaign to get basic water free to all South Africans. The launch conference in April was attended by NGOs, rural water committees, the SA Municipal Workers Union (SAMWU) and civic delegates from Soweto and Alexandra. It called for a new system whereby everybody gets their first 50 litres per day free. Above this amount, people should pay according to a rising block tariff and national cross-subsidised charging scheme which would make sure that the rich - or those who use more water than they need - pay more and so are encouraged to conserve water.

These calls form the cornerstone of the national "Water for All!" campaign, which is already expanding beyond the labour unions and urban interest groups to include other social justice and human rights groups.

The conference took place amidst growing



"We need to save water so they can fill up their swimming pools"

concern about the high failure rate of water projects. Of the 3 million people who have received water since the new government took over, as many as 90% may no longer have a reliable water supply. The main problems are sustainability of supply and affordability. Many rural communities are simply too poor to afford water. 

USA - Calls for Solidarity

The Navajo and Hopi people's ancestral homeland is being transformed into a "National Sacrifice Area". The people, land, water and air are being sacrificed for energy production. Vast quantities of coal, uranium and natural gas lie beneath the homes of these indigenous people (9% of all US electricity comes from the two mines leased and operated by Peabody Coal Company). The remaining people in the area and their homes may soon be forcibly removed to facilitate mine expansion. Since 1974, over 14,000 Navajo have been pressured into relocation - the largest relocation of an ethnic group in the US since the internment of Japanese-Americans in World War II. The support group is seeking urgent solidarity and support. For info. and materials on the subject, contact: **Black Mesa Indigenous Support**, PO Box 23501, Flagstaff, AZ 86002. Email: fbmsn@hotmail.com, unity@netmanor.com or granmonta@hotmail.com. Website: www.netmanor.com/unity/unity.html

Mumia Abu-Jamal is facing death at the hands of the U.S. judicial system for a crime he did not commit - you may know of his involvement in anti-racist and human rights issues during and before his 17 years of imprisonment (see DA9). The 'Mumia Must Live! Campaign' organises and assists others in organising events and solidarity for Mumia: mumia@callnetuk.com or visit the site at www.callnetuk.com/home/mumia.

Chris Plummer is an anti-racist anarchist activist currently being held captive by the state of Texas. In the late 80s and early 90s, Chris was involved in the squatting movement of New York's Lower East Side, when he became involved in the United Anarchist Front. In 1993, Chris took part in a raid on a house in Houston used by the American Front and the Confederate Hammer skins, a fascist group with a record of extreme violence. Chris broke into the house and destroyed nazi propaganda, and was subsequently convicted of 'breaking and entering with an intent to burglarize' and sentenced to 15 years.

In his years in prison, Chris has set up a prisoners' organisation called Cell One, which has developed the Texas Prisoners' Anarchist Lending Library (T.P.A.L.L.). Other projects he is working on include: Anti-fascist Prisoners' Network, Kenyan Literature Project, and the United Anarchist Front Prisoner Legal Defense Fund.

Solidarity/offers of help to: Christopher Lee Plummer, #677345 Hughes Unit, Rt. 2 Box 4400, Gatesville, TX 76597. Contact the following to show support for Chris: Warden Moya, Rt. 2 Box 4400, Gatesville, TX 76597; Wayne Scott, director, TDC, P.O. Box 99, Huntsville, TX 77342.

Ali Khalid Abdullah is a New Afrikan Anarchist prisoner incarcerated in Michigan. He has recently been denied parole again, as part of an effort to maximise the number of prisoners in jail so that the governor of Michigan can push ahead with building 6 more jails. As a response, prisoners like Ali, eligible for parole and knocked back for trivial or previously unmentioned reasons, are now taking the parole board to court. Ali needs the cash to make this possible. A lawyer to file the papers will cost about US\$1000-1500. Ali deserves our support - he is the founder of the Political Prisoners of War Coalition, an activist group inside prisons, mainly in Michigan, that fights for prisoners rights and to raise the consciousness of those incarcerated. Ali himself has written extensively on political, social and prisoner issues - one of the reasons he has no money for the appeal is that he has put any money that has come his way into his political work. Contributions can be sent to: Cynthia Ritscher, PO Box 554, Lincoln, MA 01773, USA; or letters, cashier cheques or postal/bank money orders to Ali Khalid Abdullah #148130, Saginaw Correctional Facility, 9625 Pierce Road, Freeland, Michigan MI 48623, USA. (Put Ali's full name and prison number on the cheque). Or in Europe, send to PO Box 17773, London, SE8 4WX (make payable to Red & Black Club and specify it is for Ali). 

Italy

Demonstrations across Britain, Europe and the entire world have been going on in protest to the Nato bombing of Serbia - DA has been inundated with reports of local demos, photos and commentary. All these actions have been worthwhile - there can be no doubt that Blair and Clinton and the rest know how many people in their countries have seen through their selfish motivations and veiled media rhetoric.

One campaign which has particularly grabbed attention has been that of USI, the Italian section of the International Workers' Association and sister organisation to Solidarity Federation. USI has been the only organisation in Italy (and to our knowledge, anywhere) that has successfully called and carried out a 24 hour strike involving workers in all types of workplaces, nationwide. The success of the action and support for USI's anti-war stance was such that even workers in towns where there are no USI members have come out on strike in support. Despite effective blanket opposition from the press, TV and government politicians, USI's telephone enquiry lines were blocked with calls requesting information and sending messages of support, even in the week

before the first strike action happened on 14th April.

Just some of the workplaces who contacted USI with their confirmed support and strike

USI members joined the fun in Reggio-Emilia; Sardinia, education workers; Calabria, Sicily, and Pescara, various stoppages; Puglia, student action in Ban, Bitente and other towns; Marche, where opposition was organised to the local NATO militarisation, in connection with its military use of the Falconara airport, plans to use Torretto hospital for NATO wounded, and acquisition of parts of the major port of Ancona to load the military hardware for the invasion of Kosovo.

Following planning and preparations in Civitanova Marche, the strike in Marche was especially strong in the postal, telecommunications and education sectors, and was followed by a USI 100-strong evening demonstration, after which police made 4 arrests and detained 2 on the basis that during the march, at some point, they had covered their faces. Three days later, a demonstration took place at Falconara airport, occupied by NATO.

Those who participated will never forget what NATO have done. 

From the USI paper, Lotta di Classe, no.33, April/ 2nd fortnight



participation are given here, to indicate the scale of the action. In Friuli-Venezia Giulia, postal workers of Udine; in Trieste, health, postal and local government workers (where USI organised various local actions); Venice (Padova, Treviso, etc.), various workplaces; Lombardia, including USI actions on the day in Bergamo; Como, education workers; Brescia, postal and education workers; Milano, local public services and across the health sector, and specific actions in company workplaces of Sesto S. Giovanni and Monza; Torino, postal and banking workers; USI-Liguria, various actions continued over subsequent days; Murialdo (SV), the paper factory, where collections were made and sent to the workers of a Yugoslavian factory destroyed by the bombing; Toscana, education workers and building workers of Casentino; Carrara, the COBAS marble workers; Emilia Romagna, especially in Bologna, where several hundred public service workers held a public assembly; Imola workers; Reggio-Emilia, across the small metal-mechanical sector, and in education, food cooperatives, public administration, etc., where the day ended in a 300-strong demonstration; Parma, where workers of several companies responded, and

Anti-war Writing and Discussion

There is a lot of anti-war and anti-NATO material on the Internet, and many left and autonomous groups have published statements, pamphlets, etc., ranging from party line to in-depth analysis. (For help/ access contact DA).

The CNT-AIT in France have translated and reprinted the Principles, Aims and Statutes of the International Workers' Association in south Slavic - for a copy, send 2-3 IRCs (get them at the post office) to:

CNT- AIT, 112 rue de Bourneuil,
89000 AUXERRE, FRANCE.

In Serbia itself, ZAGINFLATCH, newsletter of the ex-Yugoslavian anarchists, is still available, albeit sporadically - contact the CNT-AIT or DA.

All in the Name of Democracy

From the height of 60,000 feet
you can't see the bombs hit the street
can't see the terror in their eyes
as death rains down from the skies.

Can't hear their shrieks and groans
as we burn their flesh and mangle bones
Milosevic and his cronies safe below
deep in shelters where our bombs don't go.

We punish the people on the ground
leaving devastation all around
you feel the excitement and the thrill
when 'our' government says 'go out and kill!'

But when alone, I think, 'how insane,
the Serbian people are not to blame
it's the politicians again - as before
and they never fight the bloody wars.'

One day maybe we'll get it right
when workers of all nations refuse to fight
when all races, brothers and sisters can be
joined in human solidarity.

The Misery Makers

As soon as the bombing started back in April, the trickle of people fleeing Kosova became a flood. As usual, NATO got it really wrong, and Blair, Clinton and their hundreds of clever advisers failed to see the obvious coming. Now, there is a chance to start sorting out the thousands of split, broken and suffering families.

NATO hasn't even dared contemplate the scale of the devastation, killing and economic and social damage it has wrought across Serbia and Kosova. And Milosovic, well, does he care? The main thing is, both he and Nato knew that he wasn't going to be on the streets when the bombs rained down.

The real victims, as in every war, are ordinary working class people like you and me. Factory workers, public service workers, teachers and nurses, childcarers, mothers, fathers, shop assistants and the self-employed, all have been press-ganged, bombed, terrorised, deprived of basic dignity, services, rights, and even life. Where you live and what your language and culture is within Kosova and Serbia is only likely to have influenced the type of suffering and who exactly is inflicting it on you.

If hundreds of thousands of displaced Kosovars are to be repatriated before winter, there is much to be done - and Britain and the US will speedily throw resources into it. Not, you understand, because they have the best interests of the people at heart, but because the alternative is unpleasant TV reports and more pressure to accept more refugees onto home soil.

Indeed, Home Secretary Jack Straw has asked the Refugee Council to co-ordinate provision of temporary accommodation and interpreters. The Home Office is also conducting a trawl of disused army camps and other government accommodation that could be brought into use. But the British (and New Labour) record on refugees is less than generous.

what Labour really thinks of Kosovars

Before the Nato bombing, local and national media were running sensationalist stories which branded asylum seekers - Kosovars included - as benefit scroungers and criminals. There is tacit support and even active encouragement from New Labour - the government has been feeding a steady stream of case material to the likes of the Daily Mail to satisfy its lust for racist reporting. The crux of



the matter is that, like all racists, they have started to believe that Britain is both attractive and comfortable to asylum seekers, yet it will be overwhelmed if we let them in. Well, surely if it

Why fly 3 miles high and spray towns and cities with depleted uranium warheads and cluster bombs which will kill and maim for generations to come? Why drop bombs around people, if you don't want to hurt them?

was about to be 'overwhelmed', it wouldn't be so 'attractive'. This is, of course, one area where the capitalist mindset suddenly backtracks on its notions of free market and freedom of movement. And I thought the free market assumed total freedom of labour markets and movement (and indeed, even zero transport costs, at its most efficient). And I thought Britain and the US were pro-free market? Oh, only on *some things, not foreigners or poor people maybe*.

Now, after Kosova, far from challenging the prejudice and race-hate whipped up by the press, government proposals in the current Immigration and Asylum Bill threaten to add to the misery.

the new asylum

The Bill contains provisions to strengthen pre-entry controls, making it harder for people fleeing terror and persecution to enter the UK. Airlines that carry refugees without visas are already subject to fines, which will be extended to drivers of lorries that are found to contain refugees. The Bill makes it a criminal offence for asylum seekers to use false documents - yet many genuine refugees are unable to obtain passports and visas before escaping. It also cuts further the support system for asylum seekers who do gain entry. Currently, only refugees who claim asylum at the port of entry are entitled to benefits, while those who claim once inside the country have to contend with a largely cashless system of support administered by local authorities under the Children Act 1989 and the National Assistance Act 1948. In the Bill, Local authorities will no longer have responsibility for asylum seekers (apart from for unaccompanied children). Instead, a new Home Office body will

co-ordinate accommodation and cashless support, dispersing asylum seekers to "reception zones". Refugees will have no choice about where they are sent and they will get far less than Income Support.

So, New Labour's latest plan amounts to this; refugees will find themselves split up and in a corner of the country where they stick out like a sore thumb, and there is no existing community they can relate to; they will have no money, only humiliating and complex vouchers; and local agencies and authorities will have inadequately skilled and resourced means of assisting them with basics like trauma counselling, English language skills, etc.

what else could they do?

The Balkan crisis has exposed the sharp contrast between the New Labour Government's commitment to war and bombing on one hand, and its hard line on refugees in general on the other. Given this, the Asylum and Immigration Bill is just what you might expect from New Labour. Now, the common challenge from Blair is what else can you do with a tyrant like Milosovic. Well, he is a product of the capitalist system of domination and hierarchy which Blair and his ilk are constantly reinforcing throughout, and constantly fine-tuning to screw the poor harder. In other words, let's ditch capitalism for a fairer system and we won't have any more Milosovics. But even under capitalism, we could have helped defend Kosovars by directly attacking the perpetrator of the crimes against them, instead of unleashing war on innocent Serbs. Why fly 3 miles high and spray towns and cities with depleted uranium warheads and cluster bombs which will kill and maim for generations to come? Why drop bombs around people, if you don't want to hurt them?

If you want to overcome nationalism, racism and ethnic cleansing, you first have to practice what you preach and believe in what you want. Setting an example, educating against bigotry, empowering communities, depowering leaders; all these things can be done quickly and effectively, decisively and successfully - without the innocent by-standers being slaughtered. But would you expect Blair or Clinton to connect with that, given their particular hobbies? 

Racism@UK: *An altogether*

There's more to racism than
nailbombs, knifings
and the odd
fruitcake

What does racism mean to you? Here's 3 possibilities; individual prejudice; institutionalised discrimination, or; the erasure of the point of view of people who are not white. Actually, it is used to describe all of these, but the first gets a disproportionate amount of attention. As a result, the reality of racism is often painted as merely a product of ignorance and prejudice (and therefore predominantly working class). Nothing could be further from the truth.

It is no coincidence that it was the Daily Mail, hate sheet of the middle classes, who first named the suspected murderers of Stephen Lawrence. As the media circus arrived in town, racism was once again firmly framed as being about evil people. Furthermore, the style and attitude of the suspects was identifiably working class, which also helped distance "racism" from the Mail readership.

Now, the antics of the racist working class and their effects on those who are subject to their hatred are not in doubt. The occasional (and it is occasional, fortunately) overt violence they use causes horrendous damage to people's lives. But even this pales into insignificance when compared to the sheer scale of institutionalised discrimination which permeates all capitalist countries, not least 'multi-racial' Britain.

Bear with me for a moment, while I slip into cultural studies jargon to describe how racism operates - I do this simply because culture is a critical part of social control:

'An ideological mechanism serves to distort reality in order to displace racism from the institutions of power onto the white

working class. In a culture dominated by the assumption of individual responsibility and will, there is a tendency to regard the motive as more important than the consequences of any action. The unspoken assumption is that the subject of the action is all-important, and that the object is of significance only in relation to its subject'.

To put it another way, here is an example of what is meant by 'subject' and 'object', and how 'everyday' racism works.

witch-hunt

The story starts back in 1990, when workers and union activists in the Housing Department of Hackney Council in East London began to complain about a witch-hunt against black, and particularly African workers by management. This witch-hunt turned out to be called an 'anti-corruption

because it was an 'anti-corruption' drive, it must have been uncovering corruption, and therefore its opponents must have had something to hide

campaign' initiated by the Director, Bernard Crofton. Crofton was adopted by liberals as the hero of the piece, an 'anti-corruption campaigner'. He was the 'subject'.

The black and African workers targeted by the 'anti-corruption campaign' were the 'objects' of the exercise. Predictably, the media adopted the subject's point of view - that it was indeed an anti-corruption drive. They ignored the alternative point of view - that black workers were subject to obsessive scrutiny of their professional (and private) conduct with the intention of finding enough

dirt to sack as many as possible of them on trumped up charges (for example, alleged mortgage irregularities).

Because it was an 'anti-corruption' drive, it must have been uncovering corruption, and therefore its opponents must have had something to hide. Thus, from the start, attention was firmly placed on the so-called 'corruption', involving such issues as black housing workers allegedly colluding in the mounting council rent arrears. The wider question of why these workers (plus squatters and tenants) should be blamed for Hackney's housing crisis instead of the government, the council and the (white) management for underfunding and the mismanagement of resources never really surfaced, even in the anti-Crofton camp.

For those who accused Crofton (and his campaign) of racism, the media attention was on his motivation, not the way the 'investigation' of black staff was carried out. The technique of using a unit of 'untouchable' ex-police, and its focus solely on (black) workers rather than management was ignored.

For the defence, Ken Livingstone, among others, was wheeled out to testify to Crofton's record of anti-racism and commitment to equality. Having absolved Crofton of 'racism', as they defined it, the council was conveniently blind to the institutionalised racism going on through the very practice and conduct of the 'anti-corruption campaign'.

class hunt

Class makes a difference in how non-white people experience racism. The lower down the social hierarchy you are, the more



services, for example, almost eliminated professional and supervisory grades, destroying opportunities for low-paid workers to advance through the system.

This disproportionately affected the prospects of low paid, black workers, serving to keep them in a position where they can be most easily subjected to the more extreme measures taken by Crofton's ilk.

It might seem contradictory that an individual who later became a victim of racial discrimination was also part of the structure of discrimination, but reality is like that. Just as thirty years ago sociologists started trying to convince us that class no longer existed because it was possible to

...if you are the bottom of the pile, there are far more people above you, with the power to discriminate against you

attain high socio-economic status from the humblest of origins, so the existence of a black middle class is cited as evidence of the erosion of racism. In reality, social mobility can co-exist with an oppressive class structure. Equally, individual black self-advancement can co-exist with institutionalised racism.

job hunt

So, Crofton's comeuppance came when he seized on failures to check references of West African job applicants, and he took on

Yeboah. The giveaway of his racism was in the fact that he focused only on the West African job applicants, and the fact that Yeboah is a West African name. His triumphant exclamations followed - here was evidence of the corruption he had been looking for. As the media gullibly joined in, we were treated to the story of the "West African mafia" helping itself to jobs in a lucrative racket. If only Crofton had looked at a few non-West African cases, he would have found that what he had 'uncovered' was not corruption, but simple incompetence. Hackney Council's recruitment procedures are crap. Nothing new.

In typically incompetent fashion, the ruling clique sacked Crofton. He promptly went to the media, who swallowed his 'anti-corruption campaign' pitch whole. A couple of allegedly corrupt West Africans was all that was needed to sanction racism. The 'object'-centred view prevailed. Eventually, Crofton was reinstated by the Council, amidst much posturing over the supposed latent 'loony left'. Crofton emerged as the media's moderate liberal, and hero of the story.

In August 1998, Yeboah won record damages for constructive dismissal and racial discrimination against Crofton and the Council. Post-Steven Lawrence, the media's attention is now finally drawn to the "new" (sic) concept of institutional racism. But I will eat my hat if the BBC does a special investigation into institutionalised racism in Hackney Council. And as for special investigations into all the other tiers of government and control, or even in the liberal media itself...?! 

restricted the definition of what 'appropriate behaviour' is for you, and therefore the wider the scope for disciplinary action. In other words, you cannot get away with as much deviation from the norm as a middle class person can. Another practical problem is that, if you are the bottom of the pile, there are far more people above you. This means there are far more people with the power to discriminate against you.

On the other hand, the further up the hierarchy you are, the more likely you are to be useful to your superiors, and therefore get their support. Crofton came unstuck when he made the mistake of targeting someone who was part of, or useful to, the ruling clique in the local Labour Party, when he accused Personnel Director Sam Yeboah of obstructing an investigation into failures to check references of West African job applicants. Racial discrimination is OK, but not if it affects the allies of power.

As an aside, Yeboah himself strengthened structural inequality and discrimination, by presiding over restructuring and overlooking procedures designed to prevent promotion through such 're-organisation', which is an easy way for managers to promote themselves or their friends - corruption! Restructuring of Library

Language Militia Manifesto

Language is such a major part of everyday life, it gets taken for granted. But from the day we're born, our identity is defined by language. The genders, races and classes we belong to are also thus defined. Our status and level of living is fundamentally influenced by the language of power.

But language can also be turned into an important weapon in the fight against discrimination. This article details two primary concerns; how language is used to maintain power over us, and how we can use it to challenge and overcome existing power structures.

Language is vital in developing, maintaining and reproducing all sorts of power relations. It perpetuates a vast range of myths and stereotypes based on class, gender, racial, sexual and other feelings of superiority. From 'simple' name-calling and insults to the subtler-end chauvinistic journalism, verbal attack, in one form or another, is ever present. After a time, this negative language becomes ingrained, and so the power structures which language reflects determine our social and language practices. In turn, these practices contribute to maintaining the power structures. This cyclical process has helped establish and reinforce a hierarchy of language styles, used in different social and institutional situations, which are parallel to the hierarchy of social and class relations.

The form of language we use with our mates, our families, or in the school playground differs from that we use with the boss, the police, in an interview or in the classroom. The 'telephone voice' phenomenon indicates how we change our language to fit with the expectations and norms of society. In institutional situations, like the police station, the manager's office, the classroom, or all sorts of interview situations, the context is one in which rigid, pre-determined language roles exist. Power, in these situations, is reflected by the respective roles of the participants, and is either maintained or challenged through the ability or willingness of one or other of

a language is just a dialect with an army and a navy... 'standard' English is no less a dialect than any other, except it is a class dialect, not a regional one

the participants to play their expected role. Where the authority figure can assume and retain control, power relations are reinforced, and regular repetition of these events throughout society reproduces these power relations.

Before going on to look at the part played by the education system in this process, let's deal with a few myths about language.

standard lingo

The form of the English language that is associated with power in Britain today, is variously known as BBC English, received pronunciation, southern British standard, or even simply 'proper' English. It is no accident that this dialect descends from the merchant class of London at the end of the medieval period. As this class evolved into the new capitalist class, so their linguistic influence spread. Capitalism required improved communication, and therefore a working class that at least understood the dominant dialect, both written and spoken, even if they didn't use it in their own speech. Establishing the dominance of this dialect was part and parcel of the capitalist class establishing its dominance over the working class.

It could be said that a language is just a dialect with an army and a navy. Two points arise. First, it ties prestige forms of language to capitalism's favourite form of political organisation - the nation state. Second, it reflects the reality that 'standard' English is no less a dialect than any other form of English. The difference is that it is a class dialect, not a regional one. It is held up as something to aspire to, not denigrated like regional dialects. It is a class dialect because the capitalist class uses it most, and because it is working class people who are said not to speak 'proper' English.

Not content merely with dominance, there are even those who wish to go further and develop standard English into a uniform national language that everyone must use. The latest example to hit the headlines was Beryl

Bainbridge's bigoted demand for working class accents to be weeded out at school. To hold such views is a demonstration of crass class arrogance. It certainly shows no understanding of how we learn language or what language should be about.

In fact, the majority of language learning is done before we reach school. Most of us therefore, don't learn 'proper' English, but the dialect of our families and communities. At school, we learn to read and write the standard dialect, but we largely ignore the attempts to make us talk proper(ly). Although people can, and do, change their accents or dialects, it has rarely anything to do with school. Even so, childhood dialects remain, as witnessed by their ability to show up, or get stronger, due to stress, emotion or inebriation. To try to wipe out regional dialect, therefore, can only be doomed to failure, for children by and large continue to use the same speech habits as their family and friends, not those that school attempts to force-feed them.

The elitist, prescriptivist ideology is that standard English is the one and only truly correct form, that all other forms are lazy, inelegant and lacking logic. But the truth is that no dialect is any more correct, elegant or logical than any other. It takes the same level of mental sophistication to develop the knowledge to speak 'proper' as it does to speak Scouse, Cockney, Geordie, Brummie or anything else. Prescriptivists like the bigot Bainbridge fear that English is being infected, debased and mongrelised by regional dialects and 'sloppy usage'. But no language remains static. Standard English, like other English dialects, and like other languages, changes all the time. Such changes are irresistible, and beyond the control of the self-appointed grammar police.

back to school

As already mentioned, capitalism needed improved communication, which led to the spread of literacy through the state education system and

among the working class, who had hitherto been denied access to education. Of course, the teaching of skills like reading and writing, even if based on a standard, capitalist dialect, is no bad thing in and of itself. However, in going about the teaching process, the education system establishes the social patterns, including patterns of language use, that we go on to use in our dealings with wider society. School establishes a distinctive structure with a set of situations (class, assembly, playtime, staff meeting, etc), a set of roles (head, teacher, pupil, prefect, boy/girl, bully) and a set of purposes (learning, teaching, examining, maintaining [social] control), all of which demand their own distinctive language pattern - controlled roles, controlling roles, when to take turns, respecting the authority of the head, the teacher, and so on.

Having downplayed the education system's ability to affect our dialects, a more accurate assessment would be that, instead of our childhood dialects being affected, we are given access to another (standard) dialect for use in dealings with institutions, etc., which demands a language style higher up the hierarchy. Thus, to some degree we do absorb the standard dialect, for use in specific situations. How successfully we can do this is reflected in how successful we are in educational and career terms or, put another way, how successful we are in reproducing society's values and power structures. Of course, people from capitalist, 'middle class' or professional backgrounds, that is backgrounds where they learn the standard dialect from birth, have a head start in this process.

media & ad-'men'

Another institution which reinforces both language patterns and capitalist power structures is the media industry, including its offensive off-shoot, the advertising industry. The media are skilled at disguising power relations to direct attention away from the powerful people and the profit-motivated causes that lie behind discrimination, pollution, and a long list of other social evils.

A sort of simulated egalitarianism, which depends heavily on hiding surface markers of authority and power, is projected through advertising and the media, as well as education, government and state bureaucracies. The language used presents capitalist practices as universal and 'common sense'. The power to do this is a significant complement to economic and political

power.

For instance, industrial disputes are reported through the use of distorting language such as "trouble", "disruption" or the disease metaphor. All of the time, it is existing power structures which are reinforced. The whole point is to achieve consent in the maintenance of power, which is certainly a lot less risky than ruling through coercion.

free language?

An aspect of language which is just as important as its role in maintaining power, is the role it can play in challenging and breaking down power structures. Indeed, over the last four decades, various social and political movements have adopted various strategies to 'expropriate' language in this way. Capitalist society lays great store in being 'free' and 'democratic'. However, when those at the sharp end of social power structures claim such ideas in the fight against discrimination, and re-work their meanings, this is a challenge to existing power structures.

Another way of fighting back through language is to reclaim 'insulting' words. This has been done to a certain extent elsewhere, but has been most successful within the gay movement. The word 'gay' itself is one which was reclaimed back in the 1970s, while 'queer' has recently undergone the same process. Again, language is being expropriated and given unexpected and empowering meaning.

In recent decades, there has also been a trend away from the overt marking of power relations in language, resulting in the hiding or blurring of language power relationships. Examples include in higher education, the use of 'Japanese management techniques', and the increased use of indirect requests in everyday conversation, rather than direct orders. In languages like French, German, and Spanish it is also seen, in the trend away from using informal and polite equivalents of "you" to mark power relations, towards their use to express family, friendship or solidarity relations. Then again, it is seen in the shift away from "he" and other male pronouns to refer to all sexes collectively.

Such changes show a response to social struggle. The powerful have felt the need to exercise power in less open and direct ways. Of course, there is no question of them giving up any of that power. Power inequalities in terms of wealth distribution, access to health and education facilities, and so on, continue



SelfEd - for self-education - skills, info, ideas
Get a free copy of "Skills for Action" by mentioning this offer when you subscribe to DA (see page 9), or send 50p (cheques to "Solidarity Federation") to: SelfEd, PO Box 29, SWPDO, Manchester, M15 5HW.

to widen, deepen and generally become more stark. But they are disguised by the ever thicker wallpaper of subtle language change. This is simply one face of the simulated egalitarianism referred to earlier.

While such trends may show that the language of power relations can be challenged and changed, they also demonstrate that capitalist society can adopt and adapt to such language change without significant change to the whole hierarchy of power. The ultimate challenge, then, is to bring down the capitalist system, which is built on that hierarchy. And language must be a part of this process.

arming the militia

The expropriation of the terminology of the dominant ideology is one way in which we can immediately intensify our battle against it. For example, we can set about expropriating that old capitalist favourite 'free speech'. Since this must be based upon the ability to participate freely and equally within society, a society that expects the majority of us to meekly fit into subservient roles and follow orders cannot be one that encourages free speech.

To be in favour of free speech, therefore, is to reject both the social and class hierarchy, and the hierarchy of language roles that goes with it. Now, to take on managers, coppers and other authority figures, to refuse to accept being controlled, is no easy task. But it is one that is central to the whole idea of overthrowing the current society to bring about a better one. It is a task that we must prepare for, through self-education, backed by solidarity. 

*advertising
and the
media, as
well as
education,
government
and state
bureaucracies
present
capitalism
as universal
and
'common
sense'*

FAQs Them&us

What is Institutionalised Racism?

The Lawrence Inquiry into the racist murder of Stephen Lawrence in Eltham, South East London, and the subsequent police investigation, may have lulled the Daily Mail readers of middle England into thinking everything's alright again, but it offers a very mixed bag to those of us who want an end to racism.

For anyone who does not know the case, Stephen was a black student stabbed while waiting for a bus by a gang of five white men, in April 1993. When the police arrived, they treated it as a "gang matter" and failed to give first aid or treat seriously Duwayne Brookes, Stephen's friend who had also been assaulted. Duwayne pointed out what direction the killers ran in, but the police were not interested.

Subsequently, several witnesses came forward with details of the gang, but the police didn't follow up these leads. Stephen's parents kept up the pressure, even though they were patronised by the police. The police finally charged two men with murder two months later. In July, the Crown Prosecution Service dropped the prosecution because of insufficient evidence. A new witness came forward with three more suspects, but the CPS still felt there wasn't enough evidence.

Two years later, disheartened by the lack of progress, the Lawrence family brought a private prosecution against five men - Neil Acourt, Jamie Acourt, Luke Knight, David Norris and Gary Dobson. The trial collapsed after Duwayne Brooks' evidence was ruled inadmissible, despite videos taken of the men at home making violent racist comments and saying how they would stab black people. With the election of New Labour in May 1997, an Inquiry was set up under Sir William Macpherson, which finally reported in February 1999.

Macpherson, a scion of the establishment if ever there was one, defined racism as consisting of "conduct

or words or practices which advantage or disadvantage people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin. In its more subtle form, it is as damaging as in its overt form." He also

defined institutional racism as consisting of "the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness, and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people." Macpherson accepted that institutionalised racism played its part, but not that the majority of the police officers involved were racist. The Inquiry made 70 recommendations, though not all will be taken up by the government.

Regarding the definitions above, both are fairly neutral in language, but important because, for the first time, an establishment figure has made

covering up the casual racism of ordinary police proved impossible, so Macpherson brought it out into the open

them. For years black activists have said that their communities suffered as much from the unthinking, unseen racism of institutions like schools, housing authorities and, above all, the police, as from the unthinking brutality of individual racists. Here, in this definition, is something to measure that by. Lest anyone thinks that such words don't matter, an SF member has already told me that it has made a big difference in his case. He was being victimised for not looking at "both sides" of racism (i.e., not giving the racist perspective) at the school he works in.

Certainly, whatever the quibbles over these definitions, they represent a recognition by the establishment that such a thing as institutionalised racism exists and this is important. Paul Condon was able to wriggle out of admitting that the Metropolitan Police are institutionally racist because there was no agreed upon definition at the time, rather than face what the black community and anti-racists already know - that the Met is riddled with racism from the top to the bottom, and that even well-meaning officers who might think they aren't racist act in racist ways because of the culture of the organisation. Some of Macpherson's recommendations directly seek to address this, by looking at training (some to involve local ethnic minority communities), ethnic monitoring of stop and searches and targets for recruitment and retention of black and Asian police officers.

Other recommendations from the Inquiry included regular inspections of the police along the lines of OFSTED in schools (OFFCOP?), that race relations legislation should apply to the police, that a racist incident should be one where the victim perceives it to be racist. More controversially, Macpherson suggested that the double jeopardy rule, whereby two of the killers cannot be retried because they have already been found not guilty, should be ditched. Like all public order legislation, this is exactly the sort of thing that gets brought in to stop racists and the far right, but will usually be used against the left. Macpherson also wanted to make use of racist language a crime, though how on earth this could be practicable, I can't see.

One area not covered so assiduously in the Macpherson report is the allegation that corruption played its part in undermining the original Lawrence investigation. Macpherson found that there was no corruption or collusion. The allegations centred on Clifford Norris, father of David Norris. He is currently serving 8 years for drug dealing, a fact mentioned by many papers, but his part of the story has been largely unreported, except in the satirical magazine Private Eye. Norris met various officers over a several years, one of which (referred to as Officer XX), was assigned as an escort to Duwayne Brooks. He had met Norris to establish him as an informer. Norris also had a role in fixing an earlier trial where his son was accused of stabbing Stacey Benefield.

Covering up the casual racism of ordinary police proved impossible, so Macpherson brought it out into the open. Corruption, on the other hand, could easily be routinely dismissed by the Inquiry, particularly as it focused so much on the racism involved.

The Inquiry's recommendations are all very well, but given that the role of the police is to contain crime within working class areas, it means very little to us, who, living and working in those areas, will find ourselves victims of both crime and, at best, police indifference. At worst, the police will continue to harass us, particularly those of us who are black, politically active or young. As we are against racism, any improvements in the police (and indeed, other institutions like schools) treatment of black and Asian people is to be welcomed. But let's not hold our breath - twenty years ago the Scarman report on the Brixton riots made many recommendations about policing ethnically diverse areas. Twenty years on grassroots anti-racist groups like Newham and Southall Monitoring Projects report no change in the number and type of cases they deal with. 



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, SE8 4WX. Tel. 0171 358 1854
South-west Solidarity, PO Box 741, Swindon, SN1 3UG
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.
West Yorks Solidarity Federation, PO Box 5, Hebden Bridge, W. Yorks, HX7 8YN

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

Digging up the middle ground

A colleague of mine was recently reprimanded for indulging in a shouting match with a fellow member of staff who he believed had brought about a change in company regulations. The subject, the phasing out of a morning break, was one he felt strongly about. Passionate feelings usually spill over into an emotional response, but apparently this is no longer acceptable. He was told to behave in a "professional" manner at all times.

During the past decade, there has been a gradual invasion of dehumanised professional bullshitters into middle management; softly spoken, over friendly types who make a career out of regurgitating nonsensical phrases, usually from the latest American self-development guru. On arrival, the expectations of their staff are usually raised with talk of how important their own input and involvement is. Soon afterwards though, is the realisation that this "empowerment" amounts to nothing more than you doing their job for them for no extra pay.

If you're still having trouble spotting them, here are a few tell tale signs:

Hands On

If they're not swanning off to meetings, they're on the phone all day.

Team Player

Constantly banging on about the importance of "pulling together" and "being flexible", they shy away from anything remotely laborious.

Man Managers

Only interested in your work load 10 minutes before the board meeting. Guess where the recognition for your achievements is going?

CV Development (theirs)

They've been on more IT courses (£347 per day including training manual, buffet and certificate) than all the secretaries put together, and still can't type a f***ing memo.

CV Development (yours)

They will off load their own responsibilities onto you at every opportunity. If challenged, they will insist that they are merely giving you the chance to develop your own skills.

Family Orientated

Like Billy Connolly, they are under some misguided notion that the rest of the office is remotely interested in that cute funny thing their 2-year-old did in Sainsbury's last week.

Investing in People

Externally appointed, they arrive with their proven track record, team building qualities and hands-on approach. After eighteen months of radical rhetoric, they achieve naff-all and promptly leave for a fresh and challenging role elsewhere.

TOP TIPS FOR FIGHTING BACK

When they're about, change the conversation to politics, world affairs, etc. The professional bullshitter is notorious for being devoid of any reasoned argument or sensible opinion.

Alternatively, place their name, job title and the company address on the mailing list for New View Erotica - "bizarre and different". Sit back and let the gossips do the rest. As a last resort, tell them Phil Collins is a talentless tosser. 

Best Paid Plans...

Profile: Jan Leschly

Jan Leschly is the 59-year-old chief executive of pharmaceutical giant SmithKline Beecham. The company has invested £125m in Human Genome Sciences, putting them at the forefront of genetic research. SmithKline are probably better known as producers of such household names as Ribena, Panadol and Lucozade. Jan Leschly meanwhile got a pay and perks package last year of £92m! Meanwhile, SmithKline have just announced a major downsizing drive in their British based operations. That's a shit load of sackings to you and me. So it's with all this in mind that we are honoured to present Mr Leschly's personal profile.

What is your idea of perfect happiness?

Lots of money.

What is your greatest fear?

Strikes.

What trait do you deplore in yourself?

Modesty.

What trait do you deplore in others?

Greed.

What objects do you always carry?

Panadol, Milk of Magnesia and a number of other high quality products.

What makes you depressed?

I'm a misunderstood genius.

What is your favourite smell?

Crisp new bank notes.

What is your favourite book?

Frankenstein- Mary Shelly.

What is your favourite fantasy?

I'm too busy making important decisions to have any fantasies.

Are you sure?

Er, yes. Why? Has someone offered to sell you some photographs...?

How did you vote at the last election?

For New Labour, of course - the party of Business.

Do you believe in Capital Punishment?

Only for strikers, shirkers, the poor and the weak.

For what cause would you die?

I don't understand the question.

Do you believe in monogamy?

Yes, it's a wonderful word.

How do you relax?

I count my money.

What single thing would most improve the quality of your life?

More money.

What would your motto be?

I'm all right Jack!



What keeps you awake at night?

The blue fingered shark monkeys who live behind the skirting boards. Don't they keep you awake too?

What is the most important lesson life has taught you?

Never give a sucker an even break.

What is the most overrated virtue?

Compassion.

How would you like to be remembered?

Like all the great men of history - Alexander, Napoleon, John Major. 

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.

Dear DA,

Call me naive if you like, but it seems that the New Labour government is crap at maths. I mean, they say they've got to cut back on benefit payments, wage rises, etc. but they have managed to find money for things when it really matters to them. For instance, a friend of mine in the Health service was told recently that the government's promised April wage rise couldn't be paid until all departments had made massive savings. At the same time the government are set to cut disability benefit. Yet the cost of the Balkan war must be billions by now and will be several more billion even if the war ended tomorrow. I guess that part of the reason for this apparent double standard is simply a question of profits. Arms manufacturers and civil construction firms are set to make huge profits while the principles of free market economics are imposed in the eventual "peace" settlement. Wage rises and benefits are, by contrast, a waste of money. Not as big a waste of money as the massive number of special advisors employed by No 10 - up from 8 to 20 since Labour took office,

with costs soaring from £3.4m to £5.3m.

It is truly sickening to see Blair shedding crocodile tears for refugees who are treated as criminals if they have the misfortune to end up in Britain. Even now, with Kosovan flavoured refugees becoming fashionable to New Labour, anyone else is still an "economic migrant", "scrounger" or "con-merchant". The hypocrisy is staggering. Throwing money at destruction and death, at profiteers and sycophants, it just doesn't add up. They spend vast amounts of money on killing people they claim they want to save, while they cut budgets for people already struggling claiming that this is the best way to help! If there was ever an argument for having no government, then the last few weeks is it. TL

Dear DA,

I wrote to Mark Thomas and asked him to do an interview with me - I thought I'd send it to DA, as I think he would compliment your wonderful mag perfectly. Well, he never replied (yet). Still, did you see his balloon flight over Menwith Hill, Uncle Sam's European spy centre? If not, you can read all about it at www.menwithhill.com, where you can also book a flight over with him in June, when they are trying to get a shitload of people going over at once. There was even some mention of a huge novelty balloon of Saddam Hussein floating over the golf balls!!! Needless to say, I've got a group of people who are mad for it, and we've signed up. J

Dear DA,

In DA 10, JP's letter about porn draws some important comparisons with other exploitative industries. Leaving aside the "moral" argument about whether porn is ok or not, is porn just the same as any other industry that exploits its workers? Does the fact that women can "achieve star status" make porn a better industry to work in than, say, the Post Office? So there is a "high demand" for porn. Does that mean that we shouldn't take a critical look at this industry? And as for the closing statement about "nudity sells magazines and boosts TV ratings", why of course, that's where the revolutionary movement has been going wrong all these years! I won't go on, as the letter is so full of holes...

I'm inclined to see JP's letter as an attempt to justify his/her own personal tastes. What would be more useful would be a reasoned debate on the whole question of porn and sexual desire.

Yours in Solidarity, AC

Ireland

Dear DA,

Concerning the article in Direct Action no.8 which addressed collusion. This otherwise excellent article which exposed the 'rule of law' and 'democracy' as nothing more than the Empire's new clothes was marred by a fundamentally incorrect analysis of why the British State imposes military occupation on part of my country. It is not some lofty idealism of 'Rule Britannia' which motivates the actions of the British State, nationalism is just justification for its actions, which are determined by class interest. The article states that "*The British State carried out its atrocities because the British Government did not want the world to see its forces evacuating Northern Ireland, Vietnam-style, at the head of a victorious Republican movement*". This particular line offers the dodgiest analysis of the 'troubles' this side of Class War or Red Action. Firstly, in regard to the Vietnam analogy, by the time the last American forces had been driven from Saigon, their opponents were driving 'Soviet' tanks, for from '68 onwards the North Vietnamese Army were their main opponents. Even in the 1950s the Vietnamese were fighting battles against the French Army, in which the Vietnamese were better equipped with the weapons of a conventional army, e.g. artillery guns. So Vietnam is a whole different ball game. The author of this article is correct to say that British

Nationalism is a major problem in the Six Counties, it is not however that of the Government but that of the British majority. If it were loss of face or nationalism which prevents a British military withdrawal, then, how come there was a withdrawal from the South? How come that far flung corner of a foreign field ain't English any more? How come as the song says "*The flags are coming down, everybody stands saluting, somewhere in the distance I can hear somebody shooting, and another piece of red left my atlas today*"? How many pieces of red are left in your atlas? What motivates the Governments in this situation (and I say Governments because it's not just the Loyalist Paramilitaries that the British State colludes with) is the reality of a well armed British majority in the Six counties. The fact is that, not only does the Irish State not want Northern Ireland and would be quite insistent that the British military occupation stays in place (and indeed the Irish State helps to maintain that occupation), but that the end result of a withdrawal would be a vicious civil war akin to those in Bosnia or the Lebanon, which would turn Ireland into a charnel house. This ethnic slaughter would then result not in a "*victorious Republican movement*" but in the occupation of Ireland by an Imperialist N.A.T.O. or U.N. force. It is to prevent such a civil war on their doorsteps (and perhaps even closer) which

motivates both States to do everything possible to repress Irish nationalist resistance (indeed what was not mentioned in the article was the fact that some of the intelligence files sent to the Loyalist paramilitaries may have in part been collated by the Southern security services). Consider this: 138,000 legally held weapons mostly in Unionist hands, 13,000 members of the R.U.C., which, to quote republican muralists, is "*98% Protestant 100% Unionist*", the Royal Irish Regiment/Ulster Defence Regiment, which is another 20,000 odd, the Loyalist paramilitaries - such as the U.D.A., which "*at peak, may have had a membership of 50,000*", according to former Irish Press editor and prolific author Tim Pat Coogan. This adds up to a quite formidable array of armed organisations, which, to most of their members, have the *raison d'être* of preventing a united Ireland and defeating the I.R.A. What do you expect them to do if there was a British military withdrawal? The term 'British military withdrawal' is something of an oxymoron when you consider that most of the state forces are recruited locally. The 'Northern Ireland Problem' is a problem of two diametrically opposed nationalisms sharing the same area, and anarchists who side with either are helping to exacerbate the problem of sectarian division. NO WAR BUT THE CLASS WAR.

T.D.

"Queer as f**k", 8-part drama, Channel Four

If this doesn't win Hype of the Year, it'll only be because Sky Sports' sheer volume will conquer all.

Media outrage was deliberately generated by "explicit" sex scenes and a sexually active 15-year-old, but the real significance of the series is that the drama is not driven by the three leading characters' homosexuality. Lack of dire warnings about AIDS, people tortured by doubts about their sexuality or asexual stereotypes upset the right. Lack of "positive role models" (unless you count Vince's mum), safer sex instructions, and a "balanced", "representative" depiction of the Lesbian and Gay Community upset some of the latter. What is really interesting about the series is what some people expected of it.

Even after Gaytime TV, (yes, I watched it, I'm not too proud to admit that, straight people are allowed to watch trash, why not us?) Gay Television is somehow supposed to reflect the life of each and every lesbian and gay man. Nor must it frighten the heterosexuals by portraying certain sexual practices ("So what do you like?"... "Rimming?" "Yes?" Stuart misreads tone "Excellent!... Well, go on then."), or "give the homophobes ammunition" by acknowledging that not all of us are squeaky clean.

'Queer as f**k' presents an idealised, fictionalised version of Manchester's "Gay Village" in Canal Street, which is central to the lives of Stuart, Vince and Nathan. This subculture is not presented without warts, or critics, and the existence of gay life outside the scene gets a look in. As well as Stuart cruising a nurse in a hospital, and shagging a closeted married man in the loo at work, there is Vince's older, Australian boyfriend Cameron who sees the scene as shallow - arguably the most sympathetic character in the series. Both Stuart and Vince are outgrowing their lifestyle as they hit 30, how they will resolve the resulting tensions is what keeps you watching. "Issues", including parental homophobia after Phil's funeral, (and the fact that Phil's premature death is



not caused by AIDS, for a change, draws attention to the latter), Vince's isolated existence at work, ageism, "attitude" and body fascism on the scene, are not ignored, but they aren't central. To expect more from a gay drama than from an equivalent heterosexual one is discriminatory. How many "mainstream" dramas show characters reaching for a condom? "Positive" role models reflect conservative values, realistic characters will not - how many moralistic politicians' lives conform to the values they impose on us? (Answers on a postcard to Joe Ashton, MP).

There are two reasons why the heterosexual world might see fictional characters as archetypal of gay life. The first is if they conform to the former's prejudices; the second is if all the gay people they know are in the closet. The only realistic portrayal of gay life in all its diversity is our lives themselves. Why not shine a little light into the twilight world of the heterosexual? Anyone who's gay and who doesn't want to be "represented" by the likes of Stuart should come out. Your sexual "orientation" is not private, it is assumed to be heterosexual. If they ask you about rimming, there are two approaches. The first is to assert your right to privacy, (which does cover what you do in bed), the second is to bring up the risks of Hepatitis B and to ask them if they've been vaccinated yet. 

Penny Rimbaud aka J.J. Ratter
Shibboleth: My Revolutionary Life.
Edinburgh: AK Press with Exitstencil Press.(1998)
ISBN 1-873176-40-6 £6.95

Penny Rimbaud was the drummer with CRASS, before that, as J. J. Ratter, he was a teacher in an art school and started up this commune. He was a quasi hippie, involved in early free festivals with his friend Wally Hope. Indeed, this book is almost as much a eulogy to Wally Hope as it is an autobiography.



It's a very odd book, nearly 350 pages of varying styles, mixed in bits of fiction, some rather dull monologues, bizarre passages of seemingly stream of consciousness. It's extremely hard reading in places. The style is at its worst when it gets flowery. He jumps from image to image, metaphor to metaphor with little thought for coherence or any allowance for the poor reader trying to keep up wading through his thick prose. His flights of fanciful imagery often skip out of reach (and often beyond belief). This is not a dull factual account of his life, neither is it a tedious rant on why his own brand of whatever is the only true brand. Quite what it is, I am still not certain. As an autobiography, the book is not overflowing with information. The short bits on the early festival movement are okay, but lost in the tales of Wally.

The bit about CRASS, a band of some influence, is a bit more detailed. He presents CRASS as a bunch of people who more or less fell together whilst drunk and/or stoned, and who more or less fell into being anarchists in order to not be seen as leftist or right wing. At the time, CRASS's brand of angry, shouty anarcho-pacifism seemed to be widely influential. They sold buckets of records. During the eighties no self-respecting group of punks failed to have at least one leather jacket with the snake on the cross logo on it. Maybe as a result, CRASS can be blamed in part for seemingly endless iffy punk bands playing in pub back rooms. In terms of wider influence, it's harder to tell, and Ratter/Rimbaud sees it all falling back in the face of the "Forth Reich" of Thatcherism. (I am a bit fed up of these lazy uses of the images of Nazi imaging to describe everything that leftist and anarcho don't like, Rimbaud is nowhere near as bad as many, but never-the-less, it's lazy and cheap.)

The best bit of the book is the large central bit, where Rimbaud talks about Wally Hope (Phil Russell). As the book explains it, Wally

Hope was a mystical hippie instrumental in setting up and organising the Stonehenge free festivals. (His story was outlined in the text that came with the CRASS LP Christ - The Album.) Wally Hope was, not surprisingly given his activities, continuously harassed by the police. He was arrested for drug possession (a few tabs in his pocket in a raid officially looking for someone AWOL from the Army!). The police doctor diagnosed him as schizophrenic. On his eventual release from the hospital, he was drugged almost out of existence. He went off to Devon and was seemingly recovering when he was found dead in extremely dodgy circumstances. The only major re-writing I can see from the piece in Christ - The Album is that now Rimbaud is confident enough to publicly state that his friend was murdered. This tale of state oppression, and a large portion of the population's callous indifference to what happens to those who don't fit in, is passionately told and dwarfs the rest of the book.

What has happened post-CRASS is not very clear. The commune's landlord has changed and its future is uncertain. It's less open and there are considerably fewer animals running round the place. Rimbaud's politics has moved on as would be expected, but quite where to would be hard to say: obviously either Rimbaud has trouble saying or I have trouble comprehending. His politics appear to be arch individualism, almost nihilism in places, but complicated with references and allusions to Nietzsche.

The latter part of the book contains an examination of Rimbaud's moral position, which seems to be best summed up as still angry, angst ridden and unsure. The moral debate is often sidelined in politics or made mundane with bland and inane statements of dogma; Rimbaud does at least avoid that. Unfortunately, his style once again seems to get in the way of the point he is seeking to make and those of us interested in engaging in a moral debate that should feed straight to the heart of our politics probably only need to pay passing attention to this book.

To sum up, I'm still unsure what Rimbaud wanted to say. Why an autobiography? Because he believes that as we are each so tightly tied up with ourselves, any other form of writing is pointless? Or does he think what he has done is really relevant? Did he write this to deal with his own thoughts and ideas, or to explain them to the reader? If it's the latter why the ponderous paragraphs? If it's the former why the fictional asides (hopefully they are fiction)? By the way, a Shibboleth is a sign of identity with a group (I looked it up; it's from the Old Testament/Tanakh, somewhere in Judges): no idea why the book's called that, though. 

Noam Chomsky. Propaganda and Control of the Public Mind.

AK Press and Audio. 2 CD Set.

Howard Zinn. A People's History of the United States.

AK Press and Audio. 2 CD Set.

Any mention of an ongoing class war nowadays is usually met with a torrent of abuse or a dismissive attitude at best.

I take this denial as a fair indication of the general misunderstanding most people have of what is, or is not, in their best interest. Of course, the 'ruling class' know where their interests lie and have no problem maintaining their covert antagonisms. This theme is dealt with in two recently released compact discs through AK PRESS, one from Noam Chomsky - 'Propaganda and control of the public mind', and the other by Howard Zinn - 'A people's history of the United States'. Both of these are recordings taken from lectures, which include a question and answer session.

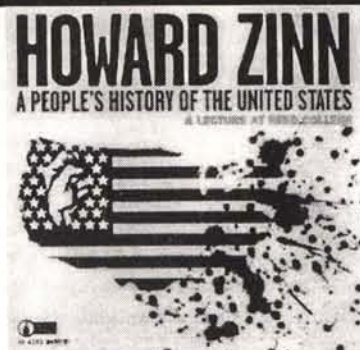
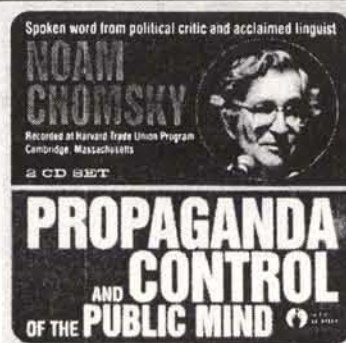
Zinn's effort is a reduced historical catalogue of class struggle taken from his acclaimed book of the same name. He is a historian by trade, and mentions during his talk that he "never wanted to practice 'safe' history". So the work he produces is a refreshing change from the usual biased rubbish from the 'right-wing' establishment. His style of narration is almost hypnotic, but the subject matter keeps your attention. Zinn talks of the omissions of facts throughout the past and present that have shaped our view on the world, and of the exclusions that have created a warped sense of history. A history that favours the elite.

Chomsky's undertaking is more hard hitting, as he opens with a reference to the class war, and follows this with explaining the

economic and political exclusion of the working class through the methods mentioned in the title. As Chomsky explains, propaganda is a very powerful tool, especially when in the hands of an immensely rich and influential media. It is on this front where the class war is fought, this is where political ideologies are formed, and this is where discriminations and divisions are encouraged. Can people's minds be controlled this easily? Yes, they can, if they are constantly being bombarded with one point of view. The fact that we never see the likes of Chomsky or Zinn's work in the mainstream media is evidence to this.

On a recent visit to London, Chomsky gave a lecture on a similar subject. His views were dismissed as a conspiracy theory by a reporter in the Guardian. Although this would be of no surprise to Chomsky, as the majority of reporters and political commentators are themselves a product of a 'propaganda model', a method of weeding out 'non-conformists' and 'troublemakers' early on, as explained in the book 'Manufacturing Consent', co-written with Edward Herman. In their publication, the 'non-conformists' and 'troublemakers' are described as anyone whose opinions are not in the interest of the rich and powerful. These opinions include, for example, supporting any trade union industrial action or calling for social programmes designed to reduce the disparity of wealth between the rich and the poor. These are the views of 'agitators', which are not acceptable to those in power and have to be marginalised. So all you are left with is the conformists. Both Zinn and Chomsky's recordings go a long way towards supplying the weapons needed to fight the class war. A war that can be won, by the working class, with knowledge and solidarity. 

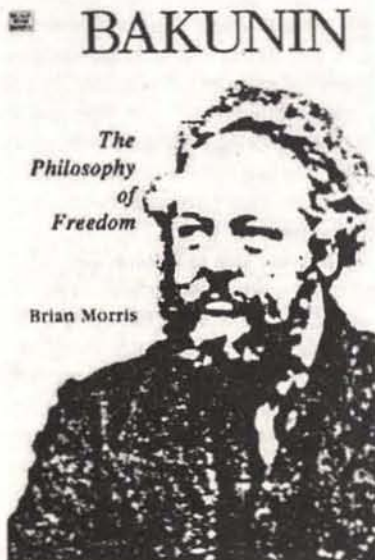
"Those were the most educational years of my life...One of the things I learned was the capacity of human beings who seemed powerless to create enormous power just by their own acts of getting together, sacrificing together, taking risks together, and how things can change by people determined to change them." Howard Zinn, from the CD.



"There's no doubt that one of the major issues of 20th Century history, surely in the US, is corporate propaganda...Its goal from the beginning, perfectly openly and consciously, was to 'control the public mind', as they put it. The reason was that the public mind was seen as the greatest threat to corporations." Chomsky, on the CD

BAKUNIN - The Philosophy of Freedom
Brian Morris
 Black Rose Books

In this short book (154 pages), the Author deals mainly with the criticisms and misunderstandings of Michael Bakunin's work which, to this day, is still under attack from Liberal and 'left-wing' intellectuals who seem unable or unwilling to accept Bakunin's Libertarian ideas.



This stems, according to Morris, from Bakunin's early years where, for instance, his association with the young Polish 'nihilistic anarchist' Sergei Nechaev and his attraction to secret societies leaves a confused legacy. However, Morris argues that it was Bakunin's later years that his work should be judged on, as it was in this period that Bakunin produced his most inspirational writings. This book could be subtitled 'A case against Marxism', as a number of chapters deal with the personal and ideological differences between Karl Marx and Bakunin, and includes a good account of their split during the collapse of the First International (just a small matter of authority and dictatorship opposed to liberty and federation!!?). All in all, a good introduction to the thoughts of Bakunin with some excellent quotes from the big man himself. 

Antonio Tellez
Sabaté: Guerilla Extraordinary
 Elephant Editions/AK Press, 1998,
 ISBN 190259310-3, £5.95

This reprint of the Elephant Editions title published in 1985 maintains the same text and cover. Now a classic, it is good to see a reprint of Tellez's account of the anarchist guerilla Francisco (also known as El Quico) Sabaté.

Tellez recaptures the difficulties of the post-Civil War period and the continuing guerilla war that some republicans, anarchists and communists engaged in throughout the Francoist regime's life. He writes well and is even verging on the exciting in places. It is certainly the best account of Sabaté's activities. It also focuses on the difficulties faced by the anarchosyndicalist CNT as it tried to survive both inside and outside Spain after the Civil War and the various differences of opinion, if not splits, that occurred in an organisation that had been physically destroyed by the fascists. Sabaté's, and other guerillas' relationship with the CNT and wider anarchist movement was always problematic. So is Tellez's near-glorification of the period and man. But the question still remains as to what kind of resistance is likely to produce the best results under dictatorships, and how it is to be democratically controlled. Tellez does



not really broach these questions. Perhaps an additional preface could have been written for this book, trying to learn lessons from the past, evaluating Quico's activity, and a little on the libertarian movement in Spain today would have been useful. 

Y Faner Goch
 #112 May 1999 40p
 NEW ASSEMBLY, SAME OLD POLITICIANS
QUANGOROO COURT

The Welsh Socialist
 Assembly special
 • Left unity call: p2
 • Scottish success: p5
 • Plaid's problem: p7
 • Stop the bombing: p8

IT'S UNITY OR BUST FOR LEFT

Y Faner Goch
 #112 May 1999. 12pp.
 40p from; PO Box 661 Wrecsam
 LL11 1QU Wales.

Y Faner Goch is the paper of the Welsh Socialists, who are a militant, libertarian-leaning, and generally anti-hierarchical organisation. However, before I get too much into the compliments, I need to get something off my chest. I am not entirely opposed to people voting tactically if they really want to, but to spend time on electioneering is to waste it, or worse still, to legitimise the state, which I am opposed to. So, not surprisingly, I like the jibes at New (Welsh) Labour etc. but the disproportionate election-related content got the thumbs down from me. Maybe I got the wrong issue - May's is dominated by coverage of the election results for the new Welsh 'Parliament'.

OK, on to the praise. Obviously done on a shoestring, and probably by very few people, the paper is sharply written and well-produced. Everything is readable and the regular snatches of satire add to the fun. There are pieces worthy of note in this issue on reforming the unions and on an anti-opencast coal group. The only other sizeable piece slotted between the post-election talk is an anti-Nato piece on Kosova, which almost gets to the heart of the matter. One less election post-mortem and there would have been space to expand this into an excellent, in-depth libertarian perspective on the war. There I go again.

In short; you don't have to be Welsh or in Wales to appreciate Y Faner Goch. Regular wry smiles come as standard. Short, snappy, tea-break or train journey sized, it's got to be worth 40p. 

Race, Class and Struggle

Louis Kushnick

Rivers Oram, 1998. ISBN 185489 0972

Kushnick wrote the essays contained in this chunky 250 page book over 3 decades. His stated intention is that the reader can trace the development of racism and class over the period.

I could say the reality is that it gives the material a decidedly dusty, 'past it' feel and that Kushnick has taken the opportunity to recycle a load of stuff he wrote and published ages ago just to produce another book. However, let's just say it introduces a historical perspective, with contemporary essays on racism in the '60s, '70s, '80s and '90s.

We kick off with the 'New York Decentralisation Controversy', where the point is clearly made that racism was central to the US education system both before and after desegregation in the 1960s. Indeed, in commentary, Kushnick states that it remains more rife than ever in the late 1990s. Next, we move on to the development of the US Civil Rights Movement, where a neat argument is made that the US State supported this Movement as a means to deny the USSR a political weapon with which to recruit non-white nations to its side in the Cold War. By this time, the US State had realised that overt racist laws could be replaced with more subtle (but no less brutal or effective) institutionalised racism, to retain the racist structure of US society.

By this stage, if you weren't aware before, you will have gathered that Kushnick is from the US. However, he has lived in Manchester, UK since 1964, and the next essay centres on the first race relations Acts in Britain in the 1960s. This piece contains hopelessly optimistic assumptions about the potential benefits of such laws - something that he basically admits in commentary.

The next stop is the build up to and events of the 1981 uprisings in Britain (Brixton, Toxteth and elsewhere), where useful comparisons are drawn with the US, especially in terms of common causative elements - inner city policing tactics, high endemic unemployment and such-like. There is good reading to be had here on the dual policies of 'community policing' rhetoric, coupled with brutal repression of (black) workers' groups, such as the Black Panthers.

Kushnick then turns to the New Right Reagan/Bush administrations' moves to repeal much of what limited liberal legislative progress had been made towards equal rights. He acknowledges the wider reactionism within

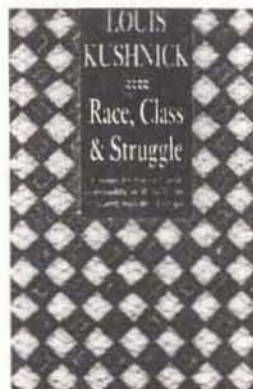
this era, such as the clampdowns on women, sex and homosexuality and characterises it as an attempt to reassert more direct forms of privilege for professional white men.

Bringing us up to date, the last 3 essays were written in the mid-late 1990s, and chart the ongoing rapid increase in racial polarisation, racial violence, and latent nationalism and racism. As Kushnick puts it: "This growth of racism has accompanied, and made politically possible, greater class inequality..." And this is where, as at many other points in the book, I get the distinct feeling that, in adopting the sequence 'race then class', Kushnick puts his cart before his horse. It was the swing to the right since the late 1970s which brought greater class inequality - and *one of the mechanisms of this is racism. In other words, with wishing to underestimate the power or explicitness of racism in any way, I would place it as one of the range of weapons in the armoury of the dominant, hierarchical, capitalist society.*

Kushnick's left academic style is reasonably detailed yet, for the most part, accessible, and he makes some good, original and revealing

points.

Unfortunately, such insights do not occur at every turn of the page, by any means. As for practical pointers on how to take on racism and the authoritarian state which sponsors it, his commentary on such ideas and tactics, and on organisations and communities developing them, is pitifully, woefully inadequate. You are left with the feeling that this 'important' academic has built a successful career on 'analysing' racism and espousing the need to overcome it, but he just does not believe that the people on the receiving end are up to it. In this regard he is and must be proved very wrong. And it is up to us direct actionists to do it. **DA**



George Chauncey, Gay New York: the making of the gay male world, 1890-1940

Flamingo, London, 1995, ISBN 0-00-655001-0, £8.99

A superb and very accessible text on the history of male homosexuality in New York at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century.

Chauncey, a seasoned historian and sociologist, has written here such an intricate account of gay male life that it will be difficult to better it, at least for the next few years. Chauncey does not just document gay culture, literature, spaces in the city, bars and bathhouses, but also provides a fascinating account of the relations between homosexuality and heterosexuality. Male straights defined themselves very often in opposition and distinction to what was thought at the time to be 'pansy-like' or gay. From this perspective, the study becomes a history of the heterosexuality and all its anxieties as much as of the gay male culture.

This is a very important step in the recuperation of gay history. But not only is this a mere academic exercise. The way in which the book is written makes it accessible to a wide public; it engages with current theory on gay history and sexuality, but it is also a very lively read. It also enables us to see how homosexuality and heterosexuality have so often defined themselves as the mirror image of each other, each trying to get away as far as possible from the other. This was clearly an aggressive tactic fostered by institutions, police, administrations and heterosexual males of the time, and a defensive tactic by gay males. In this way, we can see how much of our own sexuality is defined in its oppositional stance to what else is out there. This invites reflection and action: reflection on how we can break down divides and gender roles, but also action in the best way of writing about, critiquing, and practising different sexualities. **DA**

Desert Flower Waris Dirie

Virago 1998, £9.99 ISBN 1-85049-606-7

As a woman, I find this review difficult to write, as parts of Waris's life story are physically sickening, raising issues for which there are no easy answers.

The book can be read on a number of levels. On one, it is a classic rags to riches story. Waris Dirie, a Somali nomad girl who doesn't even know how old she is, becomes one of the world's top ten models and is photographed for all the exclusive magazines. At another level, it is a tale of sheer survival.

Waris describes her life in the desert of East Africa, where even the most basic necessities of life had to be struggled for. It was this determination that enabled Waris, penniless and with little English, to survive in London after her employer (the Somali Ambassador) had left. She was 'discovered' by a photographer, but even then her troubles were not over, as she was threatened with deportation. Only a marriage of convenience saved her. At a third level, much deeper issues are raised, not least that of arranged marriages.

Waris ran away from home as a young girl when her father attempted to sell her to a sixty year old stranger in exchange for five camels. And then there is genital mutilation (sometimes called female circumcision). In Somali culture, like many others, uncircumcised girls are considered unclean and unfit for marriage. Infection following circumcision had killed her elder sister, but nevertheless, at the age of five, her mother sought out a woman who performed the operation with no anaesthetic and dirty razors. Waris can still hear the rasping noise. For years, she had terrible pains every month when menstrual blood could hardly escape and in England, she had an operation to attempt to correct genito-urinary problems stemming from her childhood mutilation. By this time, she had long-realised that she could never get physically close to a man because of the enfilulation she had been subjected to.

To a certain extent, time has healed. She has a partner and a son - but because of her operation she can never gain normal pleasure from lovemaking. Most women would have been content to win their own private battles, and not want intimate physical details made public. To Waris' massive credit, she is using her status as a model to campaign against female genital mutilation, which is still common in 28 African countries. No less than 80% of the Somali women have undergone the most extreme form of genital mutilation. Waris has now given up her modelling career and has been appointed a United Nations special ambassador with a special brief on women's rights in Africa. She needs our respect and support. 

3 Reviews on Abuse and Mental health

Whose Daughter next? Children Abused Through Prostitution

Barnardo's Child Care Publications report. Report £8.50, Video £9.99, both £15. ISBN 0 902 046 519

Child prostitution should be readily recognised as the sexual and emotional abuse of children. However, this is still not the case with a sizeable section of the population. It would seem that it is a fairly new idea to many. This view is reflected in the ways the young people who have had the misfortune to be abused are treated. They are invariably criminalised and labelled.

This report and video from Barnardo's is wide-ranging. It will be an effective means of changing attitudes, and a focus for action. It makes recommendations to the powers that be, and a number of these may hopefully be acted upon, e.g. the issuing of guidelines to the police, which states that the involvement of young people in prostitution should be regarded as child abuse. The report looks at attitudes, the scale of the problem, and the level of coercion and abuse used by adults. It also describes clearly and in detail the methods used, and takes the viewer/reader through 4 distinct stages of the abuse process: ensnaring, creating dependency, taking control, and total dominance. It argues that abuse continues because of outdated attitudes, and exposes the law as a counter-productive element in the process. The video is strong on exposure of the psychological process of intimidation by so-called boyfriends. 

Unnatural Death and Schizophrenia

National Schizophrenia Fellowship (Tel. 0181 547 3937)

This report from the National Schizophrenia Fellowship looks in depth at suicides among people suffering from schizophrenia. One amazing statistic which leapt off the page was that 10% of people diagnosed as suffering from schizophrenia will eventually kill themselves. The report is based on nearly 600 cases between April 1991 and January 1999. According to the Schizophrenia Fellowship, many of deaths could be prevented by improved and extended social services. However, it also suggests that families and friends of those suffering from schizophrenia should receive training and get information on suicide prevention from health and social services. It sounds rather like a wish-list for a system of real 'care in the community', rather than the actual one we currently have. 

The Hurt Yourself Less Workbook

National Self-harm Network, PO Box 16190, London NW1 3WW.

We see self-defeating behaviour every day of the week, but active self-destructive behaviour and deliberate self-harm are, fortunately, less common. However, it is more widespread than you may think. Hence, it is always good when new resource material appears, which may help to reduce or control it. People who self-harm rarely get any sympathy. They almost never get any understanding of their condition. This workbook is addressed directly to people who injure themselves. It is not patronising or pathologising, and it is written by people who self-harm. The tone is both personal and compassionate, with the writers introducing themselves individually. A range of exercises, techniques and processes are suggested for identifying feelings, and exploring self-image and self-esteem. In my opinion, self-harm, like self-defeating behaviour generally, is the result of anger being directed back against oneself, when it should be more profitably directed back at the source or cause of the anger.

To generalise, many people who self-harm are survivors of abuse. They self-harm because others have harmed them, and consequently, they no longer value themselves positively. They internalise the abuse they have suffered, and turn the anger on themselves. Self-harm becomes an outlet for the intense anger at being abused. The urge to self-harm often becomes irresistible, it is a temptation, and the act of self-harm offers some release. Since the war, and particularly through the Major and Thatcher years, people have become more and more fragmented, isolated and -in short- alienated. This leads to a whole number of states of mind which can be labelled by psychiatrists (e.g. schizophrenia, manic depression), but generally means that one feels like shit, and can be prone to self-harm, self-neglect, lack of motivation, and loosing touch with reality. The only way to end self-harm is to end abuse. Meanwhile, those who suffer and end up self-harming can best fight back by working together to understand their situation, and start to find ways of turning their anger on the perpetrators of their abuse, instead of upon themselves. This self-help workbook is an important step in the right direction. 

CNT, n° 244, March 1999, monthly paper of the CNT-IWA, Spain, Granada.

One for the Spanish readers, this long-standing publication is today a combination of reports on CNT activity, editorials, reviews and analysis. In this issue, there is discussion on the CNT's action against ETT's, temporary work agencies.

There is, as every March issue, an analysis of the current state of play of International Women's Day and a number of contributions from women and Mujeres Libres, the libertarian women's organisation. 





Why Women do it for Less



Women are major contributors to society through work. They are also major losers in this process, because in the main, they get pitiful pay for what they do. The causes of this situation are numerous, but the solutions are a long time coming. There are good reasons for this - and why New Labour's plans will, at best, further enslave women to capitalism and, at worst, leave them still largely enslaved to male power and money.

For clarity, and because I find it easy, let us start with a definition. This article is about employment and work in the strict sense of 'formal paid economic activity'; what is commonly called a job. It is important to make this distinction as a lot of people who do not have a job are nevertheless employed in a variety of activities which are work. I should also point out that a lot of the specific statements here apply mainly to Britain, and may only have varying degrees of application to other western capitalist countries.

There are distinct differences in employment patterns between men and women in Britain. These patterns are a creation both of the *laissez faire* capitalist system in Britain and a couple of hundred years of political and cultural attempts to influence its subsequent development.

In Britain, on average, women earn a lot less than men. We have recently reached the point where roughly half the workforce is female, so why the difference in pay? It is only by looking more closely at the detail of the

differences in employment patterns between men and women, and between women, that a clear picture will emerge. There are differences in the way people work (part-time, full-time, continuous, short-term, casual, etc.), the sector they work in, and their seniority within the sector, all of which affect their income.

mythical norm

Women's employment histories tend to fall into three categories. There is a smallish, slowly shrinking group of around ten percent who either never work, or who only work up to marriage/birth of their first child. Whilst this is often seen as the traditional 'family' mode, it is not particularly traditional. In modern terms, it is more or less a product of eighteenth and nineteenth century bourgeois ideology that has somehow hung on until the end of the twentieth century. It never applied to all classes, but was predominant amongst the middle class. The employment of working class women was more or less ignored. The fact that a marriage bar was placed on many 'professional' or white-collar jobs can be seen as the political manifestation of this ideological attempt to force women from the workplace and into the home. The marriage bar regulations, which forced women to leave work on marriage, existed well into the 1950s and 1960s (and even until the early 1980s for the civil service in Northern Ireland).

The role of the unions in this is worth noting. Much of the debate and demands around the 'family wage' took for granted an ideological perception of the man supporting the women and any children.

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Even comparatively recently, trade union leaders generally concentrated on seeking permanent secure employment for men so they could support their wives. The male-dominated trade union movement sought to organise in the male-dominated industries and jobs, and shunned what were seen as women's occupations (service industries, etc.) This patriarchal attitude indicates one reason why women's wages have remained lower than men's and why now, with the increase in employment in traditionally female work areas, union organisation is patchy to say the least.

male model

The second group, which is a bit larger and slowly growing, is of women who remain working full-time throughout their working lives, with the possible exception of the odd short maternity break, after which they quickly return to work.

This pattern is closest to the typical male pattern of employment (the vast majority of men work full-time throughout their lives - or at least would do if they could get permanent jobs). It is this full time permanent pattern of employment that is normally seen as the desirable objective - a sort of gold standard.

casual majority

The third and largest group does not fit the (mostly failed) bourgeois model of women as homemakers, nor does it tie in with the full-time alternative. The majority of women in Britain initially work full-time, but then, usually on the birth of their first child, they stop work

for a variable length of time, before returning only to part-time work. Most then continue to work part-time until they reach official retirement age. It should be noted that a lot of this part-time work is not half-time work; often it may even be less than ten hours per week. Also, much of it is casualised and has been for decades. There are few permanent contracts, few benefits and the chances of a decent pension are even lower than those of full-time employees.

Even with recent legislation extending basic employment rights to part-time workers, they are still severely disadvantaged in comparison with most full-time employees. Whilst there has always been casualised, part-time work in Britain, it is in the post war years that it has expanded most - and this growth has been almost entirely amongst women. This phenomenon accounts for a large amount (some argue nearly all) the growth in employment since the 1950s. The percentage of women working full-time has risen only very slowly - and that only recently. Thus, the expansion of the proportion of women in the workforce has been made up almost entirely of part-time workers, and it does not appear to have resulted in loss of full-time employment either by men or women.

Part-time wages are generally set at below the level needed to survive. Those who work on part-time wages are usually reliant on another source of income, be it a partner working, parents, a pension, or state benefits. It is noticeable that male part-time workers are either the young, who either live with their parents or are full-time students, or they are older men who have taken early retirement from full-time work with a pension. Part-time work is marginalised, undervalued and rife with poor conditions.

Obviously, as most women workers are part-time, and as part-time work is underpaid, it is not surprising that much

of the reason women workers get less is that they are in crappy part-time jobs. But to attribute all of the difference to this is to underplay the importance of the wider undervaluing of women's employment through other factors.

'women's work'

Firstly, there are noticeable differences between the sorts of work men and women normally do. Again, it may seem obvious that many occupations are considered 'male' or 'female', and there has often been a historic difference in the 'value' placed on them as a result. This dual system of the value of work depending on how it is perceived to be gendered has been and continues to be challenged. Female-dominated workforces, such as nurses, are demanding to be taken and valued seriously.

Nor is the gender balance in occupations static. In teaching, for example, there has been a swing from male domination to now where, at primary level at least, the government now reckons there is a shortage of male teachers. It is important to note that the perceived status of teaching has fallen as this change has taken place. While cause and effect is hard to interpret, as is often the case, women have been left with justifications for poor pay and conditions that emphasise the caring nature of the work.

In other words, if you take a pride in doing work of real direct value to other human beings, you should expect low pay!! The imposed willingness to work for heavenly peanuts and the joy of service continues to be used against nurses, whereas doctors, traditionally a male occupation, are not expected to care as much and therefore require much bigger pay packets.

In general, women's work has a weak collective basis. Casualisation and the patriarchal trade union focus on the

family wage, and full-time permanent employment led to whole sectors of the economy being more or less ignored for years. Without collective action, the pay and conditions in these sectors have remained poor. Now that these sectors are making up a larger and larger part of the economy, so many of the gains made through unionisation of the traditional male industries have been lost. So, this attitude, coupled with Thatcher's ferocious attacks and the consequent impotence of reformist unions, has led to a sharp decline in pay and conditions across the British working class as a whole.

unequal opps

After discrimination by work type, comes the second issue of discrimination within work type. After taking into account differences created by women who work part-time, there remain major differences between men and women in terms of pay within the same work type. Much of this remainder is down to seniority. Men still occupy the most senior posts and get the most pay. Though this is not universally true, research has found that, in a number of occupations, especially those where there are fairly discretionary grades of pay, women receive lower pay than do their male colleagues. This is particularly noticeable in white collar 'professions', such as law and academia (though it could be that these are singled out simply because this is where most of the studies have been done).

The most common approach to confronting this particular inequality has been to seek to get women into the 'male' occupations, particularly the high prestige 'professions', and then get promoted into positions of seniority - to break through the glass ceiling. This is what the equal opportunities legislation is all about - giving women the right to participate in the hierarchical structures

without a far more radical approach, the vast majority of working women will always remain in crappy jobs - irrespective of 'equal opportunities'

Essential ingredients

Working women as % of total labour force

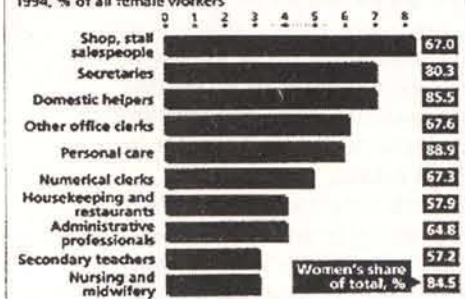


Source: OECD

Women's work

EU12

1994, % of all female workers



Sources: OECD, US Department of Labour

US

1997, % of all female workers



of capitalism on the same basis as men. The problem is that, at best, this may give a few middle class women the same power as a few middle class men. If you place your faith in this line of thought, you are suggesting that women need to get involved in the 'only game in town', whereas in fact, a new game altogether is called for. Without a far more radical approach, the vast majority of working women will always remain in crappy jobs - irrespective of 'equal opportunities' rules (as they are not designed to lead to anything like equality).

To get back to the central point, though, equality between genders is at least partially addressed with equal opportunities initiatives. At least women have the possibility of fulfilling any role within the current society. Indeed, there has and continues to be growth in childcare facilities and the like (albeit interminably slowly).

unequal choices

There is an argument, which is now gaining some ground, that women in effect have more choice than men. Women can choose to work full-time, leave the formal economic sector altogether and be supported by 'their' husband, or be economically dependant on a primary source of income (whether partner, benefit or whatever) which they supplement by their own earnings. Men, on the other hand, only have one socially acceptable choice, which is full-time employment. Whilst this is fundamentally true, it misses the point. Women are still denied access to the more prestigious occupations and the most prestigious positions within occupations.

Women who wish to 'compete' with men for these positions have to make stark choices. To work full-time and have a family means that some arrangement for the care of children must be arranged. For men, this has never really been a problem, they just didn't take care of the children. For women who, despite the rhetoric, still have the bulk of childcare responsibilities, there is a serious problem. Childcare is not cheap.

Unless a woman can afford to pay or has family and social contacts to take care of her children for 'free', she cannot work and have children. Hence, the most common solution - women work part-time earning some income, but are still dependent on another primary source of income. Any external childcare that is needed is usually sorted out through informal arrangements. This brings us back to square one; part-time work has

very poor pay and conditions, thus women have been marginalised by the inflexibility of the only form of employment which offers enough pay to survive on.

let's have real casualisation!

So far, the government rhetoric has revolved around removing the barriers that prevent women from entering full-time employment. In other words, primarily, provision of affordable and available child care. The dual problem here is the availability of the full-time decently paid jobs, and the fact that these are likely to be jealously guarded by men wherever possible. Furthermore, full time work does not appeal to all women.

A more robust solution - and we are still talking within the current system here, not a fundamentally altered society - is a change in the way work is organised. As a starting point, this means fewer hours, more flexibility, more chance to fit work with other duties such as child care, opportunities to take breaks to fit circumstances, etc.

On the face of it, this might sound like calling for casualisation - and basically, it is. The casualisation of work is only bad because it is being used by employers to undermine pay and conditions. People are forced to fight to work full-time from when they leave school to when they retire because otherwise, they will have no pension to speak of, and before they get their pension they will live in poverty, unable to have a decent standard of living. Real casualisation is decent pay for all, with flexible working hours - the 'flexibility' being decided more by the workers than the employers, as it is now. This would make casualisation something which working people could demand, rather than fight against.

Of course, the only way to turn casualisation to our advantage is to come together and plan collective action - and the current trade unions have proved time and again they do not particularly care for women, the part-timers, or the marginalised. It will be down to independent direct democratic organisations like Solidarity Federation to act as a focal point for people to achieve this.

The bottom line is that, in theory, the basic raw capitalist doesn't care about gender; what is important is that the worker can produce in a certain time an amount of product that can be sold for more than the worker gets paid for that



the casualisation of work is only bad because it is being used by employers to undermine pay and conditions

length of time. Capitalism is about exploitation for profit. But beyond the theory, even the most rational of capitalists carry with them cultural baggage, which affects their decision-making. Supplementing this is 200 years of political manoeuvring; the current British version of capitalism has had a tremendous amount of interference from governments of all colours, all designed to retain the dominant power system for the inevitably short period in office. Hence, capitalist theory and the economists' model of a rational economic individual remains just that, a model. Women's experience of employment stems from the long-term process of patriarchy (and to some extent the reactions against it). Patriarchy has operated through the *laissez faire* capitalist system and permeates it. Any attempt to bring real change to the employment situation of women cannot ignore the wider problem of patriarchy; indeed, it must target and destroy it. This means disabling the mechanisms of patriarchy - concentration of wealth, centralisation of power, and the entire hierarchy of oppression in society.

It is not a fine choice to be either dependent on a husband or dependent on the state's pitiful and heavily begrudged handouts. Until we start to address the problems created by a social norm which sees full-time employment as the gold standard, 'and the rest can go whistle for scraps', everyone - and women in particular - will be trapped trying to balance having a life with being able to afford to live. 

For more information about issues raised in *CloserLook* articles, write to DA, or come to the SF Dayschool (details p.6). The next DA focuses on education. Bargain sub. and contact details are on p.9

Lost Innocence

Why have we declared war on the world's children?

New Labour is considering electronically tagging children as young as ten, in its drive to deal with the expected rise in young people held in custody, caused by implementing the 1998 Crime and Disorder Act. Already, children aged ten to fifteen are being tagged in two pilot projects run by the Youth Justice Board, in Manchester and Norfolk. The pilots will continue until March 2000. After this, the Government will decide on extending its plans nationwide.

Jack Straw is a real charmer - even more reactionary than Michael Howard. Speaking recently at a Family Policy Studies Centre Conference, he expressed surprise that, at any given time, 3,500 children under two years old are in local authority care. At the same time, childless couples are waiting many years on adoption registers.

Straw said: "It is in no-one's interest, not the mother's, nor the child's, nor the prospective parents', to allow a situation to develop where a crisis point is reached in the baby's first year, because the ability of the mother, often a teenager, to cope has been misjudged by well-meaning but misguided people". Here we have, in New Labour guise, the Tory hatred of the single/teenage mother. And it goes far beyond negative stereo-typing of grubby and stupid beer-drinking plebs. Straw's blatant discriminatory middle-class fear and loathing of working class people is remarkable - was he bullied at school, or did he just have a rough time potty-training?

Single parents need support. They are generally doing a good job with little practical help, in spite of the negative stereo-typing and right-wing ideology which masquerades as, on one hand, common sense, but also as 'social science'.

child soldiers

There are over 300,000 child soldiers worldwide, some as young as seven. They are mainly concentrated in Africa. Because of developments in weaponry, such as lightweight materials, children can carry, handle and operate such arms. These new weapons are produced mainly by Britain, France, Russia and China.

Currently, there are some 15 million children who are refugees, of which 5% are orphaned or abandoned. In many cases, they have witnessed the murder of their parents or family members. They have been psychologically scarred. As a result, many want revenge.

Children are regularly kidnapped and forced to fight. Through this, they have again been forced to participate in and witness atrocities. In Uganda, a gun can be bought for the price of a chicken.

punishment

The NSPCC has recently launched a campaign to end cruelty to children called "Full Stop". It reports that one child under five dies each week in the UK as a result of parental abuse and neglect. Recent Government-sponsored research found that more than a third of all children in 400 'ordinary' families were punished 'severely'. 'Severely' was defined as the 'intention or potential to cause injury or psychological damage'.

In Sweden, smacking and physical punishment was outlawed more than 20 years ago. In the 1980s, no Swedish children died and, between 1990 and



1996, 4 children died as a result of physical abuse. Prosecutions for abuse also showed a decline in trend during this period. This trend is most marked amongst parents in their 20s who grew up in this "no-smacking" culture.

Children are regularly kidnapped and forced to fight... In Uganda, a gun can be bought for the price of a chicken.

The British Government now seems to have accepted that the law on physical punishment should be changed following the ruling that a British stepfather's caning of a young boy breached the European Convention on Human Rights. The Children are Unbeatable Alliance have called for a complete ban on smacking and physical punishment. However, in spite of many parent education programmes, physical punishment is far from dying out in Britain. Still, over 90% of children are smacked by parents and carers, including babies under the age of one year.

Once it was thought it was acceptable for men to hit women, specially their wives. Now we believe that the concept of zero tolerance promoted by campaigners against domestic violence should be extended to all children, who are surely the most vulnerable members of society. 







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