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ANTI-GM



AUSTRIA



SEATTLE



direct actions

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**Direct
Action**

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DIRECT ACTION

DARE TO DREAM: THEN DO IT

3 questions: What's it all about? Is it good? When and how is it best?

Q.1. What is direct action? Well,
just to annoy pedants, linguists and
assorted clever dicks and dickesses, it
is doing something, but not indirectly.

Indirect action is where you
allow/encourage/tolerate someone
else doing something on your behalf
and/or in your name. In political
terms, this invariably means voting
for someone to make all the
decisions you know you could and should really
make yourself, but don't, for whatever reason.
Appealing to third parties to solve your problems for
you doesn't really work. Especially if they are the
very people who created your problems for you or
made them worse in the first place. Doubly
especially if they stand to profit from your problems.

The alternative is direct action. The general
thesis here is that direct action is doing stuff
collectively in the mutual interest of the group, not
getting or expecting someone else to do it.

Q.2. Is direct action always a good thing? The
obvious answer is no.

**Q.3. When is direct action the right thing to do, and
then, what sort?** This, of course, is the real nub of the
issue.

A starting point answer is that direct action is
right if it does not conflict with your basic aims,
principles or beliefs and, provided it is conducted at
the right time, in the right place, it is likely to help
you along the way towards meeting some objectives
you have. The first part suggests that you need to
have some developed wider ideas before any direct
action can hope to be 'successful'. The second part
implies that each direct action must be developed
and planned for each unique circumstance, and that
the outcome cannot generally be guaranteed in
advance - there is an element of risk and uncertainty.

To illustrate the general territory; a couple of
examples of really bad direct action. Marxists and
other reformist state socialists never had much
experience of direct action struggle. To advocate a
socialist dictatorship necessarily means going in for
snatching political power by outmanoeuvring the
present incumbents. Marx's theoretical, economics-
centred approach is fundamentally flawed. Its lack of
faith in the working class makes 'necessary' the
retention of a party, leadership and state - the very
things which are the cause of so much of the



oppression and misery. The role of direct action in
Marxism is restricted to exploiting the lack of
confidence within the working class and
manipulating them into following the new socialist
leadership, thereby providing them with the numbers
necessary to usurp the establishment. The Russian
Revolution of 1917 involved mass direct action, but
the resultant gains were not to be had by the working
class, for they had been giving their effort, faith and
lives away to the party - and the party got the fruit of
their labours.

The second example is direct action for national
liberation, where, for example, an identifiable
linguistic or geographic group seeks to 'liberate' itself
from a larger or more powerful group which is
controlling and oppressing it. There are numerous

IT IS NOT SO MUCH WHAT DIRECT ACTION IS DONE, OR HOW, OR WHY, BUT THAT ALL THREE OF THESE ARE CHUFFING CRUCIAL

active examples, and many have arisen out of
imperial colonialism, a particularly nasty chunk of
capitalist legacy. Such struggles involve advocating a
more local form of state, and in so doing, the national
liberation movement bows to the idea that the state is
a desirable institution - just not in the current form.
As such, it has the fundamental flaw that, if
successful, it will generate a new state - which may
or may not be 'worse' than the current oppressor.
The fact is that the state idea involves a higher
authority, which inevitably protects the interests of
those who have controlling power. National
liberation struggles are therefore really a battle over
the 'right to oppress', between the current state and
the would-be new state. To take direct action to
support a state, even one which does not yet exist, is
to support oppression. Even if it may appear that the
liberation struggle involves lesser oppression (at
present), as numerous cases show, the newly
empowered 'liberated' state can often be even more
vindictive, power-crazed and oppressive to 'its'
people than the previous regime.

Thus, an anarcho-syndicalist alternative to the
national liberation struggle is to build associations
between all people based on global solidarity, against
capitalism and the nation state. The point here is that
it is not so much what direct action is done, or how,
or why, but that all three of these are chuffing crucial.

(cont'd on page 4)

regulars:

theme: **DirectAction**

8 **blairedvision:** Meet the EMU Resistance

The Euro and Monetary Union are bad news, but not for the reasons the sceptical broadsheets would have you believe.

8-12 **actions+comment**

10; Making a killing. 11; Huntingdon death sciences. 12; @action.net>.

Sidelines: Immigration update; Glen of the Downs; Royal Mail walk-out & sacking; Stagecoach boycott; Campaign against silly homes; Nestlé Formula: the killings continue.

13 **globalfocus:** Remember Seattle

Email notes from a participant, posted 30/11/99.

14 **international news**

Mexico; Poland; Netherlands; Brazil; Nicaragua; Colombia; Israel; Italy; US; Bangladesh; Sweden. Plus: Free Mumia; Immigration round-up; Up-coming global events.

22 **notes+letters**

24 **ideas for change**

Occupy yourself.
The struggle to be really human.

34 **DA resources**

SolFed info., forthcoming events, campaigns, actions, friends and neighbours.



2 **Dare to dream: Then do it**

People celebrate confidence; capitalism kills it. Dare to dream hard enough, and doing direct action becomes natural and necessary. Notes on some hows and whys of the art form.

6 **Unharvesting unhinged?**

GM crops and direct action. Spring has sprung and the time for frenzied crop pulling is upon us once again. A pause for thought.

18 **New Labour New Terrorism**

The Government is planning to change the Prevention of Terrorism Act, making it a danger to 'free' speech and expression, your life, and the alternative media. 100,000 people across the UK could be affected - maybe you are one of them.

20 **Violence junkies**

Direct action and self defence; how violence might be used, or not. Can peaceful ends justify violent means?

30 **closerlook:**

Like there is no tomorrow

The fight to consume the last free lunch is on. The fall-out to worry about is not the crumbs, but the flying crockery. Welcome to consumerism, doing what it says on the tin.

reviews: **26-29**

books/pamphlets

Classics in Politics - Noam Chomsky
Remembering Spain; Italian anarchist volunteers in the Spanish Civil War
- Umberto Marzocchi
The Poll Tax Rebellion in Haringey
- Haringey Solidarity Group
Thought Bombs - Anthony Rayson

music/tv/film/video

Primal Scream - Exterminator
Negativland/Chumbawumba - The ABCs of Anarchism
The Mark Thomas Product

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Corporate Watch
Genetix Update
All Power to the Imagination
- Dave Douglass
21st Century Class War - Class War
Direct Action Against Apathy
Adbusters
Bristle
Non-violent Action

(cont'd from page 2)

It is worth examining the 'what', 'how' and 'why' questions of direct action in turn, as a way of working out what action is 'best' in any given case.

What? Well, I would suggest that direct action is always best taken in defence - particularly of ethical rights. So going out and defending our gains now, defending our rights now, and defending our future are all legitimate forms of direct action. Physically stopping people undermining our quality of life, our jobs, our environment, our human rights, by occupying spaces, withdrawing labour, or what have you, are all top notch.

How? I would suggest that direct action can only be successful in the long term if it is undertaken by people who organise themselves according to direct democratic principles - in other words, they are all directly involved in decision making and action. No political experts, no massed ranks under orders. This is because otherwise, the action will be used by someone else and the rights to the benefits we have fought for will be lost. Clique groups and the 'tyranny of structurelessness' takes hold around direct action groups where the organisational 'hows' have not been fully thought out.

Why? This goes back to aims; in my case, the aim of the direct action I do is to help along the new society I crave, built on the principles of equality of access to resources, mutual freedom and respect for people and the environment, social and political solidarity, and the development of the individual through social progress.

It cannot be stressed too much that it is all three which are needed. An authoritarian Marxist may agree with my eventual aims exactly, but we will be totally opposed to one another in every other way. Without agreement on basic methods, aims and principles, direct action may not be as effective as those who give so much time to it hope and deserve.

That is not to say that getting every move thought out way in advance is either possible or desirable. Direct action is like a game of chess where the rules keep changing; you have to have a general direction, even the general basis of theory, and of course, eventual aim and interim objectives, but you also have to be ready to change tactics at a moment's notice and work out what the implications of this are. Usually, this is done by experience, by looking back at last time or times before, and by talking to others with different experiences. In other words, it helps to be plugged into a wider

DARE TO DREAM:

DIRECT ACTION: WHAT, HOW, WHY?

group, and it helps to blend planning with spontaneity, practical ideas with head-based stuff. Theory is useless without action - but vice versa is also equally true.

BETTER THAN PROZAC

The real beauty of direct action, however, lies not in the planned, specific result of each sortie, but in the result of the experience itself. Direct action is empowering, solidarity-building, and is a cultural form in itself. Anyone who has done any has had the buzz. As someone once said, it is better than prozac.

By putting our ideas into practice, taking control of our lives, and learning to trust and be trusted in the important heat of the moment, direct action is a now-thing that can help us actually start building the new society in the shell of the old. Direct action is central to confidence, which is essential to creating the culture of resistance, which is at the core of the new society we are building totally independently of the existing capitalist order. Solidarity, the idea that only through co-operation in society can human beings be liberated and free, is given practical meaning in direct action. It means giving something to yourself and to others - it is doing something useful (provided the thinking bits above are satisfied). It is the very negation of capitalism and the state, based as it is on pure self-interest and the pursuit of profit, and indirect, passive deference to a higher authority.

Direct action is both a means of struggle now, and the means by which capitalism can be eventually overcome without the need for a state. It is far more than a mere method of self-managed struggle, it is the means by which capitalism can be replaced without the need for outside interference.

Not only is direct action a means of keeping struggle for a better future under our own, direct democratic control, and not only is it a more effective form of struggle than parliamentary action, it is also a means by

which people can become conscious of their oppression and how to counter it. Voting negates consciousness, since responsibility for action is negated, so why think about it, if you cannot do anything real about it? Direct action helps *make you think*.

Confidence, self-education, solidarity; direct action is far more than just a street tactic. It is the vehicle which forms the basis of both change and the confidence and ability to create further change towards liberation. Through every direct action, people demonstrate to themselves that they are not merely dispensable wage slaves, working class cannon fodder or beasts of burden with little intellect. They gain confidence in their abilities, gain a sense of their own worth, and in so doing become more acutely aware of their own oppression and the need for an alternative to capitalism.

Self-confidence as a primary ingredient in struggle and change cannot be overstated. People celebrate confidence, capitalism kills it. Dare to dream hard enough, and doing direct action becomes natural and necessary. All oppressive societies must develop a belief system that underpins the oppression within society, since they cannot rule by violence alone. At the heart of the belief system is usually the idea that there is no alternative to the current order, that the oppressed have no alternative to their oppression, and that things could/would be worse otherwise. Without the ruling elite, society would collapse into chaos. This simple confidence trick cannot be maintained if masses of people have confidence in themselves and their humanity. No confident direct activist will believe that running society must be left to their 'leaders and betters'.

In attempting to build a new society within the old, the self-organisation, self-education, and self-confidence around direct action is an ongoing igniter for fresh change. Once it gets going, it feeds itself. The fact that our current oppressors are only too aware of this potential runaway train is indicated by one of their latest plans - to extend their definition of 'terrorist' to anyone who is prepared to take direct action (see centre pages).

**PEOPLE CELEBRATE CONFIDENCE, CAPITALISM KILLS IT.
DARE TO DREAM HARD ENOUGH, AND DOING DIRECT
ACTION BECOMES NATURAL AND NECESSARY.**

THEN DO IT



21ST CENTURY: THE BIG ONE?

While they were developing direct action methods and ideas we still use today, the syndicalists of 100 years ago were laying down the basic tenet of anarcho-syndicalism; that freedom can only be achieved by people themselves. Only through common struggle based on self-organised direct action can people bring about their own liberation. This is the very opposite of the Marxist idea that a transitional period of state control would be needed in the immediate aftermath of the revolution, because people would be incapable of taking control of society themselves.

The early syndicalist movement was also flawed in that, for many, the revolution was seen as an orderly process, leading to a quick, simple and straightforward transfer of power from capitalism to socialism. There was an identifiable switchpoint from the old world to the new.

One problem with such a mechanistic view is that it virtually rules out spontaneity. While spontaneous direct action will never be enough on its own - if it was, the desperate state of 19th Century poverty and oppression would have meant that revolution would have occurred long ago - spontaneity is a critical addition to the modern direct action toolkit. As capitalism turns on the offensive against us, for example by using new 'terrorism' laws to ruthlessly smash our organisations and activities for liberation, we need to be able to react quickly and change our tactics and methods if necessary in order to maintain the initiative. The anarcho-syndicalist movement learned from the mistakes of syndicalists and rethought the general strike tactic. Reasoning that, in the face of the brutal force of the state against strikers and militants, the simple withdrawal of labour was going to be too passive and too planned to succeed, they began using wildcat strikes and occupations. This was developed into opportunistically taking control within workplaces. Instead of staying away from work, the idea emerged to take control of it in order to ensure production on behalf of the revolution. The 'revolution' in anarcho-syndicalist terms has now become largely viewed as an episode amongst many of increased unrest and conflict between state/capitalism and the movement for solidarity and freedom. There will be no single 'big bang', or at least only one that is a bit bigger than the others. Defining moments are all relative - revolutions are times of relatively more change; between them, direct action is an everyday thing - not something to be saved for some mythical one-off event.

SOWING THE SEEDS OF TOMORROW IN THE COMPOST OF TODAY

It is not just idle armchair talk, or the stuff of Channel 4 late night chat-show myths. Direct action is on the rise. Gone is the disastrous cul-de-sac that was Marxism. Gone is any pretence of revolutionary intent from the crumbling 'socialist' capitalist puppets, where success was measured in terms of votes at the polls. All 'ideals' were long ago sacrificed at the altar of the polling booth. In Britain, the drift away from socialism has finally run its course with the rise of New Labour, which now can no longer bear to speak the name.

At the same time, the more progressive, direct action inspired elements of the ecology movement have managed to organise and successfully counterpose the dominant apathy and desperation in the face of capital power. In the best examples, such groups have increasingly begun to broaden their direct action basis into self-organisations capable of confronting capitalism as a whole. This stems from recognition that capitalism and the state are the root cause of current wanton environmental destruction.

Aims, principles, whats, hows, whys are emerging (or re-emerging), giving real strength to direct action. At the same time, there is a greater realisation that using direct action and self-organisation instead of negotiation and leadership elections is paramount to success. The struggle must be based on solidarity - there are no short-cuts. "Unity is strength" is central to every struggle and every action, and only through this can we really expect to progress. 

UNHARVESTING UNHINGED?

GM CROPS AND DIRECT ACTION

CONTACTS

The winter list of GE test sites is up on

www.primalseeds.org/testsite.html

Two other standard places to look for GE info. are:

Genetic Engineering Network, PO Box 9656,
London N4 4JY
0181 374 9516

genetics@apc.gn.org
Genetix Snowball
One World Centre,
6 Mount St.

Manchester M2 5NS
0161 834 0295

genetixsnowball@onet.co.uk

They have lots of up to date info and various publications. A set of excellent GE briefings is also available from

Corporate Watch by sending an A4 SAE (50p stamp) to: Corporate Watch,
16B Cherwell St, Oxford
OX4 1BG

or for free on their website:
www.corporatewatch.org



The spring has sprung, and the time for frenzied crop pulling is upon us once again. Maybe now is a good time to take a closer look at our strategy and tactics and ask a few searching questions of our motivations and ourselves.

While I wholeheartedly endorse the destruction of GM test sites by mass direct action, there are one or two nagging doubts in my mind. Firstly, supposing Monsanto is driven out of business by the actions of crop pullers and consumers worldwide, will it really be a victory that we can celebrate? Sorry to sound pessimistic, but what about all the other mega-corporations out there and the governments backing them up? Are they all going to roll over and say, "Ok, you're right, we'll be good from now on. Let's destroy all this genetic technology and, while we're at it, we'll stop exploiting people and ripping off the Third World". Get rid of one bunch of fat cats and another bunch takes its place. I'm not advocating doing nothing, just trying to emphasise that we all need to keep our activities in perspective. Without putting what we do in the maize field into context, we are doomed never to make progress. If all we do is destroy and don't seek to build alternatives, then what exactly are we doing? Having a bloody good time admittedly, but ultimately we need to make a difference to the way future

society is organised in order to defeat the exploiters and the blood suckers once and for all.

There is a worrying tendency amongst some in the anti-GM movement to see themselves as some sort of elite, "we've got the bottle to actually defy the law, everyone else is just playing at direct action". This "eco-warrior" syndrome is terribly trendy in a post-modernist, don't get too serious kind of way, but it is bugger all use in the long run. Individual acts of reckless heroism may make good headlines, but they do little to organise MASS activity, which is the true measure of success.

Unless you are prepared to get your hands dirty by raising awareness, writing pamphlets and generally agitating, educating and organising for change, then you are little more than the syrup of figs of the movement - you pass through leaving little trace except a faint whiff of something unpleasant. Preaching to the converted is easy, but not a lot of use in building a genuine mass movement and organising for lasting change.

The anti-poll tax campaign mobilised tens of thousands of people into sustained direct action, yet, once the tax was killed off, the support quickly faded. Now the optimistic view is that many people were radicalised through their involvement in this campaign, and it's true to say that such a thing is impossible to measure. Some would argue that the Poll Tax



"IT IS A DISGRACE THESE PEOPLE SHOULD OCCUPY PRIVATE PROPERTY. THE PLACE TO MAKE THEIR PROTEST IS AT THE COMMONS, WHERE THEY WOULD BE LOCKED UP FOR THEIR PAINS."

Lord Macclesfield on the anti-GM activists who squatted a derelict farmhouse next to his land.



DEBRIEFING: M&S IS PANTS

The opening ceremony for the largest Marks and Spencer in the world in Manchester brought the crowds flocking in, including a small group of 'superheroes against GM pants', sporting unusually large Y-fronts and a particularly huge pair inscribed with the words "pants to GM cotton".

GM cotton is not segregated from any other cotton, and it occurs in most cotton clothes. M&S, who have recently embarked on their latest drive for more profit and cheaper labour and materials, said; "we haven't taken GM cotton out because our customers haven't asked us to".

Captain Y-front explained the action by saying "it's not just about food scares. GM cotton will increase corporate control and chemical use, and will threaten biodiversity". Monsanto has a monopoly on GM cotton, and US is the largest cotton exporter. GM cotton briefings (!) and some rather fetching large pants and banners are available to spice up actions elsewhere: Manchester EF!, Dept 29, 255 Wilmslow Rd, Manchester M14 5LW, or email cotton@equinox.freewire.co.uk.

organising led directly to Reclaim the Streets. However, most of the potential for mass action dissipated quickly and our problem was how to build on the gains made.

RTS, on the other hand, learned the lessons about building links. The old lefty way of "parachuting in" and trotting out the party line was seen for what it was - the deadening influence of the out of touch. Thus, RTS strives to build connections between environmental struggles, workers in dispute, and global capitalism. Its message is that one area of life - work, health, pollution, or whatever - can't be separated from others - what's happening in Nigeria, Stock Markets, consumerism, etc. We need to see the big picture in everything we do and we need to be part of the community we are fighting for, not an elite bunch of activists above it. Sadly, some seem to have lost sight of this aspect of direct action and instead have fallen for the glamour of destruction. One leading anti-authoritarian magazine lauded the J18 action for "putting London back at the top of the world rioting league". So what?

TECHNOPHOBIA

One of the main arguments against GMOs is that they risk unleashing an irreversible catastrophe on the world's eco-systems. While this is a theory we should never attempt to test out, it can blind us to the value of new technology and the enormous benefits that many innovations can bring to all of us.

The issue of who controls the technology throws up other questions about how big corporations operate and how Third World countries are held to ransom by first world governments and business. Many farmers in India, and indeed many activists here, would not disagree with employing technology that increases crop yields or lessens the reliance on pesticides. However, we all know we cannot trust a company whose sole aim is the maximisation of profit and market dominance.

Only technology shorn of its control by business and politicians can be fairly evaluated and employed safely. It may be that, given such conditions, GM or other innovations can be placed at the service of humanity and improve the lives of people all over the planet. We will never know until we operate in a truly democratic and accountable environment with the necessary checks on the abuse of power and knowledge.

In the light of this, we should be wary of rejecting all inventions and discoveries out of hand. We should ask what benefits can be had, weigh them against any potential risks instead of simply being anti-technology, then work towards the kind of society which unlocks potential, encourages debate and seeks solutions through consensus, instead of the unequal, corrupt and oppressive one we have now. 



sidelines

IMMIGRATION UPDATE

The leader of the Czech Nationalist Party called for the age of criminal responsibility for Romanies to be lowered at birth because their first crime is to be born. Such talk has encouraged the country's 5,000 skinheads to declare war on the Romany people. The Romanies have been given little or no protection, and have been left with little choice but to flee in their thousands. One destination for them has been Britain, where in the last 2 years some 10,000 have arrived, many at Dover. For the record, Britain is not a 'soft target' and these are not 'economic migrants'. Only 3 Romanies have been granted refugee status in Britain, and some 3,500 have been turned away.

New Labour's response to the crisis is to 'get tough' on such 'foreigners', and on anyone who refuses to get tough on them too. The Government has recently started developing a strong propaganda line aimed at identifying lorry drivers who "co-operate" with racist searches as being responsible and good citizens. Any haulier unable to show that they have a comprehensive plan in place to combat 'illegal' entrants now risks a £2,500 fine for each immigrant found.

GLEN OF THE DOWNS

Thirteen Glen of the Downs protesters were jailed on 12th February for refusing to give undertakings not to interfere with Wicklow County Council in the Glen of the Downs. Around 25 protesters were in the High Court, of which 13 refused to make the necessary legal promises. Mr Justice Barr noted evidence of contempt of court, and ordered them to be taken into custody until such time as they promised not to interfere with the road widening scheme in the Glen. He added that if they want to be made martyrs and carted off to prison, he would oblige them. <http://www.eco-action.org/index.html>



Meet the EMU Resistance

In the face of the rabid right wing nationalist forces now lined up against European Monetary Union, one almost by default has to support the Euro. This is especially tempting when those who support the Euro tend to dress their argument in the language of progress; peace loving pro Europeans versus xenophobic right-wing nutters. However, there is slightly more to it.

EMU'D BY DEFAULT

In feverishly rallying against xenophobic English nationalism, the 'feel good' liberals are merely replacing English nationalism with a new European nationalism. While they advocate free movement of people (labour) within the EU, they also pursue a policy of 'fortress Union' in supporting strict immigration control against people born outside the EU. The latest example is an agreement between the French and German "socialist" governments to harmonise procedures for the expulsion of immigrants under the forthcoming presidency. Part of this is a deal whereby developing countries have to agree to take back "illegal immigrants" in exchange for securing some preferential access to European markets. The new right-wing Austrian government has (correctly) argued that in strictly limiting immigration into Austria, it is only applying the same rules adopted by the EU as a whole. The wrath directed at Jorg Haider and the Austrian government is not over its racist immigration policies, it is about the rise of Austrian nationalism jeopardising the Euroland project.

Why not open up European borders? In short, because of the fear of being overrun by poor non-Europeans seeking to milk the European social system. This fear of foreigners is largely based on prejudice. It certainly cannot be justified on economic grounds. Virtually every piece of research suggests that opening up borders and allowing the free movement of labour increases "prosperity" and economic growth, not to mention enriching culture. Arguing for EMU is not progressive, it merely replaces "little Englander" with "little European" mentality. The only progressive position on this is to argue for the free movement of people, regardless of race, nationality, sex, levels of income or whatever other artificial division.

Incidentally, market economic theory requires free movement too, and the lack of it is proof that such theories are only followed partially and to provide smokescreen validity for continued wealth inequality.

The other liberal pro-Euro mainstay is that it will place Britain within social democratic Europe. This is the Trade Union Congress position and again, it is a bogus argument. European capitalism is slowly but visibly moving away from the social market system in favour of the free market US-style economy. Not surprisingly, leading this particular crusade is our very own Tony Blair. Arguing that the single currency should be seen as a platform for free market reform, he recently posed the question: "Does Europe continue with the old social model, which has an attitude to social legislation and welfare rooted in the 60s and 70s, or does it recognise that the new economy demands a redirection of European economic policy of the future?" To clarify what kind of Europe he wants, allow me to bore you with another quote, this time from Hasso Plattner, chief executive of SAP, a German software group. He commented on the wonders of the US free market system by proudly proclaiming that; "there is no way an industry such as ours can live with the 35-hour week. You need to work a 60-hour week to stay in the game."

REALITY CHECK

Even if moves to deregulate the European economy are resisted, there is no doubt that EMU will mean job losses and widespread economic misery. At its core, EMU is designed to replace a federation of national economies with an integrated European economy, in order to make the European economy more efficient in competing with the US and Asia. One of the quickest ways of achieving this is to strip out replication and encourage specialisation, by doing away with companies based on the national economy and creating a handful of new Euro-wide super-companies. For instance, instead of numerous banks in each country, merger-mania will ensure that we are left with just a handful of Euro-banks, operating throughout Europe.

Mergers and take-overs bring one certainty; less jobs. As the Euro and the drive towards efficiency take hold, we can expect wave after wave of job losses as national companies begin



to rationalise to compete on a European scale. For New Labour and much of the trade union leadership, this is a price that has to be paid for making European capitalism more efficient. But, as ever, it will be a price paid by working people, not politicians or union bureaucrats. With no alternative to capitalism on offer, much of the British left have now given up and resigned themselves to trying to get the best deal on offer from capitalism. Hence, the tacit support for EMU, with the vain hope that, from within the Euro, the left can halt the move towards US free market capitalism and ensure the social market model continues.

So, with the social democratic left bankrupt, Marxism and the planned centralist economy dead, and the Tories' ranting old right not even worthy of consideration, what can be done about EMU? A brief glance back through the 20th Century is in order. The strong direct action tradition in Britain developed out of syndicalism, which burst onto the British scene around the turn of the century, before fading in the 1920s. Its brief heyday left a lasting influence on militant workplace activism, including the post-war shop-stewards' movement. At the heart of the approach was the idea of class war; that the interest of the working class takes priority. If management proposals conflicted with the interests of the workers, they were rejected. If management attempted to impose change, direct action was organised, most notably, the immediate walk-out, which usually helped persuade management of the error of their ways.

The syndicalists took little account of the wider interests of capitalism. They flatly rejected management arguments that changes would benefit the company and therefore the workforce in the long run, or that similar changes were taking place in competing companies. The bottom line - the only line - was whether changes were against the immediate interest of the workforce; if they were, they were opposed. This approach made whole swathes of British industry virtually unmanageable. One good example is the newspaper industry, where workers resisted change in working practices and technological change for decades, until eventual defeat by Murdoch resulted in massive job losses.

The problem with recent workplace militancy in Britain generally is that it has too

often been devoid of wider political and social perspective. Marxists argue that workers should leave the wider political struggle to the political party, thus emptying the unions of their political content. As a result, workplace militancy has invariably become an end itself. Deprived of its wider perspective, British workplace militancy has increasingly meant sabotaging capitalism without any long term plan to replace it.

EMU RESISTANCE

It is from the perspective of politically and socially aware militancy that we should oppose EMU. It will act against working class interests and so it should be resisted. The implications for the efficiency of European capitalism are not our concern. We don't support capitalism, so why expect us to come up with ideas to patch it up, or give up our livelihoods for it? The point must be stressed that opposition to EMU is part of a wider opposition to capitalism. EMU is regionalist, protectionist and capitalist. To have a progressive, global, egalitarian perspective means opposing EMU.

Rationalisation within industry has to be resisted. This means gathering and building solidarity amongst working class people across Europe to provide a position of strength from which we can refuse to take on the work normally undertaken by a workplace elsewhere which is threatened with closure. Anti-union laws are framed against such tactics for a reason - solidarity works.

Seemingly endless attacks on working class people have to be resisted. The dressing of free market doctrine, the talk of deregulation, and the pleas to "act rational and accept change in the face of technological advancement" are trite nonsense. Effective opposition to this dirge will not come through appeals for workers to accept redundancy in the hope that aggressive free market capitalism will stay away and we will keep the watered down social market version in Euroland. Capitalism is rampant precisely because it has been able to con us into thinking that there is no short term alternative and that their change is somehow inevitable. By raising the banner of direct action, we can begin to pose a real, viable alternative which is worth fighting for both now and into the future. 

sidelines

ROYAL MAIL WALK-OUT & SACKING

One day last September, Royal Mail's Bridgewater Manager gave 5 minutes notice before proceeding to break a crucial written local agreement on sorting and cut-off times, which protects both delivery time-outs, and hence public service and jobs. Bridgewater members walked out at 11am, at the point at which they were told to carry on sorting and hence break the agreement. Five and a half hours later, they returned to work when management agreed to retain the agreement. However, soon after, the CWU Branch Rep was given notice - his last day was 3rd February.

Creeping privatisation in all but name is the aim of the game behind current Royal Mail management tactics towards 'teamworking' and the like. Their latest success has been in duping the CWU into a ballot over a lose-lose deal for postal workers, which went to a finely balanced 'Yes', after massive union backing. The Government is keen to see Royal Mail start competing more with courier firms; your local postie might even be delivering pizzas before long.

Help/support to CWU Rep, Bridgewater PDO, 25 Friarn St, Bridgewater, Somerset. For more info on the anarcho-syndicalist Communication Workers' Network, contact; CWN, PO Box 29, SW PDO, Manchester M15 5HW.

STAGECOACH BOYCOTT

Stagecoach boss Brian Souter, who gave over £500,000 to the campaign against lifting Section 28, has himself a boycott. He is Christian and New Labour, and that means he is against repealing the law, which prevents schools and teachers from promoting the acceptability of homosexuality. Stagecoach operates both buses and trains, so ask before you buy your next ticket.

Making a killing: Business as usual

If you want to go to prison, try robbery or tax evasion. Killing and maiming workers hardly ever results in a custodial sentence.

Only nine people have ever served custodial sentences for work-related safety offences.

■ Abdul Majeed, self-employed, 4 months in 1999 for ignoring improvement notices.

■ Paul Evans, foreman, 9 months (half-suspended) in 1998 for asbestos offences.

■ Mark Litchfield, skipper, 18 months in 1997 for manslaughter of three crew members.

■ Colin Barker and Knox Kerr, directors, 4 months each in 1996 for failing to comply with prohibition notices.

■ Roy Hill, director, 3 months in 1996 for asbestos offences.

■ Alan Jackson, director, 1 year in 1996 for manslaughter of an employee.

■ Kenneth Roberts, supervisor, 1 month in 1996 for perverting the course of justice after a workplace death.

■ Peter Kite, director, 3 years in 1994, reduced to two on appeal, for manslaughter of four members of the public.

In December, three businessmen guilty of construction plant theft and export were sentenced to a total of 11 years in prison. Two former directors of contractor Westbeck, of Catford, south London were banned from running a company for six years after they were found guilty of failing to keep proper accounts and withholding tax.

Yet, Electrical contractor Giffen Group was fined just £25,000 at Harrow Crown Court, where there is no ceiling on fines, when they pleaded guilty to the breaches of health and safety laws that led to the death of Ronald Bastie, an employee.

For nicking plant from a construction site you get stir, if you fiddle the tax you get banned from being in business, but if you negligently kill someone at work, it is business as usual. A few years ago, a small construction sub-contractor, Floyd Construction, was found guilty of breaches of safety law that caused the deaths of three young men working on east London's Watney Market. No-one was imprisoned, and the company continued to receive lucrative local authority contracts, making the guilty men very rich men too.

Lorry company bosses Stephen Bowles and Julie Bowles escaped with suspended sentences. The case involved a double fatality after their employee, Andrew Cox, fell asleep at the wheel and crashed into oncoming traffic. Judge Michael Hyam at the Old Bailey said the two directors of Berkshire-based Roy Bowles Transport had "turned a blind eye and should have known Cox was working such long hours as to be unsafe." Driver Cox was "dangerously exhausted" after working up to 60 hours to boost his pay. On investigation, it was found that Mr Cox and other drivers at the firm routinely worked horrendously long shifts. There was no system in place to regulate the drivers' hours. Stephen and Julie Bowles were found guilty of manslaughter for being "grossly negligent over the driver's working hours". In December 1999, they were given suspended sentences, while employee Andrew Cox was jailed for 30 months.

Neil and Andrew Medley employed three schoolboys to strip asbestos without protective clothing. They pleaded guilty to health and safety, child employment and environmental pollution charges in two separate prosecutions and got 240 and 120 hours community service respectively. Reach Environmental Ltd was recently fined £120,000 for a

botched asbestos strip in Bristol. But Reach still has an HSE asbestos removal license and is still working in the industry. Last year, the average penalty for workplace safety offences, including fatalities, was under £6,000.

Despite the 'tough talking', H&S and environmental laws, big companies can be as unconcerned about a prison sentence as they are about fines. No director or manager of a major UK company has ever been imprisoned for safety offences - and it is certainly not because they are not guilty. Last year, the Centre for Corporate Accountability revealed that Tarmac topped the list of workplace criminals with 75 convictions in the last 10 years, including prosecutions after 13 worker deaths and 20 serious injuries. No-one from Tarmac was imprisoned. The average penalty for each death was £11,475 pounds and just £3,200 for each serious injury. Behind Tarmac came: AMEC, with 39 safety convictions; engineering and construction giant BICC, with 36; house builder John Laing, with 35; British Steel, with 34; building firms Wimpey and Costain, both with 30; Mowlem, with 27; BET Ltd, with 21; and British Gas, with 19.

In contrast, Abdul Majeed, a self-employed builder from south London, was jailed for four months for ignoring advice from HSE inspectors. He may have been asking for it, but the point is that the big bosses evade jail for safety offences up to and including responsibility for workplace deaths, while jobbing builders like Majeed get banged up.

It is four years since the Law Commission itself proposed a new crime of "corporate killing", and the government is about to 'start a new round of consultation'. While Jack Straw beats the law and order drum and brands us all terrorists (see centre pages), workplace crimes and villains seem to be escaping his attention.

Even those government lackeys, the union leaders, have noticed: "Some employers are literally getting away with murder. And many more are committing GBH on their workforce. Company bosses may find themselves in the dock, but despite the horrific nature of the accidents caused by their negligence, they end up paying a ridiculously small fine." (John Monks, December 1999). Meanwhile, New Labour talks the talk: "Fines might be linked to a company's turnover or profits; on-the-spot fines might be levied for minor offences; compulsory health and safety training might be required; or a penalty point system might be introduced." (Health and Safety Minister Lord Whitty, December 1999). I think the emphasis is on might, and we know the rest. 

Article drawn from Hazards, PO Box 199, Sheffield S1 4YL, England.
Tel: +44 114 276 5695. Fax: +44 114 276 7257 email editor@hazards.org

On February 12th, the Huntingdon National Demo took place in Cambridge. This huge direct action event was part of a long and sustained campaign to close down Huntingdon Life Sciences, and followed on from the last National Demo on December 11th, which itself was attended by about 1,000 people.

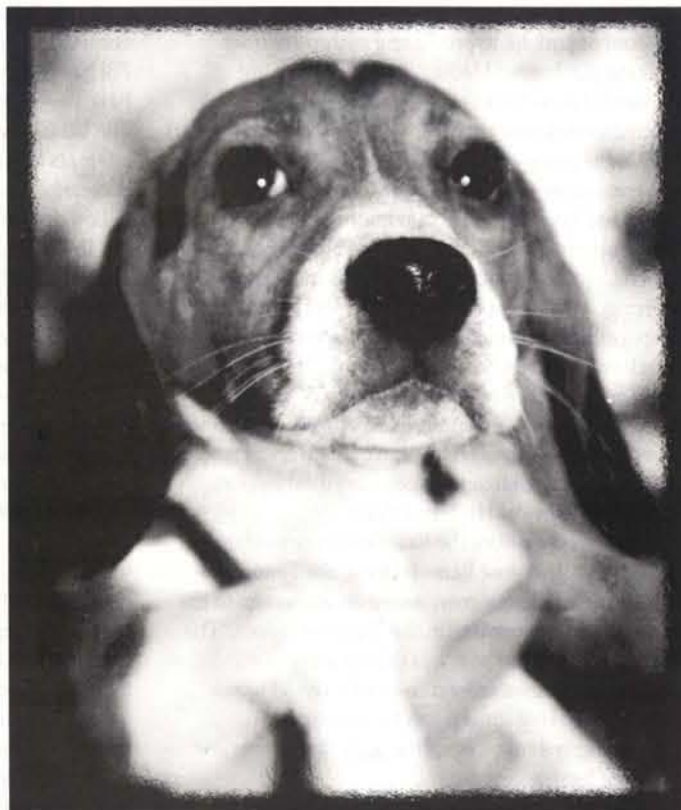
After the December event, a number of people decided on a splinter demo at HLS itself. Finding the place completely cordoned off by police, plan B was put into action, and the demo took place outside the home of one of the HLS animal experimenters. Within half an hour, the forces of law and disorder arrived - helicopter, riot vans and all. Fifteen arrests followed for 'conspiracy to cause criminal damage'.

Nevertheless, it was harassment, under sections 4(A) and 5 of the Public Order Act, that the fifteen were charged with in the end, while the prosecution were talking about upping it to 'violent affray'. Despite such scare tactics and legal hot air, all charges were dropped in January and the fifteen are currently considering suing for wrongful arrest.

As always, the state has shown its keenness to use a barrage of legislation, including the Public Order Act and the Criminal Justice Act, to silence legitimate protest. No doubt it is relishing a new opportunity in the revamped Terrorism Act (see centre pages). A few arrests and some trumped up charges which are soon dropped when the dust settles is their answer to increasingly successful direct action campaigns such as the Hillgrove Cats Campaign.

For further information on the HLS campaign and its activities against NatWest, or for leaflets to distribute in your area, contact:
Huntingdon Death Sciences Campaign, PO Box 325, Cambridge CB1 2UF.

Huntingdon Death Sciences



One of 71 beagle puppies rescued from HLS's beagle supplier in late 1999.

The appalling cruelty meted out to laboratory animals at Huntingdon Life Sciences (HLS) was exposed in April 1997 on the Channel 4 documentary 'It's A Dog's Life'. After this and subsequent revelations of abuse in the US, HLS soon got the hot potato treatment by leading clients eager to avoid being tainted by association with animal cruelty and thus protect their precious markets. Shares soon nose-dived, and it looked like HLS would be out of business before long.

Enter NatWest with a £24 million bail out. Hence, NatWest is one of the main targets of the Huntingdon Death Sciences Campaign's current activity. People who object to capitalism's need to torture animals for profit are urged to make their views known to the following:

J I Hartley, Head of Customer Relations, NatWest, Level 4, Carlyle House, 4 Eastcheap, London EC3M 1AH.
Tel: 0171 726 1081
Fax: 0171 726 1967

Or contact HLS's own branch manager:

Greg Warman, NatWest, Carlyle Road, Cambridge CB4 3DH. Tel: 01223 324949, Fax: 01223 01974



If you can't get to the demo, get the T-shirt.

sidelines

CASH

The Campaign Against Silly Homes (CASH) is a group of local residents in Hockley, Essex. Since July 1999, they have maintained a protest camp against the building of sixty luxury homes on eleven acres of wood, scrub and common land.

Between them, the local council and the developer, Countryside Properties, have tried 4 times to get the camp evicted. Though still supported by local people in the shape of food, clothes and baths and by 'veterans' of Newbury and Manchester Airport, the camp is now threatened with imminent eviction.

The local council got the first eviction order in September. The fact that area is 'common' land exposes the sham of so-called democracy. The council never once consulted local people over its future, and (of course) the legal system took the side of profit and big business against people. Despite all, the eviction order was neatly side-stepped by moving the camp to adjacent non-council land also earmarked for development.

Early efforts to obtain new eviction orders were defeated by the developer's own incompetence - they didn't own the land. In the meantime, the camp has been able to successfully hamper 'progress'. However, since January, the developer, now in possession of the land, has finally secured an order. The land around the camp has been cleared and protesters are preparing to retreat underground imminently.

For further info, ring the camp mobile: 0831 717815, or look up the campaign's web site at: <http://www.angelfire.com/mt/GBH>.

sidelines



NESTLÉ FORMULA: THE KILLINGS CONTINUE

A former sales rep. for Nestlé has said that the company repeatedly encouraged him to break World Health Organisation international codes to promote its products to breastfeeding mothers. Syed Aamar Raza, who worked for Nestlé Milkpak in Pakistan between 1994 and 1997, pointed out that doctors were being given gifts in exchange for promoting Nestlé products, mothers were being given 'free' milk for a limited period (i.e. until their breast milk dried up) and sales targets were being set.

Worldwide, two babies die every minute because they are not breastfed. Nestlé and the baby milk industry plays a full part in this, and has long realised that it has to work hard to replace these 'lost customers' by persuading 4,000 new mothers to become customers every day.

Last year, the Advertising Standards Agency blew apart Nestlé's pretence by upholding a complaint against its 1996 advert which claimed it had a 'responsible involvement' in the developing world. This, despite a vigorous and well-funded 3-year defence by Nestlé.

Nestlé's practices cannot fail to bring them into the anti-global capital spotlight. No surprise then, that when the anti-WTO parties spread across the world from Seattle on November 30th, about 40 protesters entered the Nestlé factory in Halifax and climbed on the roof, unfurling a banner saying 'people and planet before profit'. Sixteen were initially arrested and charged with conspiracy to commit burglary (there were rumours that some chocolates had proved too tempting).

The good news is that on February 18th all charges were dropped, raising the possibility of claims against the police for wrongful arrest.

@action.net>
@action.net>
@action.net>

The hacktivists used dozens of powerful PCs to send a flood of false data onto such well-known sites as eBay, Amazon, CNN and Buy.com, and a similar assault was made on Yahoo a day earlier.

Amazon's site was inaccessible after a large amount of junk hit it, preventing customers from making purchases. Media reports on this latest successful mass hack seem to indicate that the mainstream is now prepared to accept the reality that hacking is going on, and a lot of it. Nevertheless, all the companies involved strongly denied that the hacks had been able to obtain information about their customers. The attack against Buy.com was timed to coincide with the company's initial stock offering. While no-one has apparently claimed responsibility, the media are using expressions like 'electronic vandals' to describe them. The systems were not randomly chosen, but carefully targeted. No easy targets like communities, schools or charities were hit, only commerce. Some of the world's most established, profitable websites were disabled for hours, and they couldn't do a thing.

Two weeks before the East Timor referendum in August last year, José Ramos-Horta, the Timorese human rights campaigner, issued an ultimatum to the Indonesian Government in the Thai newspaper, *The Nation*. The thrust of it was that an army of a hundred teenagers around the world would wreak havoc by hacking Indonesian Government computing systems, disrupting communications and draining bank accounts.

Although it has not been reported, hacktivism has been on the rise since J18. The security software company mi2g reported that some 10,000 cyber attacks were launched on the city by a group of hackers calling itself June18.

Last May, the US Dept of Energy website, along



with others, was hacked into in retaliation for Nato's bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade. The FBI has reported that they and the Dept of Defence have been subject to almost 100 attacks a day since. The US Government admits there were over 250,000 attempts to hack their systems last year, most being successful, and it has just announced it is to spend \$3 billion on fighting hacktivism.

In Britain, hardly any of the attacks on the city were reported to the police. Companies do not want to publicise flaws in their security. The British Government does not like to talk about it, beyond vague statements about odd people doing unpleasant things, apparently motivelessly. However, they have just announced a new MI5 initiative called the National Infrastructure Security Co-operation Centre, which is to target hacktivists. One suspects there may be more than just a few bored teenagers involved. Ms Anne Campbell, an MP who speaks on techo-babble, sees hacktivism as a 'threat to democracy'. "However, much one disapproves of the Indonesian regime, the very idea that a group of hackers can disrupt a country this way is very scary". She is quite prepared to support the bombing of Serbia, Kosovo and Iraq, and no doubt supports New Labour's 'ethical foreign policy', but finds the non-violent disruption of a vicious, genocidal dictatorship 'scary'. This sums up the hypocrisy of New Labour. One must agree with Ramos-Horta, when he said he feels morally justified about hacktivism. He is reported as saying "I find it a far more moral way of fighting than using the NATO tactic of bombing a country back into the stone age".



SLEEPLESS IN SEATTLE

Posted 30th November 1999 by a Z-magazine worker

Ballpark 50-100,000 demonstrators have assembled in Seattle. They are farmers and industrial workers, unionists and environmentalists, young and old, men and women, from the U.S. and from the Third World. They are angry and their target is the WTO and oppressive world trade, the market system and capitalism itself. They are there to raise social costs to elites by their actions on the scene and around the world (75,000 demonstrated in France, for example) to curtail or better to close down the WTO agenda.

So what do you do if you are in charge of the City and have Clinton due in town imminently and the whole world, literally, watching? What's the elite strategy?

(1) You can sit back and be nice and allow the demonstrators to move freely and make their points and develop confidence and grow in number and size and, most important, in their mutual solidarity, with more people arriving every hour, and education and outreach blossoming each day.

Or (2) you can try and break the thing up, quickly, even if at great risk should you fail.

From early reports, it seems the powers that be have decided that to leave hands-off was a recipe for disaster. They likely envisioned the spectre of growing numbers, growing willingness to do civil disobedience, and worst of all, growing solidarity between diverse sectors and outreach to new constituencies, and realised that throughout the country and world this would send a message that dissent can restrain the state. They don't like that.

Their other option - the usual favourite choice - is to try to bust up opposition by using as much force as they can get away with. The idea in this case is to send an immediate message that being in Seattle as a demonstrator means braving gas, truncheons, and rubber bullets, at least. The police and media try to get the less mobile and less militant demonstrators to leave. Then, the thinned ranks can be herded away from the WTO buildings and arrested or banished.

Judging by early reports, I'm guessing that's the elite plan. The tactics are very typical - intimidating costumes, quick and eager but still for the moment limited violence, curfews, provocation to get demonstrator (or town citizen) actions that one can complain are the source of the repression. Provoke a little violence, repress it, in due course, with a lot...

The demonstrator reaction will hopefully be not to fracture but instead to generate more and more organisation, discipline, and steadfast solidarity and militancy in marching, and, when need be, in committing non-violent civil disobedience.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN?

No one can possibly know, of course. But if you are in Seattle, I think the thing to try to affect is whether Seattle's citizens — its cab drivers, its bus drivers, its small shop keepers, its folks on the street — become sympathetic to the demonstrators or even outright supportive of them, and whether the union and other more mainstream demonstrators align with the street demonstrations and continuing marches and rallies, telling the Seattle police that their opposition is workers like themselves, and angry ones at that. This is already an important event. If alliance and solidarity can be forged, it will be historic.

Here are some sites where you can get excellent up to the minute information to pass along to others to build support for the demonstrators and opposition to the WTO: ZNet's Global/WTO Watch — Direct from the scene reports and analysis—and you can post your own reports: <http://www.zmag.org/CrisesCurEvts/Globalism/GlobalEcon.htm>.

The Seattle Indy News Center — on the ground, on the scene, with audio, video, and print reports: <http://www.indymedia.org/>

Democracy Now — Amy Goodman reports with noted guests on the scene on events in Seattle: <http://www.webactive.com/pacifica/demnow.html>

World Trade Watch Radio — Live reports from Seattle with Julie Light and Norman Solomon and their guests: <http://www.webactive.com/pacifica/demnow.html>

Global Exchange's Democratise the Global Economy — Analysis and context: <http://www.globalexchange.org/>

Corporate Watch's WTO Coverage — Analysis of corporations and their role in society focused on the WTO: <http://www.corpwatch.org/feature/index.html>

Food First — Food politics in general and regarding the WTO: <http://www.foodfirst.org/>

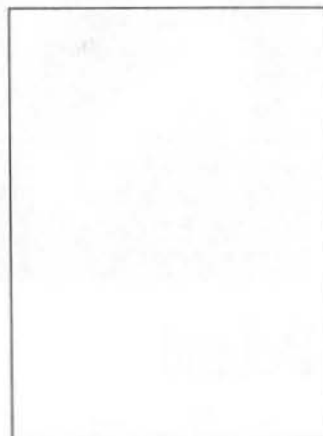
The Preamble Center: A research project into the U.S. economy ... with special coverage of the WTO: <http://www.preamble.org/>

Legal Help for Seattle Demonstrators: Information and connections: <http://www.nlg.org/wto/>

Michael Albert Z Magazine / ZNet www.zmag.org



...if you are in Seattle, I think the thing to try to affect is whether Seattle's citizens become sympathetic to the demonstrators or even outright supportive of them...



**POST-SEATTLE IS HAPPENING!!
SEE P.35 AND THE LINKS ABOVE
FOR THE LATEST ON ANTI-WTO
ACTION 2000**

Mexico -

9 month sit-in, 745 arrests, 100,000 plus on the streets

On February 9th, over 100,000 people took to the Mexico City streets to demand the liberation of students arrested when police regained control of the city's main university campus, closed by a nine-month strike.

The demonstration, which included students, parents, trade unions and left groups, was the largest in Mexico for 12 years. Chanting "freedom, freedom", the demonstrators demanded the release of the 85 students held following the police attack

on the occupied campus on 6th February, when a total of 745 people were initially arrested as police took control of university buildings and dismantled barricades. The demonstrators and their banners pledged to continue the strike even though their occupation had ended.

The National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) is Latin America's largest university, and the fact that the students and their supporters have successfully occupied it for over nine months demonstrates how seriously they are to be taken.

As with most large demonstrations in

Mexico these days, the opportunity was not missed to call noisily for the Institutional Ruling Party (PRI)'s 70-year hold on power to come to an abrupt end. Chants of "not a vote for the PRI" echoed across the historic city centre as more than 100,000 people — some estimates put the number of 150,000 people — converged on the central Zocalo square.

The occupation began last summer in protest at plans to introduce tuition fees in the university. However, students added new demands after university officials subsequently withdrew the fees. 

(A-Infos)



Poland

The gelatine factory in Brodnica (between Torun and Olsztyn), has been taken over and is being run by a workers' committee. It used to be state owned, before being sold to Grabek, a "gelatine baron". However, Grabek failed to fulfil contractual obligations regarding employment conditions and investment in the plant. The workers' response was to "evacuate the bosses on wheelbarrows" (apparently, the Polish method of firing bosses), and continued production without them. There have been threats of cutting supply from the government, but none have been put into action to date. There remain 2 outstanding law suits, one against the workers and the other against the bosses. 

Poland II

The Russian embassy in Warsaw was picketed in a demonstration against the war and ethnic cleansing in Chechnya. In a lively skirmish, 5 of the over 200 present were arrested and everyone was attacked by the police. Many of the protesters were anarchists, but there were also people from Katyn memorials, Belarus, the Polish-Chechen Committee, and others. Banners suggested "Leave the Chechens alone, drop your bombs on the Kremlin". Demonstrators congregated outside the police station until everybody was released. 

(A-Infos)

Netherlands

Tens of thousands of Dutch secondary school students went on strike against government education plans to cut access to education. The basic message contrasted the Dutch government's keenness to spend lots of people's money on NATO bombing of the Balkans with its claim of poverty when it comes to education funding.

One demonstration involved over 20,000 students and teachers in The Hague. Dutch peace activists participated, distributing leaflets calling for solidarity with schools in Yugoslavia by helping the OBJ (the Dutch Foundation for Reconstruction of Primary Schools in Yugoslavia). 

(DAMN)

Brazil

On the night of Thursday 2 December 1999, Governor Roriz arranged a massacre. José Ferreira da Silva was murdered with a 12 calibre shotgun. Dozens were wounded. Two workers were left blind in one eye.

The scene was a wage campaign demonstration by Federal District government employees. José was a 34-year-old gardener who had been in his job for less than a year.

Federal District government behaved as in the days of the dictatorship, with top leadership, including the Secretary of Labour and the Home Secretary on hand to oversee the "exemplary punishment". Special military units, dogs and anti-riot armoured vehicles were brought in against 600 unarmed workers on a peaceful demonstration.

The massacre began around 1.30 p.m., when the special units arrived on the scene and immediately opened fire. Men, women and even the company crèche were targets as the forces of the state were unleashed. Anyone who attempted to show even minimal resistance was shot point-blank with rubber bullets. Even the injured and fallen were shot where they lay. Several people were also hit by real bullets. José was assassinated with three shots to the chest. No-one was allowed on the scene to help the injured.

Roriz's right-wing government has taken to destroying union offices and prohibiting demonstrations and the use of sound-system vehicles in public places. It has also ended democratic elections for school directors, sacked workers who have dared denounce its failure to deliver its campaign promises, and embarked on a systematic campaign of persecution of political opposition.

Denounce this disgusting frenzy and demand the punishment of all those involved in the massacre.  (Labournet)

Note: Brackets at the end of a news item indicate where you can go for more information on the net:

Labournet - <http://www.labournet.org/>

DAMN - <http://www.damn.tao.com>

A-INFOS - <http://www.ainfos.ca>

DA - email da@directa.force9.co.uk for info.

All these and more links can be reached by simply clicking your way to <http://www.directa.force9.co.uk>

Nicaragua

At least 65 workers at the Jem III garment factory in Managua's Las Mercedes free trade zone were fired at the beginning of January, ostensibly for participating in a strike which took place in late November/early December. The most recent firings are part of a wave of downsizing, and occurred as management switched workers from their usual assignments to lines where their income would decrease, in violation of Nicaragua's labour code. Management had sought to have the resultant strike declared illegal but, in an historic first in Nicaragua's maquiladora sector, the Ministry of Labour ruled it legal. Management promised retaliation against workers who had participated in the strike and the sackings were the result of them carrying it out.

Reports conflict as to the exact number of sackings, partly because they are being announced by management a few at a time, apparently to cause such confusion and to minimise worker resistance. (Labournet)
Send faxes of protest to: Mr. Jeffrey A. Marine, JEM Sportswear, 459 Park Avenue, San Fernando CA 91340. Fax: (818) 361-8055. 

Italy

On January 6th, 400 people demonstrated in San Benedetto del Tronto (in Marche, central Italy) against the Mayor's threat to evict the "Totem & Tabu" Social Centre, occupied since 1993. The Town Council wants the self-managed building to be turned into an authorised recording studio/cultural centre, thereby closing the space for the local alternative, anti-fascist and libertarian movements.

The demonstration was a lively affair and a notable event for the small town (population about 40,000). People from surrounding towns turned out and gave their red and black flags an airing.

Following the demonstration, one town councillor from the Communist party resigned. The struggle to save the centre is continuing.  (DA)

Columbia

On 19 January, over 5,000 heavily armed Colombian Army troops invaded the U'wa traditional territory at Cedeño, at Occidental Oil's new Gibraltar 1 well site. Police forces also moved in *en masse*, aiming to provide security for Occidental engineers. Since November 1999, over 250 people from the U'wa community have been occupying the Cedeño site.

Oxy and the government are blatantly ignoring the constitutional and legal principles establishing the communal lands of ethnic groups as inalienable, untouchable, and protected by public deeds of collective property. The Colombian government now intends, through an obscure process, to declare the U'wa territory a special oil reserve area, using the false argument that the national oil industry is covered by law as a public utility and social interest. Support and solidarity is needed to help oppose and mobilise against the government and the oil industry. (Labournet)

For more info or to send messages of support, email;
<mailto:cobacata@colnodo.apc.org> or censat@colnodo.apc.org

Messages and letters of protest to;
JUAN MAYR, Minister of the Environment, Juan_Mayr_M@hotmail.com and jmayr@minamb.gov.co

Dr. ANDRES PASTRANA, President of the Republic of Columbia, [Palacio de Nariño, Fax 2867434. Bogotá. pastrana@presidencia.gov.co](mailto:pastrana@presidencia.gov.co)

Dr. GUSTAVO BELL LEMUS, Presidential Advisor on Human Rights, Fax 571 3418364. Bogotá.

Dr. NESTOR HUMBERTO MARTINEZ NEIRA, Home Secretary, Fax 571 2515884. 

Israel

Israeli dock workers have been in dispute for over 8 months against government privatisation plans, which include a new non-union port in the north of Ashdod. The general idea seems to be to drive down conditions in the established Haifa and Ashdod ports, with the national docks company being broken into competing companies in the run up to privatisation. One worker stated: "This dispute is part of the battle of the government to break the organised working class. They want workers who beg for work every day. It pains them to see workers who earn decent wages and have job security." (Labournet)

Messages of support to;
Shlomo Shimon, Workers' Committee, Ashdod. Fax + 972 8 8517826. 

Free Mumia

Despite the latest stay of execution, Mumia's life remains in peril at the hands of the US State killing machine.

Demonstrations continue in support of Mumia across the world. In Oslo, Norway, a demonstration was followed by the first open show of support from the Norwegian Journalists' Union. Stand-up comedy was also staged along with solidarity and political speeches in support of Mumia, after which about 250 people went to the US Embassy for a protest. Blitz, a local group, had built a model of an electric chair, which they connected to an electricity supply then and there. The result was sparks, fire, an explosion and a small inferno which raged for over 20 minutes. The police stood by, mindful of the riots in support of Mumia, which resulted from president Clinton's visit to Oslo in November.

In Denmark, the police attacked the Mumia demonstration almost immediately, as protesters attempted to stand still for 17 minutes – one for each year Mumia has been on death-row. The demonstrators were encircled as police drove into them from all sides using riot vans. After considerable trouble, the march managed to proceed to central Copenhagen, but the police again attacked with batons and tried to run people over with their armoured vehicles. Numerous arrests and injuries resulted.

In Britain, regular actions, leafletings and a national demonstration in London on March 4th ensured that Mumia has remained in the news.

Contact MUMIA MUST LIVE! at BM Haven, London WC1N 3XX.
Email: mumia@callnetuk.com
Web site: www.callnetuk.com/home/mumia



US

In February, Northwest Airlines began searching home computers of flight attendants, looking for e-mail evidence that the employees helped to organise a sick-out at the airline over the New Year's holiday (see also DA 13).

The search has since been suspended pending a temporary settlement of the airline's lawsuit against Teamsters Local 2000, the union representing the 11,000 flight attendants. Nevertheless, Northwest's action comes at a time when e-monitoring of employees online activities is undergoing explosive growth. Increasingly, courts have been willing to help companies crack down on so-called "cybersmearing" – bad-mouthing companies or their management online. "Business speech is not subject to the same protections as political speech," said a Minneapolis attorney who specialises in cyberlaw: "You can't say whatever you want about a company."

This latest action by Northwest workers follows that in spring 1998, when the company's mechanics, frustrated by the pace of contract negotiations, began an unauthorised work slowdown that forced flight delays and hundreds of cancellations. Union leaders disclaimed any knowledge or authorisation of the campaign, which employees advocated on Web sites and message boards. (Laboumet)

Sweden

30 Anarcho-syndicalist Youth Federation (SUF) activists forced the ticket barrier to the subway station at Slussen in the centre of Stockholm. On reaching the platforms, they put up posters with informative messages such as 'Next train is free'. They then enjoyed a free ride to the next station, where they gave a short presentation on the subject of 'free public transport for all'.

Stockholm has seen a wave of privatisation and neo-liberalism since the right-wing coalition took over in the City Hall last year. The subway has been sold to the French company 'Connex', whose first initiatives have been to raise the already expensive 'monthly ticket' price and stamp out any ticket fraud by use of new control equipment. SUF people have hinted that the action may become a monthly tradition. (A-Infos)

US II

Thousands of engineers and technicians streamed out of Boeing plants on 9th February, kicking off the first 'bona fide' strike ever by white-collar workers at the Seattle aerospace company.

Departing workers clutched bags, boxes of files and personal belongings. At the Renton plant, pickets began massing at street corners. Picket lines went up around Boeing operations in Everett, Mukilteo and Lynnwood.

The union, SPEEA, Boeing's second-largest, represents about 22,000 engineers, scientists, manual writers, software designers and technicians in Washington, Kansas, Florida, California, Oregon, Texas and Utah. About 13,000 are actual union members.

White-collar workers have struck Boeing for only a day in nearly half a century, and even then many crossed picket lines. The strike has been a true showdown between a resurgent union and a company intent on holding the line on pay and benefits. (Laboumet)



Bangladesh

'Faridabad Majdoor Samachar' is a Hindi monthly paper with a 5,000 copy print run which is distributed free along roadsides during shift-changes across Delhi. Over half of the 400,000 factory workers in Faridabad are casual and most of them get less than the statutory minimum wage, presently Rs. 1852 (US\$ 43 approx.) per month. What with wages regularly left unpaid, and factory closures common, there is plenty to report in the paper. However, management goons have begun increasingly ferociously attacking distributors on the streets. After the latest attacks in January, those involved have begun requesting international solidarity, either directly or by sending protest letters to the Indian government through the Indian embassy in the country you live. (DA)

Immigration round-up

As the Twentieth Century progressed, so the number of refugees increased. The start of the 21st Century is being marked by entrenchment of the 'rich' world behind new iron curtains of immigration controls. Both the US and Europe, as well as other rich nations (e.g. see Australia, below) are trying to whip up racist hatred to help gain support for their 'divide and rule' strategy. Immigration control will increasingly be a major battleground for those of us seeking a world without borders.

Australia

Asylum-seekers incarcerated at the Curtin refugee camp in Western Australia went on hunger-strike at the beginning of February, demanding better living conditions. The Immigration Minister refused to consider their demands and insisted that they tell others who may seek asylum in Australia that they will not be welcome. Curtin is a disused air-base in Western Australia's arid north-west. It now has barbed wire and guards, and the temperature is soaring as the desert summer progresses. One refugee has already been hospitalised suffering dehydration.

Despite the UN convention requirement not to use brutality to make an example of people, the Australian Government continues to use detention and punishment alongside a calculated racist campaign. The Premier of Western Australia recently said that if the refugees did not like conditions at Curtin, they should "go back home".
Messages of protest to:
Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, The Hon. Philip Ruddock MP, Suite MF 40, Parliament House, Canberra ACT 2600. Fax: 00-61-2-6273-4144

Note: Brackets at the end of a news item indicate where you can go for more information on the net:

Labournet - <http://www.labournet.org/>
 DAMN - <http://www.damn.tao.com>
 A-INFOS - <http://www.ainfos.ca>
 DA - email da@directa.force9.co.uk for info.

All these and more links can be reached by simply clicking your way to <http://www.directa.force9.co.uk>

Italy

In December, a fire killed four inmates and injured dozens at the immigrant jail in Trapani, Sicily, where inmates are crammed 15 to a cell. It prompted an official inquiry, which exposed some of the squalid living conditions in the country's eleven 2-year old immigrant jails. This, combined with riots and general unrest, has forced the government into announcing sweeping reforms. The only sign so far is that work has started on expanding Trapani to hold more inmates.

Meanwhile, no progress is apparent on the cases of the inmates who, because they have committed no crime, are officially known as "guests" living in "reception centres". Criticism from governments across fortress Europe is non-existent - European Union partners are anxious that Italy, a gateway for north Africa and the Balkans, holds firm.

Spain

All direct action is not good; some is downright racist. In February, violence broke out in the southern agricultural town of El Ejido, torn apart by clashes between white locals and immigrant workers from north Africa. The police arrived on the scene long after a group of local bigots had kicked off. The violence was sparked by the arrest of a mentally unstable Moroccan man who admitted killing a local woman. Acrid smoke from fires which destroyed a plastics factory and petrol station hung over the town. Schools and shops were closed. The government delayed taking action against the bigots, apparently as a 'race card' tactic in the run up to the general election.

Elsewhere, in Gijon, Asturias, more useful direct action saw street battles in the docks on February 11th, after 231 workers were effectively sacked by Nagisa. Teargas failed to break the barricades and a forced 24-hour stoppage ensued.



Up-coming global events

IMF PROTEST 16-17TH APRIL

Washington, April 16-17 will be the second major outing for the Mobilisation for Global Justice coalition, after its debut in Seattle (see p.13). The US capital is the home of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank Group, whose coercive powers have forced the global economy into its present shape. They were instrumental in creating the World Trade Organisation. A major six-monthly meeting will be the occasion for a demonstration of rejection of their rules and their system.

The links between the IMF, the World Bank Group, the WTO, and multinational corporations will continue to be exposed through such actions, as well as their practices and role in maximising private profits and destroying the environment, people's livelihoods and human rights.

Web site - www.a16.org. Join the e-mail list by sending a blank e-mail message to a16-international-planning-subscribe@egroups.com

MAYDAY 2000

A Global Day of Action is planned for MayDay, following on from the successful Global days of resistance and carnival against the capitalist system last year - J18 and N30. Peoples' Global Action are one of the co-ordinating groups, dedicated to building a strong, bold, and creative grassroots movement for a society based on solidarity, co-operation, grassroots democracy, and ecological sustainability. A huge range of events and actions are likely to happen, as local groups across the planet plan and do their own thing on the day. Why not join in? For details and more info, visit the MayDay 2000 Web site at <http://www.freepress.org/mayday2k/> or contact DA.

PRAGUE, SEPTEMBER 2000

Following Seattle, the next summit of the IMF and World Bank is planned to take place in Prague, in September. It is also billed by world leaders as an end-of-millennium tribute to capitalism and to its "triumph" over (so-called) "communism". The general purpose will be to show the vastly impoverished peoples of the region that there is "no other future possibility" for them but to accept the new reality of "globalised capitalism".

Activists in the Czech Republic see it differently, and they will be out in force to make the IMF, World Bank, EU, NAFTA and the G7 feel unwelcome. The mass protest will include a list of demands to smash the IMF-World Bank, cancel the debt immediately and to present an alternative of a world-wide, anti-capitalist alliance. For info, email ralf@anarch.free.de

New Labour,

THE TERRORISM BILL WILL:

■ make any activist at risk of coming under the new definition of 'terrorist' at some point in time;

■ make refugees supporting the overthrow of oppressive regimes in their own country terrorists;

■ make any degree of support for a proscribed organisation into 'terrorism';

■ introduce powers to the police to declare cordoned areas, within and adjacent to which anyone can be sent to prison;

■ introduce new 'sus' powers of stop, search and detain, which could affect anyone.

The Government is proposing to change the Anti-Terrorism Act. Initially, it was brought in as a 'temporary' measure after the IRA pub bombings in Birmingham in 1974. Now they want to make it permanent. They have also decided to take the opportunity of including a few new categories of English, Scottish and Welsh 'terrorists' into the bargain, from democratic demonstrators to people who have occasional thoughts of political dissent.

The Terrorism Bill contains a clear and explicit intention; to change the definition of terrorism from being "use of violence for political ends" to the far wider-ranging "use of violence against persons or property or the threat to use such violence to intimidate or coerce the Government, or any section of the public for political, religious or ideological ends". Under both the existing Act and the 'new improved' version, people can be arrested without a warrant and held for 48 hours. This can be extended to 5 days by order of the Home Secretary.

The Terrorism Bill signifies the 'coming of age' of a vicious piece of knee-jerk reaction to IRA activity. The scope is clearly being widened to include almost anyone the Government does not like or may not like in the future. The Home Secretary will be given the right to proscribe domestic groups and organisations, making it a criminal offence to belong to or associate with them. It will also become a criminal offence to incite groups or individuals to commit 'terrorist' acts in a foreign country.

The banning of domestic groups the Government does not like is, frankly, frightening and dangerous. So is the creation of a wide range of new 'crimes' that could lead to individual arrests, for example, for 'associating'.

However, since most of us like a bit of 'frightening and dangerous', let's consider some situations where the new regime might apply. You are involved with a group planning a demonstration. You do not intend it to be violent

but you accept that there is a possibility of violence of some sort and so plan accordingly. Sorry, criminal offence.

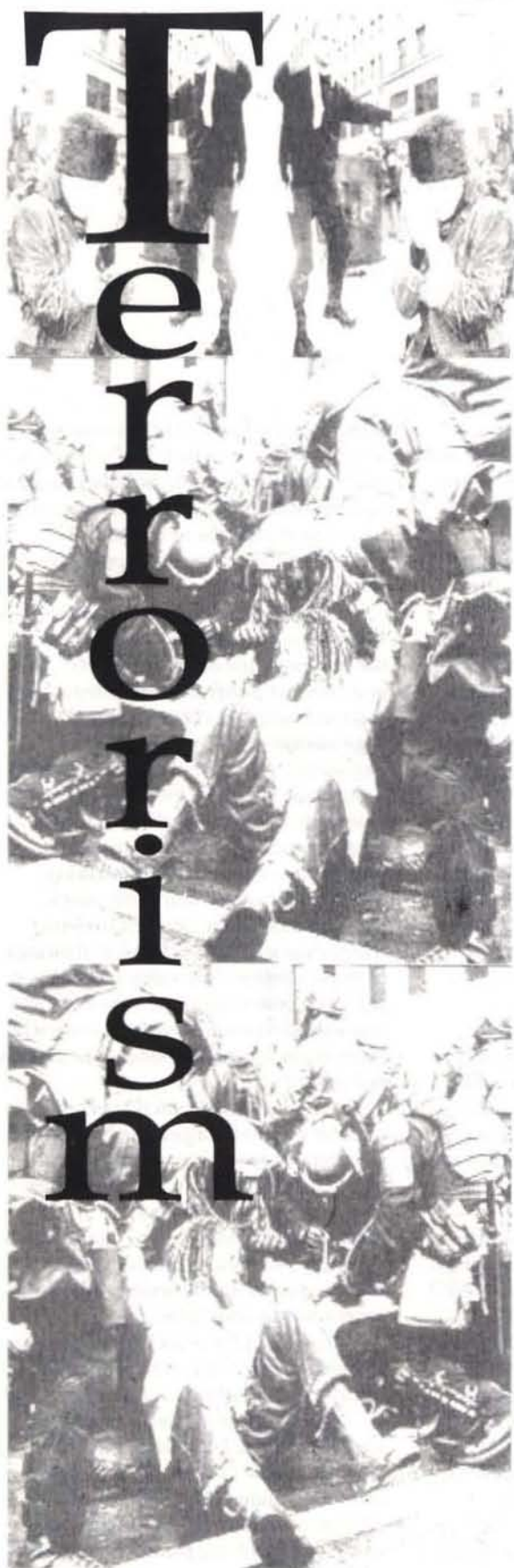
Your friend asks if her/his animal rights groups can use your front room for a meeting, as their usual place is booked up. You agree, though you do not attend and you do not know what was discussed. Sorry, lending your front room may be construed as 'support' – criminal offence.

You are staying on a road protest site and someone mentions in conversation their idea of trashing contractors plant and machinery. The idea is not pursued and nothing is done. Sorry, too late – you were there when it was considered – criminal offence. Worse still, you overhear a discussion about disabling the plant and machinery and you fail to report the possibility of it occurring to the police. Even if there was never any intention on your part to take part – failure to report planned activity is a criminal offence.

You are asked by a friend to have a look around the perimeter of a local research laboratory to see if you can get some idea of what is going on inside – criminal offence. Even planning for defence of a strike or setting up a community action group to organise opposition to a local contaminated site or new development could quite effortlessly fall within the category of criminal offence under the Bill. Now, a lot of people reading this have, at some time, done one of these things, or something similar, in one form or another. Even if you are toying with the idea, well, you'd better get on with it; this Bill is on its way to becoming one of Straw's laws, if all goes to New Labour plan.

If things do not look too rosy as a British citizen, they could be worse. Under the proposed Act, if you are a refugee and you have left your country of origin because you have been attacked and are in fear of your life because of Government repression, you will have a greater problem. Aside from the fact that, on recent evidence, it is likely you will be denied your rights, bundled into a plane or prison and forgotten about, anyone who advocates from this country the overthrowing of a Government (however heinous) in another, will be committing an offence. Support for the anti-apartheid ANC would have been illegal, if these proposals had been law at the time.

New Terrorism



INSTITUTIONALISED BULLYING

The implications of the Terrorism Bill are clearly worrying to anyone with a semblance of democratic rights. For anyone involved in or advocating direct action, it is frightening – and I do not mean fairground frightening or horror film scary entertainment, I mean brute bullying. This is probably one of the reasons the changes are proposed; pure unadulterated intimidation.

Other reasons are undoubtedly also applicable. One may appear to be a flippant joke: It may provide Special Branch, MI5 and MI6 with something to do – add some meaning to their surveillance of everyday life. 'Threats' to UK Plc, imagined or otherwise, have been dropping off dramatically in recent years, what with the crumbling Soviet bloc and the inactivity of the IRA, and that has surely led to some nervous twiddling of thumbs in secret service. Various ideas have included turning them to targetting drugs traffickers – but such people can be a bit nasty. Animal rights, road protesters, assorted direct action advocates are much easier, softer targets.

Another, possibly more realistic but less fetching reason is that this Government seems to have a rather unhealthy, intense commitment to control. Much is made of the 'one country, one society' idea in New Labour speak, and any group which disturbs this idea by not playing by the 'teamworking' rules is singled out as a threat.

We may muse over the reasons, but the fact remains; the changed Act will be one of the most repressive and reactionary pieces of legislation proposed in decades – including Thatcher's epics. It is deliberately intended to create a climate of suspicion and fear, and to fuel the populist yet anti-social idea that the average guy/girl next door could be a terrorist. Siege mentality, compliance is sensible, and if you don't like it, you'd better keep your head down and pretend you do or else. Welcome to the manic smile that is New Labour.

UNWORKABLE SOLUTIONS

It would appear that, with the will and the majority, the Bill may make it into Law. Although this clearly depends upon the sheer amount and effectiveness of the resistance we can muster to it over the next few months.

But, is it workable? The short answer to this is "not if we can make it unworkable". Four words apply here – remember the Poll Tax?

While the current Act was originally directed principally at the IRA, many people went along with it, rotten though it was (look no further than the injustices of the Birmingham 6, the Guildford 4, the 'Persons Unknown' case and the ALF arrests which have taken place under the current Act). The new Bill is so potentially wide-ranging and sweeping in both its powers and coverage, that a lot of people are already well aware of the implicit threat it brings. This is the starting point – the seed from which effective resistance could potentially grow.

It must also be stressed that even the existing Act does not and has never really 'worked'. By 1991, some 18,000 people had been detained under it but only 250 had been charged with any offence whatsoever. Despite its original intent that the Government could be seen to be doing something about the IRA, it has proved to be useless in that role.

The changes in the Act may even make it more useless as well as creating more opposition. The sheer numbers of people who are potentially criminalised as a result of the changes could even be a device of use against it. For example, if the changes are enacted and are used for the first time, say on a local demonstration, opposition group or stropmy magazine collective(?), thousands of people could be alerted and instantly present themselves at their local nick to turn themselves in. There are plenty of other ideas around to help make this farcical piece of vitriol unworkable and hold it up to public ridicule.

First and foremost, even if you ignore everything else within these pages, please help yourself, don't let yourself be terrorised (sic), bullied and intimidated into stopping doing anything you think is important, just because of this Bill. IF YOU DO, THEY HAVE WON. Organise opposition locally, be creative. Can you really afford to stand by and do nothing about it?

Violence junkies

**DIRECT ACTION AND SELF-DEFENCE;
HOW VIOLENCE MIGHT BE USED, OR NOT.**

Direct Action comes in many shapes and sizes. The media obsession is that all such activities are done by hordes of horrid violent thugs who really get off on confronting squads of police in full armour and armed with an array of offensive weapons.

One response to this has been people emphasising the non-violent nature of much direct action. Sometimes so much so, it is as if it doesn't matter what the action is, how ineffectual, how pointless, as long as it is non-violent. Then, there is the again over-reactive critique of this from the nutter brigade, who just possibly do in fact enjoy fighting with squads of armoured, tooled up coppers. So the see-saw swings.

While the main topic here is about violence used by people who apparently want to help replace the state and capitalism with a better society, it is worth starting with a quick but important aside. Whatever violence has been committed, it vanishes into nothing when compared to that committed by states. It is not just the dictatorships of the Bolsheviks and the fascists and their ilk who use violence. Social democracies have standing armies; what for, if not for the threat and enactment of violence against 'external' foes and the enemies within, the people themselves? Institutionalised violence, both physical and emotional, is the cornerstone of the means of social control used by government gurus and captains of capitalism.

Most debates on violence tend to

concentrate almost exclusively on terrorism, and/or propaganda by deed, but this is only part of the story and, currently at least, a very small part. Fortunately, the few groups and individuals who are apparently keen to do a bit of bombing to hurt people and shock others into action (or whatever) are either all mouth and no trousers or lacking in ability.

Whilst destroying sections of the ruling oligarchy may seem attractive in terms of giving them a bit of what they deserve, there is little to be gained. The capitalist system rarely relies to any great extent on individuals for its power and coherence. True, a few dozen individuals could be said to have a major controlling influence on the world's economies, but they can easily be replaced – politicians even more so. Assassinating dictators/leaders may create enough instability for social and political changes to occur but, in the vast majority of cases, it will lead to an offensive against 'politically subversive' groups and individuals (that is you, me, and anyone whose face doesn't fit). The lawmakers don't need another excuse to harass anti-capitalist thought. This is not to mention the fact that social and political change depends upon long-term shifts in ideas by significant numbers of people – a few people with nailbombs just cannot bring about this sort of useful, real change.

Then there is the problem of, as NATO calls it, 'collateral damage'. Attacks on targets other than political or military personnel seem to typically take place in either major shopping areas, or transport terminals, usually involving either potential loss of life of members of the public (unwarned version) or the clearing of people out the way (pre-warned version). To rely on the police and the military bomb disposal squads to stop the

slaughter of members of the public is absurd. To claim to be trying to create a fairer better world yet to be happy to blow up members of the working class in order for the working class to become sympathetic seems, to be as polite as possible, illogical.

A basic tenet of anarcho-syndicalism is that means and aims are integral parts of the process of transforming society. The end does not justify the means regardless. A society based on collective free organisation of individuals based on mutual aid, tolerance and understanding needs to be struggled for on its own terms. This does not mean pacifism. Pacifism means standing by refusing to dirty oneself with violence, whilst allowing oppressors to attack and harm people amongst us who are unable to defend themselves individually. This is abjuration of responsibility. To condemn violence in self-defence is to tar those who inflict the attacks with the same brush as those who suffer them and seek to defend themselves and others.

Authoritarian left and hierarchical national liberation organisations may find it acceptable to work 'undercover' and isolate themselves from real life, but for co-operative, direct democratic organisations of the working class such as Solidarity Federation, such a tactic is counter-productive (at least as long as we are not forced underground).

What about the more day-to-day type of violence, as it were; what the media would call 'yobbishness' or 'hooliganism'?

Rioting may be a blast, it may give an adrenaline buzz, but it does little more than get people noticed. This, in itself, isn't a bad thing. The meek will always get shat on. However, if you limit your strategy to glorifying pleas for recognition



**VIOLENT
CONFRONTATIONS,
WHETHER WITH THE
STATE, FASCISTS OR THE
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TIMES; SELF-DEFENCE IS ESSENTIAL,
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BE RESERVED FOR WHAT WE
WANT TO PROMOTE -
CO-OPERATION,
SOLIDARITY AND
MUTUAL AID...**

from
angry
people,
you end
up
offering
nothing of use
except
instructions on
making a molotov.

Riots, or mass violent civil disobedience are not condemned or to be condemned. When I talk to people about being in Trafalgar Square on the anti-Poll Tax demonstration or J18, a large proportion of them can sympathise with what happened and what people did, but if I say I went out last night and whacked some copper just for being one, many would think I was a nutter who ought to be locked up. I cannot condone random acts of violence against minor individual representatives of the state. Defending a demonstration, strike or picket against attacks is not the same as blind angry attacks.

A concentration of attention on the 'physical' detracts from the hard work, long, boring hours and less sexy work which goes into political action. If you only talk or do the haring around, lobbing bricks side of things, you only attract people who are interested in haring around lobbing bricks. Violent confrontations, whether with the state, fascists or the authoritarian left may well be necessary at various times; self-defence is essential, and we must be prepared to do it, but without glorifying it. To concentrate on violence without addressing political issues is to doom the action to failure. Glorification must surely be reserved for what we want to promote - co-operation, solidarity and mutual aid, not what we are against.

Direct actions would be better if the emphasis was more on being relevant and appropriate. 'Keeping it fluffy' is as irrelevant an objective for any activity as 'keeping it spiky', or whatever the other extreme would be. Direct action is a method of working and a style of political and social action that only works most effectively where it is part and parcel of a wider movement. A more appropriate focus for choosing direct action methods is that wider movement, its goals and the context we are working in.

For social revolution to succeed and not be crushed by the force of reaction or taken over by some self-serving new elite for the left, most of the work needs to be done beforehand. It's no good planning to just blow away bits of the state in a bloody struggle and expecting a perfect society to fall into place. People have to be ready, willing and wanting to run their own lives. The violence of a revolution, like violence anywhere, is only justifiable in self-defence. It is not a great cathartic blood-letting ritual, or an opportunity for bloody revenge. Unless the majority of people want a social revolution and are prepared to work with and for it, no amount of trained, disciplined, murderous revolutionary cliques can create a better world. If more people cannot be brought into the movement for change by convincing ideas and by example, then any 'revolution' is a failure. It's not very libertarian to offer someone the choice of utopia or a bullet in the head.



While
it may
be true
that
theory
without
action equals
nothing, it is
equally true that
action without theory
means you do something stupid.

Revenge is not a political ideology, and those who want to use anarchism to release their rage would be better advised to pound a mattress with a tennis racket.

Violence is a heavy tool. It can do a great amount of damage to users and receivers, intentionally and unintentionally. It needs to be treated with the utmost respect, used sparingly and only appropriately. Violence can act against as well as for social revolution. If your aim is a direct democratic society based on equality, solidarity and mutual aid, then bashing a copper or bricking a toff simply because they are is not a reasoned or reasonable objective. Eliminating the need for coppers and the system of privileged classes are reasonable objectives. If you want to beat people up and get beaten up, go hang out at one of the pubs in most towns and cities where like-minded people go, or better still, do something about your excess aggression. If you want to make a better world, think first, then do. 



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.

WITCH REPLY ?

Dear DA,

What is this paranoia of cultism? Fear of being controlled? Unwarped by politics, religion is a means of personal empowerment. That means you, no one else, realises the full potential within and reaches out to it. Look up to the stars, keep your boots in the mud and dance against capitalism, multinationalism, etc. but dance... for the earth? A speck of dust floating around the milky way; a planet in its infancy. Dance for yourself, dance for all of us, join together with friends.

Look at ancient societies – and the fragments that remain. A lot of their 'cults' were about self-empowerment and returning to the elemental forces within us. Dance to the spirits of the elements. Join a cover – whoops, now you are a cult; therefore someone bowing down to some clever, sexed-up power-hungry leader. Sure there are a few around. Probably less than the media would have us imagine, in their witch-hunting frenzy (so what's a magazine on direct action doing joining in?).

The masons are scared stiff of the direct action movement; its individuality, its independence from society and ferocious will-power. The last thing it wants is these anarchists to become even more self-empowered. Let alone watch them dabble in elemental magic. Stir up paranoia about cults and the occult! That'll stop the masses from self-empowerment. Prey on their rebellious dislike of Christianity, but don't offer any acceptable alternatives – except deluded deadline of sexed-up odd cults.

Make your own mind up, stay and atheist, but really, you are not the centre of the universe, nor am I. I'll just walk my dog, whistle in the woods, dance under the moon alone, or with friends, or come and join my cult. One blank cheque is all I need to guarantee you a place in heaven!

Joking aside, let's not be manipulated by mass fear of the cult or disappear with our heads in the clouds. But can we escape this victim mentality, be here, be now, dance, celebrate and act? Isn't everything connected? AW

BOURGEOIS DEMOCRACY

Dear DA,

The 1997 election was not a triumph, a victory for New Labour; it was a triumph for the establishment, who conned and duped millions of people into voting for New Labour under the illusion that we were going to get something different from what we had been getting for the previous eighteen years. What the electorate has actually had since New Labour came into office is, if anything, worse. New Labour is worse than the Tories. Blair is worse than Thatcher.

Elections are a farce. It won't make a wit of difference whether Labour, the Tories or Lib-Dems win the next election, the public will continue to have the same policies imposed upon them whether they want them or not. The people who really run this country are the financial-industrial-military-media elite, who bring to power whoever they choose and dispose of them when they've used them, as they did with Thatcher and as they will with Blair, whenever it suits them. The last election was one of the biggest confidence tricks ever foisted on the British electorate.

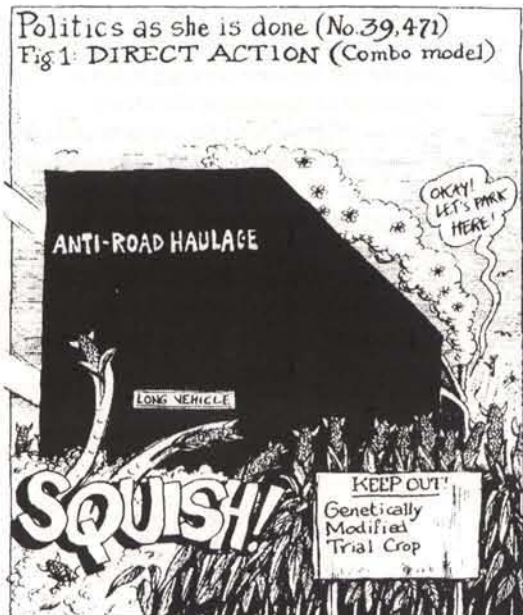
Dr Stockman, in Ibsen's play 'An Enemy of the People', dared to suggest that parliamentary democracy wasn't all it was cracked up to be. He was right. It was Thatcher and Tebbit who 'democratised' the trade unions.

Was this in the interests of the unions or their members? It has weakened them, not helped them, precisely what Thatcher and Co. wanted. She knew well that we are invariably more influenced by the telly, newspaper and radio than by the trade union leaders, and will vote accordingly in a secret ballot, while Thatcher and Co. cynically flatter the masses by telling them they are freely making their own decisions in their own best interests.

It is also the two principle world 'democracies', Britain and the US, who have the most ruthless, genocidal foreign policies, as demonstrated by Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and, more recently, Iraq and Yugoslavia, to name a few.

New Labour were brought to power to do the Tories' dirty work for them, since the establishment knew full well that Labour were more likely to get away with it – whether it is foreign policy or domestic 'reforms'; cutting disabled benefits, introducing student tuition fees, cutting Legal Aid to make it more difficult for people to obtain legal 'justice', and privatisation of anything possible which wasn't already done by Thatcher or Major. Marx once said that in Britain the electorate is allowed, every few years, to vote into office the political party who will then continue to oppress them. Never was this more true than today, thanks in large part to the enormous propaganda machine the bourgeoisie has developed in recent decades.

It may be more pertinent to spend less time attacking the obvious external enemy in Westminster and Whitehall, and instead concentrate on combating the more insidious enemy within people's homes – the broadcasting media. In so doing, we will be challenging the very institutions responsible for the unjust and oppressive society we now live in. ES





GETTING PERSONAL: OCCUPY

The idea of direct action is currently popular again. It is popping up in various situations, guises, commodifications, etc. However, whatever direct action really means, and there are plenty of offerings within these pages, it is a fact that some people are increasingly turning to taking things into their own hands. At the same time, we are less likely to vote in elections or to lobby those in power. We are increasingly (and rightly) rejecting voting as pointless and recognising politicians as hypocrites and sleazemERCHANTS.

What counts as direct action can be ambiguous. It often crosses the boundaries between law, public opinion, and convention. The range is wide, from low profile initiation of boycott campaigns, to the mass actions of large strikes, occupations and sit-downs. An 'ordinary' march through the streets asserts what is regarded as a basic right. However small, it has the potential to develop (especially if held in defiance of a banning order).

While direct action is largely a method, it can and arguably should be seen as more. Action of any sort does not take place in a vacuum, but within a unique political, social and economic context. Direct action may be a spontaneous response to a one-off type incident, such as an 'accident' or event. More normally, it is a planned response to a long-standing problem. It is invariably an attempt to reassert what many would regard as a fundamental human right.

Direct action can also be used to bring pressure to bear in order to gain a limited but clear short-term aim. However, the undisputed 'mother of all direct actions' is the sort which incorporates a method of challenging the entire political-economic system. If we are to come to some understanding of what direct action entails, we must look in detail at those movements which have consciously used it. This allows us to set the idea in a real, social and theoretical context.

The major influences that have shaped direct action theory in the western world are anarcho-syndicalism, westernised versions of the Gandhian ideas of non-violence, and the various techniques developed by the radical environmental movements since the 1960s. Writing as an anarcho-syndicalist, I think anarchist and syndicalist ideas and traditions have made a significant contribution to the theoretical underpinning of direct action in practice. For me, direct action is the method of choice, whereby 'real' political results can be



achieved. Indirect methods, such as electoral activity or lobbying, are rejected outright.

In many instances, the right to vote itself was won by direct action. While I do not vote, nor do I recognise any potential for voting to bring fundamental change, it is important to note that voting is a basic right which has been denied to women/black people, etc., at different times. I am not against the right to vote, only the idea that voting can deliver real change. However, the point is, if direct action can win the right to vote, clearly against the wishes of the state, surely it has the potential to change the social system dramatically.

The role of popular pressure, non-co-operation, and civil disobedience in winning social and constitutional rights has not been ignored by anarcho-syndicalist theory.

Direct action to anarcho-syndicalists is not just a way of expressing the spirit of rebellion, but also a way of releasing new energies to the task of radically changing society and establishing social justice. Historically, syndicalists, the forerunners of anarcho-syndicalism, saw the general strike and the social strike as being at the apex of revolutionary direct action. However, situations and methods change. Today, I think the occupation is the quintessential tactic of choice for anarcho-syndicalism.

We wish to reclaim the world, for although we occupy it, we do not control our own place in it at present. Instead, we are controlled by bosses and politicians, who prevent us from establishing the sustainable society that we need. To occupy a workplace or any other building is to challenge the ownership of it by the private capitalist or the state, or whoever has control. Likewise, occupying a natural area in advance of capitalist development is to challenge their right to own nature and do as they please with our common resources.

While striking is a progressive activity which has delivered many a victory, it has to be taken further. Instead of leaving our means of production to the bosses, why not take it over and run it ourselves for the benefit of all? The occupation is a direct step towards this end. 

"Political rights do not originate in parliaments, they are, rather, forced upon parliaments from without. And even their enactment into law has, for a long time, been no guarantee of their security...Even in those countries where such things as freedom of the press, right of assembly, right of combination, and the like, have long existed, governments are constantly trying to restrict those rights or to reinterpret them by judicial hairsplitting...The people owe all the political rights and privileges which we enjoy today in greater or lesser measure...to their own strength...Only after the workers had by direct action confronted parliament with accomplished facts, did the government see itself obliged to take the new situation into account and give legal sanction to the trade unions".
(Rudolph Rocker, *Anarcho-Syndicalism*).

The struggle to be human

We live in a time of turmoil caused by the resurgence of the chimeras of the past. The monsters which the social democrats would have had us believe were gone have returned with a vengeance.

This resurgence, while evoking only fragmentary opposition so far, is bringing into sharp focus the whole question of what constitutes 'identity'. The dead may have awakened, but the old slogans and watchwords won't work any more. The ideological soil of conservatism is suffering from long-standing drought. The planks of the conservative platform, 'nation', 'family' and 'tradition' are badly affected by dry rot. Only a commitment to the free market and market economy still seems to have a charmed existence.

However, they cannot disguise their moral bankruptcy forever. In the area of religion, a so-called celibate priesthood advises us on our sex lives, and pontificates about birth control, abortion and divorce rights, while they hypocritically ignore their vows and sexually abuse children.

The Tories blather on about family values, while maintaining a string of prostitutes, extra-marital affairs and multiple divorces. Does anyone know where the first Mrs Thatcher is? Rupert Murdoch hasn't bought her true story yet (or Dennis'), wonder why.

Cardinal Winning, the boss-man of the RC Church in Scotland is one of the nine Cardinal Presidents of the Pontifical Council for the Family, the Department of the Roman Curia that co-ordinates the Vatican's propaganda in the area of sexual morality and sex politics. He shot into prominence over his view that Section 28 shouldn't be repealed and that any talk of homosexuality in schools is wrong. Although he says his views are personal, he is also expressing the Catholic Church's distaste for sexuality in all its forms. The RC Church is on a crusade to re-establish traditional sexual morality, that is, that all sexual activity should be directly linked to procreation.

It is true that, at the moment, the main target is homosexuality, but its attitude to straight sex has only recently become superficially more liberal. The church's attitude to gay people is now strongly reminiscent of its attitude to unmarried mothers and illegitimate children in the early 20th Century. Straight sex is only alright when it is contrasted with gay sex. The ideal is still virginity, perpetual virginity, and you only have to scratch the surface to reveal that it really thinks all sex is dirty.

Cardinal Winning, in some of his recent

outbursts, comes close to saying that there is an international conspiracy – a gay plot to destroy the family. This is at the core of Vatican sexual ideology. The Pope's reaction to the European Parliament announcement in 1994, recommending that gay marriages should be recognised across the EU, is instructive. He described homosexuality as "a bad tree that humanity carries within itself, which is nurtured with the help of vast funds and the support of the mass media".

In January this year, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith came up with a new conspiracy theory. They have apparently taken over from the Inquisition. Bishop Tarcisio Bertone, at a conference in Rome, described what he called "human race feminism". This, he said, refers to the attempt of gays and lesbians to abolish the two sexes and replace it with a single neuter gender. It would appear his problem lies with sex roles. While I am not keen on the idea of a single such gender, I think the idea of the establishment of a common human identity is a good one. I think we should feel ourselves to be human in the first instance, rather than male or female, or, for that matter, anything else, i.e. nationality, race, tribe, etc. It is true to say that these categories have a subjective importance; they do not have an eternal validity. They only have significance in the present social context.

Class is an objective category. However, it has to be overcome. The relationship between the classes is the one which distorts all others, because all others are negated by it. Value has come to mean money, or even profit alone. To misquote Oscar Wilde, capitalism establishes the price of everything and the value of nothing.

The Catholic Church and other fundamentalists wish to reinstate the outworn values of an outdated society. Here we must admit that the church in its perverted way is pushing a kind of value, which is more than the sleazy neo-liberals do. They have no 10 commandments to defend, only a price list and profit figures. They would sell their granny at the right price.

Everyone has to engage with people they do not initially agree with, if they are to change the world for the better. It is possible to change opinion and belief, and they are part of our identity, the values which we hold. If we change our beliefs, we change our identity, and this is essential if we are to create a truly human, compassionate, co-operative commonwealth. The struggle against bigotry and reaction is a necessary starting point. 

The decline of Stalinism and social democracy have allowed fundamentalism and neo-liberalism to stage a come-back.

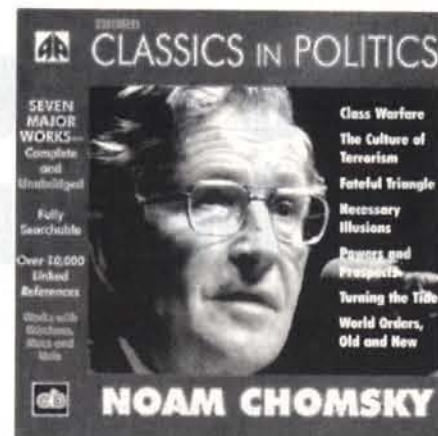
What little opposition remains has a libertarian flavour by default, as the Left has rushed to occupy the vacuum created by the social democrats' lurch to the Right.

In Rome this summer, World Pride 2000 is staging the largest ever gay event, from 28th June to 9th July.

This coincides with the Church's jubilee celebrations. The Vatican is none too pleased, and has even said that it infringes the Latran Treaty, drawn up between the Vatican and the Italian State at the time of the Mussolini regime.

CLASSICS IN POLITICS

• NOAM CHOMSKY •



Classics in Politics is a relatively new introduction to the 'electric book' concept of supplying books to be read on a computer screen or, I presume, to be downloaded and read on a hand-held computer screen (!)

The format is via a CD-Rom, which includes seven of Chomsky's works: *Class Warfare*, *The Culture of Terrorism*, *Fateful Triangle*, *Necessary Illusions*, *Powers and Prospects*, *Turning the Tide* and *World Orders Old and New*. All are unabridged. It is a format that I personally do not prefer. Although I do not claim to be anti-technology, I do not think you can replace the feel and smell of a 'real' book.

Having said this, the particular 'electronic book' in question is an excellent research tool, especially if you are interested in the works of Noam Chomsky. The CD-Rom comes with Adobe Acrobat Reader to allow you to download and read the 'books' as pages on the screen, and a search engine that can be used to find any phrases or words you may want to locate in the books.

The price might seem a bit steep and that's because it is - near on £30 (plus the cost of a computer set-up, if you haven't got one), but with most of Chomsky's books retailing at an average of £12 or more, this CD-Rom works out a relative bargain at less than half price.

The books are all concerned more or less with Chomsky's critique of the foreign policies adopted by the United States Government; policies that have a seriously damaging effect on most of us. The book 'Powers and Prospects' alters slightly from

this theme and deals with 'Reflections on Human Nature and the Social Order', where Chomsky's ideas on Libertarian Anarchism come to the fore, and the book 'The Culture of Terrorism - The scandals of the Reagan years' could easily be transposed as 'the Thatcher years', two individuals who knew how to use terrorism to their advantage.

As always, Chomsky's books are meticulously researched and backed up by factual evidence. No wonder that, as far as critique of US government and global capital is concerned, his detractors remain unable to mount a resolute argument against him.

I heard a rumour that there are some basic security controls on the CD to prevent easy copying, which got me wondering what the situation is regarding profit and control from the publication of his work. Since he has advocated anarcho-syndicalism and libertarian anarchism, it follows that he supports the freedom of information, and the sharing of knowledge. Does he know that there are financial limitations to the access of his work? Maybe this is something Chomsky himself needs to investigate.

Some of Chomsky's writing, including essays and lectures, can be accessed free of charge, if you have the above mentioned computer set-up, an Internet connection, and you can afford the price of a local phone call, by visiting 'The Noam Chomsky Archive' which can be reached via the superb ZNet web site at www.zmag.org. There are also a host of other useful web links to be had from here.



CORPORATE WATCH

Not much to say about this mag except that, with its stated aim to "inspire resistance and radical transformation", it is an ESSENTIAL buy. Packed to the rafters with useful info and analysis, this issue has several in-depth articles on genetics along with big business news, a look at Wal-Mart, women and the corporate world, DIY guide, reviews, contacts and the all important Diary.

A new departure in this issue is a look at the "psychology of corporate man". Here there is some welcome analysis of the political and economic imperatives driving the decision making at Rip-off Inc. To use a well-worn cliché, "if you only buy one magazine..." The graphics are good too and everything is anti-copyright, so what are you waiting for?



GENETIX UPDATE

GEN, PO Box 9656, London N4 4JY.
Subs £5 donation.

Newsletter of the Genetic Engineering Network, Genetix Update consists of reports and actions around the anti-GM movement in the UK and beyond. If you want to make contacts, get involved, or get an introduction to issues beyond the narrowly-reported food issues of the media (e.g. GM trees, GM cotton), this is 100% essential. The initial success of the campaign against GM and, specifically, Monsanto (see also p.6-7) has been due in no small part to the excellent communication and information networks within which GEN is a crucial element. Their role is demonstrated by the serious attempts by Monsanto to silence them by force.

The trial sites are still being planted; Genetix Update is a key means of helping you get informed about how best to stop it.



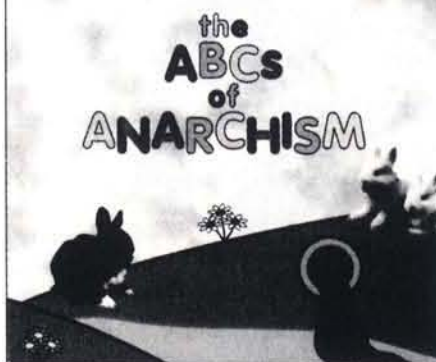


Primal Scream – Exterminator

Creation CRECD239
2000

Political music is back (again) – Hurrah! And this time it's not crap (genuine shock). Actually, the press coverage of this, admittedly pretty excellent, CD would have us believe that there has been no politics in music since punk. Whereas those of us with our ear on the street (well, who pay a passing interest in music) know it was there long before punk and never went away after. Exterminator is Primal Scream's best since Screemadelica. Not too much of Bobby Gillespie's withering on, it's got the Detroit era Stooges feel, with the Screemadelica groove, plus it's got a hint of politics, plus it's got angry Bobby. These are not the narrative songs of politico-folk, nor the hectoring rhetoric of a lot of political music. In fact, for a political record, there's hardly any obvious 'politics' on it. This is a political record because Primal Scream, perhaps best known for a fondness for chemicals, are one of the most actively political name bands around. What they have done is drag politics back into the music papers (and even the newspapers) giving interviews where various members, though usually Bobby, goes off on one about the things he is angry about. Normally, when the music press has its occasional fads for a bit of politics, it's a 'clever' way of dismissing some obscure bands into a bandwagon that can be labelled and safely filed away under 'specialist interests'. They can't do that with Primal Scream, they are too established, too big and too important so, horror of horrors, they've had to address some issues. A big shout to Bobby and Co. for dragging reality into the (un)sanitised world of the music press and for finding their form once again. This has to be the swan song of the not at all sadly departing Creation Records, complete with card about the Free Saptal Ram Campaign (PO Box 23139, SE1 12U). Read the notes, listen to the music, get angry, get organised. Right on. 

NEGATIVLAND/CHUMBAWAMBA



the ABCs of ANARCHISM

NEGATIVLAND and CHUMBAWAMBA
Seeland Records

Chumbawamba you already know about - bunch of anarchists from Leeds blag a contract with EMI, have a hit single in 1997 and go very quiet. Negativland are a group of Seattle based musical pranksters who have been around for years. They haven't had a hit single but they hit the big time in a slightly different way to the Chumbas. One of their acoustic collages brought them into a legal confrontation with U2, who took offence at Negativlands sampling of "I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For" spliced with a radio DJ cursing the group, causing their record label to go bust and the offending single to be destroyed.

Undaunted, Negativland have continued on their merry way, and here team up with Chumbawamba on a single which is almost shouting, "sue me!" There are so many cut and spliced tunes here that you would need to be a musicologist or addicted to MTV to be able to spot them all.

I guess the two bands are expecting the eagle-eared legal teams of the major record companies to be listening. No pretty tunes here, just samplemania, which adds up to a dig at corporate cynicism and an attempted demolition of copyright law. All very noble and interesting, but not a record I would listen to very often. Let's have more tunes next time please, a bit of Mantovani would be nice.

Check out Negativland's back catalogue, especially "Escape From Noise". Contact RER, 0181 771 1063. 

Exterminator is Primal Scream's best since Screemadelica. Not too much of Bobby Gillespie's withering on, it's got the Detroit era Stooges feel, with the Screemadelica groove, plus it's got a hint of politics, plus it's got angry Bobby.

The Mark Thomas Product

Channel 4.

Mark Thomas is bloody good. (When someone suggested I might like to review the latest series for DA, I thought it would be a synch. After much cogitation over words and phrases which might be fitting, the notes ended up in the recycling. It's not that easy to sum up the best, funniest, most effective direct action TV around. If you missed it, write to Channel 4 and demand a video copy and/or immediate re-screening on prime time. If you saw it, you already know what I mean.) 



All power to the imagination!

Dave Douglass
Class War Federation, PO Box 467, London
E8 3QX
1999. £5.

Dave Douglass is a life-long miner, has been NUM Branch Delegate for Hatfield Colliery since 1979, and comes from a long 'council communist' tradition. His latest book is, as its title suggests, centred around the idea that 'real' revolutionary struggle is a response to current misery, combined with the imagination that a better future can be attained. A faultless perspective.

The range of commentary is impressive, although one topic is regularly returned to. The politest way to describe this major sub-theme is a critique of the authoritarian Left and elitist self-styled 'anarchist' groups, the most prominent target of which is the ACF (AF).

Now, don't get me wrong, 99% of this critical stuff is bang on the nail, an example being summed up in the subtitle "Goodbye to the Unions? OK, goodbye, but where are you going?". The 'but' is about being left with the nagging feeling that the device of criticising elitist or closet-authoritarian people in order to illustrate how strong your ideas are is a little overdone - why devote so many column inches on it? Personalised back-and-forth bickering is not the high point of this book.

Still, the high points are there - plenty of direct relevance to the excellent title, and the anecdotes, information and exposure of the undermined coal industry (forgive the pun) and its communities makes it top stuff. 

21st Century Class War

Class War, PO Box 467, London E8 3QX.
1999. £1.

You can get the initial gist of CW's political tactics by skimming the pics in this introductory pamphlet. Lots of skulls and crossbones, thumbnails of pyrotechnic devices, invitations to rob the rich, etc.

The writing is slightly less clear-cut. The initial starting point is that patronising anarcho-left groups produce 'garbled theory', whereas CW recognises that 'ordinary people share our basic politics already'. Then we move quickly on to read that CW's strategy is centred on 3 things; humour, populism and violence. Populism is favoured because it makes things 'easy to understand'. The implication is that most people are too thick to understand anything other than tabloid headlines. Now, I understand the dichotomy (a word presumably barred from CW), but this itself would appear to be a bit patronising.

Putting such picky comments aside, the general theme is uplifting, confidence building, cheerfully offensive (in the sense of "going on the...") and refreshingly anti-PC. This is old CW, regrouped after it split in 1997. It is unreconstructed, instantly recognisable, direct, funny and undoubtedly offensive (in the sense of "rude to the rich..."). Obviously there must have been much soul-searching and reassessment after the post-Poll Tax bubble burst and the subsequent unfortunate split, but it is not apparent from this pamphlet that anything fundamental has changed to try and prevent such problems from recurring in the future.

Patronising (which is all relative) aside, the short-term strategy is clear. Let's hope that if/when CW gets another burst of growth, it is able to hold itself together and build on it. 

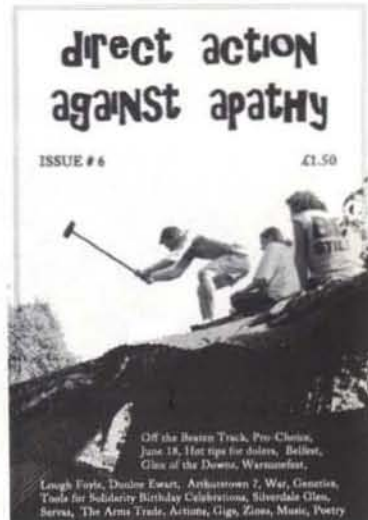


direct action against apathy

daaaa@hotmail.com
£1.50 or £6 + SAE for 4 issues.

daaaa#6 is a handy yet chunky A5-sized 76 page mag from Belfast, which appears to be produced by just 2 people, with contributions from a further 20. The result is simple layout, lots of pics and no contents page, which will alarm the more anally retentive among us for a moment. Start reading and you will soon forget.

Lots of views and reviews, with some longish articles thrown in. Worth singling out are the excellent accounts of recent events and actions. The overriding impression is a bunch of 'happening' people who are involved and engaged. The result is a general 'thumbs up' feeling. Though the feel is 'personal' (a nasty person might even venture that it is potentially 'cliquey'), the fact is that the content is wide open. It is clearly political, yet non-aligned - to the extent that I am still unclear what they are 'for', apart from direct action, or 'against', apart from apathy. They've decided to go themed (naturally, after reading DA?! - ed), so if you want to know more about technology or 'radicalism', then sub now - mine's already in the post. 



bristle

No. 3, Autumn 1999. 50p.

OK, so it is indeed 'bristling' with local action in the Bristol area (SW England, that is). From housing co-ops to nuclear waste trains to prisoner support, this shot at "creating an alternative media" is well-aimed. All the usual explosive ingredients are here, from Reclaim the Streets actions to anti-war commentary. However, the highlight has to be the post-march report for the big clash between Easton Cowboys (the Bristol Sunday football side) and Zapatistas FC (yes, in Chiapas). Gripping - and I didn't even know the basic rules of football - I'm still none the wiser:-) 



Remembering Spain; Italian Anarchist Volunteers in the Spanish Civil War

Umberto Marzocchi
Kate Sharpley Library, 1999. £1

Twenty-eight pages, 'classic' pamphlet (i.e. no pics) on events of 60-odd years ago, written by someone I have never heard of. Sounds riveting?

You'd be surprised, very surprised. So many people were involved, so much was at stake, that any lucid, personal account of the anarcho-syndicalist struggle that was the Spanish Civil War has the potential to get the revolutionary juices going. Once again, KSL does not disappoint. 

Umberto
Marzocchi
Remembering Spain

**Italian Anarchist
Volunteers in the
Spanish Civil War**

Kate Sharpley Library

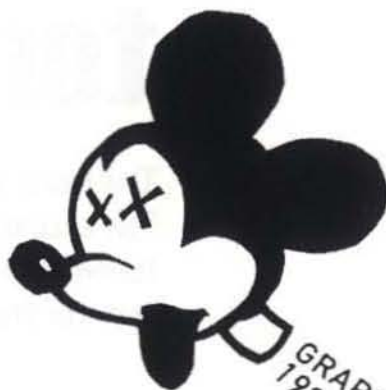
1999

A beautifully produced quarterly magazine published in Canada, **Adbusters'** main job is the dissection and subversion of the advertising industry and consumerism in general.

There are spoof ads in glorious technicolour as well as written pieces. This issue has a short history of graphic agitation, from Dada to the present, including anti war posters and the Guerrilla Girls feminist take on graphic resistance. There are also articles on GM technology, Clinton and Blaire, and plenty of "media watch" type shorts. Despite its title, **Adbusters** is concerned with the wider world of anti-capitalism too. There are two long articles of note; one on a training camp in Virginia, USA, for activists in preparation for the Seattle actions and a report from the J18 action in London, both of which are excellent and all the better for not being written in standard lefty-speak.

But it's the attack on the media where **Adbusters** really hit the spot. There is some discussion of the First Things First manifesto originally published 25 years ago and now updated and restated. The aim of the manifesto is to try and get graphic designers to exhibit some political consciousness. "The critical distinction drawn by the manifesto was between design as communication (giving people necessary information) and design as persuasion (trying to get them to buy things). As one writer states, "The decision to concentrate efforts as a designer on corporate projects, or advertising, or any other kind of design, is a political choice." At the same time, this isn't a magazine reserved for professionals. Billboard graffiti, cartoons and flyers all find a place in the mag.

Adbusters



GRAPHIC AGITATION
1920-2000

The funny but thought-provoking end piece, "anarchy by design", is a brilliant spoof as well as a call to culture jammers everywhere to join the resistance to corporate power. Find out more at www.adbusters.org, or get the next issue of **Adbusters** with articles on Seattle, Social Activist Chic, the Rev Billy of the Church of Stop Shopping, and loads more groovy illustrations and photos. Creative campaigners see also www.subvertise.org or write to Counterfeet, c/o Box g, 101 Magdalen Road, Oxford, OX4 1RG.

Non-violent Action

NVA, 5 Caledonian Road, London N1 9DY.
Monthly. 50p.

Since 'Peace News' went themed, glossy and less often, they have started producing this monthly newsletter as an up-to-date monochrome, in-between kind of thing. Especially good on anti-war stance and arguments, various direct action campaigns and debate on alternatives to armed conflict.

Don't be put off by your view of Peace News people as post-CND dippy-hippy, sitting there waiting to be stamped on by the state. This is a useful and informative organ with plenty of potential for connecting a wide network of people, organisations and campaigns. The fact that it is anti-violent is not at all bad – except in the few cases where violence may be necessary for defence purposes. Oh dear, I was trying to keep the lid on that particular can of worms... (see also p.20-21 – ed).

Thought Bombs

TB, Anthony Rayson, 27009 S. Egyptian Trail,
Monee IL 60999, USA.
Periodical, A5, 60pp.
\$2.

Thought Bombs must be one of the best of the once-again burgeoning mass of personal alternative zines. The level of debate and entertainment are consistently high.

The issue DA got (#8) contains a particularly inspiring piece centred on an anarchist perspective towards the treatment of children in US society.

Amongst the other choice pieces is an interview with Luddgang, the anarchist multimedia/music project in UK (OK, so I have to admit an interest here – some of the DA Collective people are involved!) Well worth the effort in getting hold of it.

If details aren't given or you have troubled tracking down anything reviewed in DA, contact us and we'll do our best to help.

The Poll Tax Rebellion in Haringey

Haringey Solidarity Group, PO Box 2474, London N8.
October 1999. £1 + post.

Recently out – well, these things take time – aren't there historians still pouring over the '70's, etc.? Anyway, it is timely, given the still relatively recent announcement that no further state funds will be used to pursue Poll Tax 'debts'; all remains of the Poll Tax are now officially defeated.

The Poll Tax rebellion was the greatest single anti-capitalist campaign of 1990's Britain. Something went wrong, because after it had achieved its aims, it apparently defeated itself. Was it some sort of Pyrrhic victory?

Here, the positive aspects of the anti-Poll Tax movement in Haringey are emphasised, along with a useful chronology. The Haringey example is illuminating, since it was one of the few places where the local group had the wider, underlying anti-capitalist strength and foresight to transform itself into a wider solidarity group, and so survive after the Poll Tax battles were won.

Danny Burns' "Poll Tax Rebellion" remains the best known general account of the events, but this pamphlet is an important addition.

THE POLL TAX REBELLION IN HARINGEY



This booklet was written collectively by members of Haringey Solidarity Group.

Price £1.00



Like there is no tomorrow

THE FIGHT TO CONSUME THE LAST FREE LUNCH IS ON. THE FALL-OUT TO WORRY ABOUT IS NOT THE CRUMBS, BUT THE FLYING CROCKERY. WELCOME TO CONSUMERISM, DOING WHAT IT SAYS ON THE TIN.

We live in a consumer society. In fact, the act of consumption has taken on a near-religious significance. People no longer consume on the basis of need. They do it for recreation, or just because they can. Many consumer goods and services do not feasibly add to people's lives, but the very act of going out shopping and buying things has become a form of pleasure in itself; the quick fix, the way of filling the gap in our lives. We consume, so we are.

The 'consumer revolution' underpinned the concept of popular capitalism. This was the means by which capitalism was to throw off its exploitative image and defeat communism. It was capitalism that could produce the fridges, washing machines, cars, clothes and fashion accessories, while those living under state controlled 'communism' had to queue for basic food. Throughout the cold war, the glitzy consumer society was constantly compared to the grey world of communism, where people had to survive with just the one TV set and wait years for their new car.

With the evil empire now defeated, the free market dominates the political landscape. Eager to press home their advantage, the free market advocates are attempting to rid the world of any lingering ideas of state control. At the centre of this is the idea of the "new paradigm" or "new economy". Basically, this states that, due to the high tech revolution, free market capitalism is capable of sustaining growth indefinitely,

without suffering the effects of overheating, which in the past has led to inflation and recession.

At the centre of this theory lies the US economy, now experiencing its longest period of sustained growth in modern history, having apparently rewritten the economic text book. The deregulated free market economy has finally delivered everlasting growth, thanks to new technology. This global wonder is now touted as the economic model all others should copy. Europe is regularly lectured on the need to deregulate its own economy too. This is not just about cheap bananas, it is the new religion.

Even those in abject poverty must adopt free trade rules on the road to their true salvation. They only have to adopt popular capitalism and they will benefit from the riches of the consumer society. Only a few outdated socialists seem blind to the possibility of the Internet curing the world of poverty and disease. A computer in every village/refugee camp would surely bring an end to world poverty.

NEW TECH, OLD TAT

Beyond the hype and frenzy surrounding Internet share trading, those of a slightly more sane disposition than the free market technology zealots point vainly at the expanding US economy with increasing concern. The question is, what when the US consumer bubble bursts and floods the world's economy in the sticky mucus of recession? Prophets of such doom are largely ignored by the political classes, media and assorted hangers on, both here and in the US. Instead, the rampage goes on, the giddy participants

transfixed by the little parcels of stocks and shares growing ever bigger before their eyes. The great stock market god continues to promise eternal boom. Are we really all about to be transformed into young health-wealth kids, drink only bottled water, live in loft conversions, and submit to the 'dot.com' revolution?

That crazy free market ideas should become mainstream is no surprise, for the US boom is being fuelled by consumer spending, which fits nicely into the post-modern theories so beloved by the chattering classes. Taking the heat out of the consumption boom and attempting to ensure a soft landing for the US economy would require state intervention to reduce the flow of funds into the country, which currently keeps the illusion of good times intact. Not surprisingly, dreary old ideas of state intervention to curb spending does not go down too well in a political culture dominated by the religion of free market consumerism. Better to let the US economy rip in the vain hope that the boom can last for ever, than return to the grey world of state regulation and spending limits. The game masters (sic) have become victims of their own propaganda.

Behind the glossy front lies darker home truths. Pull back the curtain of media and political hype and there lies the same old capitalist exploitation based on pure greed. The dream that technology could be used to transform the world for the benefit of humanity is, well, more of a nightmare of reality. Technological change, far from making our lives fulfilling and liberated, is used to make a whole swathe of the population dependant

**ALL THE BLAIRITE-CLINTONITE TALK OF
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on numbingly stupefying low-paid jobs, and many others dependant on miserly state handouts. Apparently, 1 in 8 of working people in the US have worked for McDonalds at some point in their lives. Welcome the knowledge-based economy, and spend all day putting machine-portioned ketchup in burger buns.

Life for the middle 40% of the US workforce, supposedly in more secure, better paid jobs, is actually little better. As traditional industries have declined and unemployment has grown, capitalism has seized the opportunity to break union organisation and ensure that the new industries remain free of any class-consciousness or collective power. A whole human resource industry has been spawned, designed to promote the idea of teamwork and company allegiance. Unfettered by organised workplace opposition, capitalism has gone into overdrive to extract more wealth from the workforce.

The extent to which US industry has changed in the last 2 decades is breathtaking. The Incomes Study Project in the US found that, between 1983 and 1997, 85.5% of the increase in US wealth was captured by the richest 1% of the population. The country's wealth rocketed, but 80% of US families received 0% percent of that increase. Latest figures released by the US government show that productivity is now rising by 5%, while costs continue to fall.

With no real opposition, the benefit from productivity gains have gone to the rich. Co-operation from the state in delivering devastating cuts in social welfare benefit has forced workers off the

dole and into the new sweatshops of low-paid service jobs. This is the reality behind the new, high-tech revolution. US wages have stagnated save for a few small pockets, while wages for the bottom forty percent have actually fallen in real terms. The gap between the rich and the rest has exploded, so that wealth is now more concentrated than at any time since the 1920s. In the land of liberty, equality and freedom (sic), 0.5% of the population owns more wealth than the 90% at the other end.

When we hear Blair, the Tories and Clinton railing against Europe, urging them to follow the US and British economies into deregulating their labour markets, what they are calling for is workers to be stripped of any last protection to allow new heights of capitalist exploitation. Even the notion that the free market US economy is 'working' in the sense of being productive overall is hype; overall economic growth in the US is low to average. At present, compared with Japan and Europe emerging from recession, it looks to be doing reasonably well, but go back to 1989-95, and it was bottom of the 'G7 growth league'. Back further, during the decades of the post-war period, the US economy was in steady decline against both the Japanese and European economies.

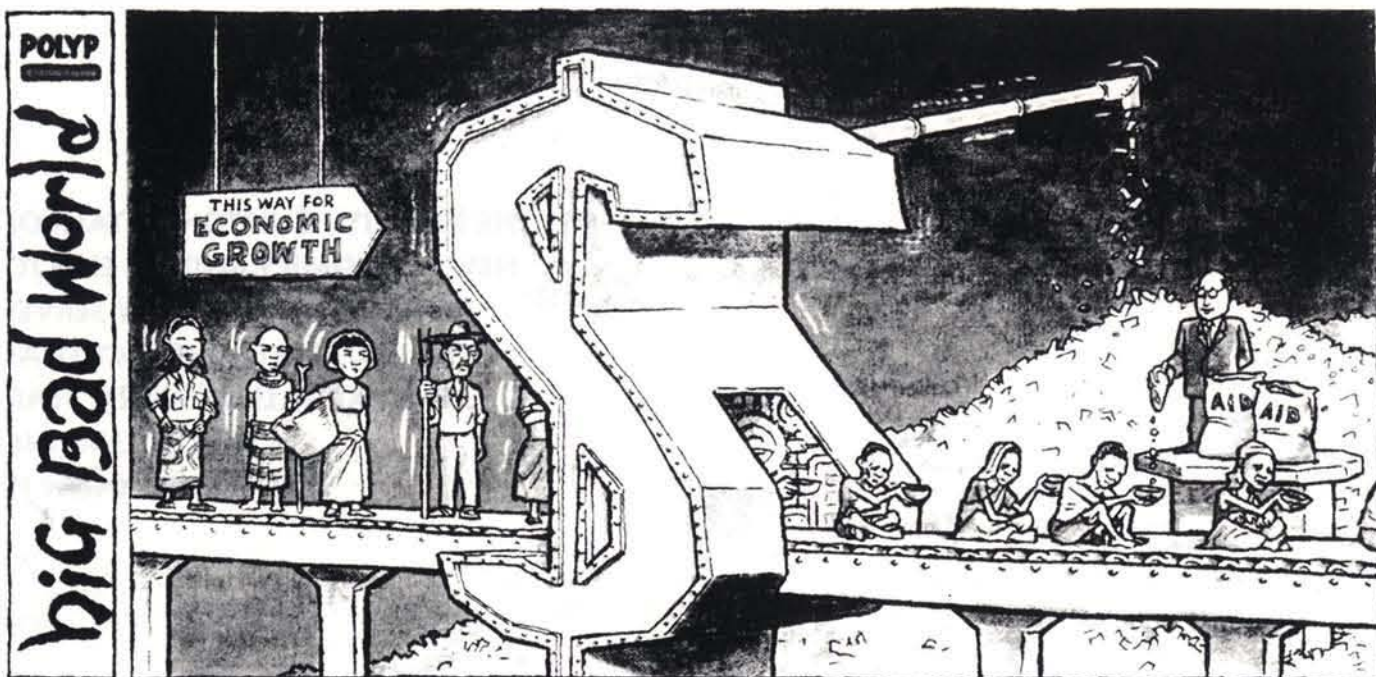
FACTS, NOT HYPE

The collapse of the South Asian economies in 1997, coupled with the poor economic performance in a Europe still grappling with the Euro and German unification, provided a major boost to free

market triumphalism, already drunk with the collapse of the Soviet Union. With the stock market now going through the roof, the middle classes can feel rich by taking out loans, ploughing money into the stock market and buy-buy-buying and spend-spend-spend their way to consumption debauchery. Little wonder the chattering classes are filling the Sunday supplements with endless tosh about the new age of leisure. The good life has apparently arrived for them.

However, the clouds are gathering, many of which are originating from a major contradiction at the heart of the US economy. As capitalism drives down wages to increase profits, it takes spending power out of the economy. In effect, it cuts its own throat by taking from the bulk of the population the spending power needed to buy up the goods and services produced by capitalism. This is the age-old problem that has so often led capitalist overproduction to slump. As a certain Mr Marx wrote sometime ago: "The ultimate reason for all real crises always remains the poverty and restricted consumption of the masses, in the face of the drive of capitalist production to develop the productive forces as if only the absolute consumption capacity of society set a limit to them". All the Blairite-Clintonite talk of new economics and an end to boom-and-bust only serves to illustrate the fact that the capitalists' worst fear is still lurking - and they know it. The key capitalist contradiction remains and, one day soon, the current free market party will end.

Hastening the hangover, the US economy has been resorting to credit to



maintain spending power at a time of falling wages. The credit role within capitalism is that it breaks down the barriers to expansion, in effect, stretching the limits of consumption. It allows people to buy goods that they otherwise could not afford. Mass consumption can continue for some time if you have a 'buy now, pay later' system, and there is no bigger such a system than in the US. Put simply, a massive sea of credit is keeping the whole economy afloat.

Recent research by Robert Pollin found that the bottom 40% of US households have turned to credit to compensate for falling incomes. They are borrowing to survive. The same research established that three quarters of US families are in debt. Falling and stagnating of incomes has led to a dramatic fall in saving and in 80% of all US families, debt now far outstrips savings.

Even these figures are misleading, for the overwhelming majority of saving in the US is in the form of pension or medical cover. The US now saves to compensate for the lack of a welfare state, while it borrows to pay for today's lifestyle and to maintain the illusion of prosperity. Britain, a decade or more 'behind' the US, is already seeing the same phenomenon, with workers turning to pension cover to compensate for the dying state pension, and private medical provision to obtain basic health care.

Behind the illusion lurks reality. According to US government figures for 1997, US households spend 17% of their income (after tax) on debt service. Research by Martins and Godley argues

that in order to sustain 2% growth in the US economy, households would soon have to devote 25% of their income to servicing debt. At some point, the borrowing has to stop and the buying spree has to come to an end. Martins and Godley, hardly raving left wingers or anarchists, argued that if the US financial bubble burst now, US GNP would fall by 0.3% a year, resulting in unemployment above 11% by 2004.

DEBT-COLLECTORS

One may have thought the capitalists and politicians would see this coming and move to deflate the bubble gradually, by slowly bringing down the level of debt. However, this assumes that capitalism is driven by logic rather than abject greed. In reality, credit plays another role in capitalism; it allows lenders to earn yet further interest on their cash that otherwise would have remained idle. It allows the rich another bite of the profit cherry. Workers first have a large chunk of their production stolen in the form of interest on their labour, only to be faced with handing over another slice in the form of interest on loans.

Debt is one of the principal means by which the rich maintain and increase their wealth. Forget the social democratic talk of a society in which people can 'make it' on the basis of merit. The "self-made" billionaires are the exception to the rule – that is why they get in the papers (unlike the old established stinking rich). As capitalism 'matures', the division between wealth and production inevitably widens, and the gap becomes uncrossable.

Research by Kotlikoff and Summers

found that 80% of personal wealth in the US comes from either direct inheritance or the income earned on inherited wealth. These idle rich do not run companies or do work, they simply maintain their capital by investing it in companies they have no interest in beyond claiming a share of the profits. Of the total \$3.5 trillion of US stocks and bonds, 2.9% trillion are owned by 1% of the population. The other option is to lend money to workers in return for interest. Either way, debt in the US economy means good business for the moneylenders.

During the post-war state interventionist period, some (but not all) of the worst excesses of capitalism were curbed by longer-term measures to maintain demand and some regulation of the financial sector. Now all pretence of restraint is gone and, as the financial sector has let rip, its main role is to create more and greater debt. However, while this suits the financial sector and the rich whose money it manages, it has led inevitably to increasing instability. In the period 1980-96, two-thirds of all IMF member states experienced financial crises. In all cases, these were only prevented from snowballing into global economic crises by massive state intervention.

This must be the bitterest of ironies for the social democrats. Even as we are engulfed in a sea of propaganda hailing the merits of the free market, state intervention quietly remains capitalism's regular saviour. It has now stood aside from regulating capitalism (at least in the US and UK), but it remains the banker, underwriting a deregulated financial sector

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that constantly teeters on the verge of collapse due to its sheer all-destructive greed. The US saving and loans scandal led to a growing general crisis in the financial sector, which was only eventually averted by a state bail-out, paid for through tax revenue. This crisis alone cost an estimated 3% of the year's US GDP. Less well-known crises include Norway's, which cost 4% of annual GDP, Sweden's, costing 6%, Finland's, costing 8% and Spain's, a table-topping 17%, all of which took place in the late 1980s. Other minor problems include the Mexico bond crisis and the collapse in South Asia, where money pouring in from abroad as loans chasing spiralling financial returns caused a financial bubble which eventually burst, bringing several major Asian economies down with it.

As the US economy charges on, propelled by the debt engine, the likelihood increases that the whole thing will fall apart. When the crash and burn happens, it will be nanny state to the rescue, with economic bailout and reconstruction provided by workers through taxes revenues and yet more cuts in welfare and jobs. Should the collapse come sooner rather than later, there is little doubt that the Japanese and European economies will slump back into recession. According to mainstream capitalist commentators, massive, general slumps are a thing of the past, largely due to the modern state management of capitalism (i.e. throwing in massive amounts of money to prevent localised financial crises spreading). However, when the world's most powerful economy goes down the tubes, such complacency concerning the

impossibility of another 1930s may prove seriously misplaced.

Haywood, in his book 'Wall St', describes the stock market crash of 1929 as "best seen as the opening movement of the broader crisis - the unravelling of a monstrously leveraged financial structure. Credit had served to push stocks to unsustainably high levels; it also allowed production to expand capacity beyond the limits of consumption. The crash exposed these limits, announced the unsustainability of promises to pay, and rendered investments unprofitable and debts unserviceable". Rapid deflation culminated in slump; a chilling resemblance to the US economy in 2000.

In the event, a general crisis may ensue, or it may be avoided by luck and taxes. Whatever, to state the obvious, the lives of billions of people should not depend on the ability of politicians to throw enough money into the pot to 'save' the idle rich from a disaster of their own making. Sitting by, watching and hoping, and/or putting faith in political parties and, to put it simply, a set of greedy bastards and power-freaks, is surely not an option.

OFFENSIVE

In fact, there are not many options. The only one which springs to mind is direct action; to confront capitalism and expose its weakness. Only direct action offers the possibility of working people taking back the initiative and gaining control of our own destiny. Confronting capitalism directly can drive it further into crisis; almost anything is better than standing by passively and hoping, as the world economy titters on the brink of

recession, staggering from one financial crisis to another. With this arrangement, during boom, we lose out as the profits go to widening the gap, and in recession, we lose out as conditions, wages and welfare plummet.

With the current rules, there is only one outcome. We lose, they win. With direct action, the crisis in capitalism can be brought about by the people ourselves, through forcing ever better conditions, leading to falling profits. Those who pay for this sort of crisis will not be us, but the capitalist class and the politicians. The ultimate price paid will be loss of their control, power and authority, as we develop social ownership of the economy. Now, does that not sound like a better idea than merely hoping for the best? 

For more
information about issues
raised in *CloserLook* articles, write
to DA. Bargain sub. and
contact details are
on p.34

ABOUT 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.

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.

NETWORKING

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 NEXT?

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 and 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 70s, 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, 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.

For more info, write to the SolFed Contact Point below.

SF Contact Point: SF, PO Box 29, SW PDO, Manchester M15 5HW
Tel. 0161 232 7889
Email: manchesterSF@scandrac.demon.co.uk

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 7LE.
 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, PO Box 487, Norwich MLO, NR2 3AL.

Manchester SF, PO Box 29, SW PDO, Manchester M15 5HW.

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

SF includes contacts across England, Scotland and Wales.
Use the SF Contact Point above to make contact with groups and individuals near you.

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 Return this form to: DA-SF, PO Box 29, SW PDO, Manchester M15 5HW, England.

EVENTS/CAMPAIGNS/GATHERINGS...

SOLIDARITY
FEDERATION

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.

Education Workers' Network

For everyone in the education sector; cleaners, teachers, students, lecturers, etc. Info from EWN, PO Box 29, SW PDO, Manchester M15 5HW.

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

North & East London SolFed

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 7LE. Tel. 0181 374 5027.

South Herts SolFed

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.

Norwich and Norfolk SolFed

Regular meetings in Norwich - contact us at our new address: PO Box 487, Norwich MLO NR2 3AL.

West Yorks SolFed

Members & contacts already in Hebden Bridge, Bradford, Leeds and York areas. Info: West Yorks SF, Box 5, Hebden Bridge, W. Yorks HX7 8YN.

Manchester SF

Support drop-in, last Tuesday of the month, 7pm, followed by Discussion Meeting, 8.30pm. All sessions open and free at; The Brow House, 1 Mabfield Road, Fallowfield, Manchester. Or call the ansaphone 0161 232 7889.

Communication Workers' Network

New Bulletin just out, send SAE for copy or a big one for a bunch for your branch/mates. Main focus on Royal Mail. CWN, PO Box 29, SW PDO, Manchester M15 5HW.

FRIENDS AND
NEIGHBOURS

To get listed here, write to: DA (F&N), PO Box 1095, Sheffield S2 4YR, da@directa.force9.co.uk

MayDay 2000

4-day gathering of revolutionaries to be held across London. Info: BM Mayday, London WC1N 3XX. www.freespeech.org/mayday2k mayday2000-subscribe@egroups.com or via NE London SolFed.

Pride

Pride (London) Membership is open to anyone who identifies as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Transgendered. Membership is £10 (£5 concessions) for individuals, and straight people can join as Friends, but not vote. A working group has been formed to help reclaim Pride in 2000, and to re-establish the Pride March as a community event in 2001. To get involved contact: Pride (London), BCM Box 6097, London WC1N 3XX. Tel. 07071 781904. info@PrideLondon.org <http://www.PrideLondon.org>

Anti-IMF/WTO Action

For info on anti-IMF action around Washington, April 16-17, see www.a16.org. Send blank message to join in: a16-international-planning-subscribe@egroups.com For info on Prague in September - the next IMF/World Bank meeting after Seattle email alf@anarch.free.de For UK updates on activities, contact RTS, PO Box 9656, London N4 4JY. 0171 281 4621 rts@gn.apc.org

Riotous Assembly

Every first Tuesday of the month; open meetings to talk and exchange info on direct action and grassroots resistance. 7.30pm, Yard Theatre (opp. Junction Pub), 41 Old Birley St, Hulme, Manchester.

Northern Anarchist Network

Next NAN is in Bradford on 1-2 April. Tel. 0161 707 9652 for details.

Faslane Action

News on the blockade and future events from Scottish CND, 15 Barrland St, Glasgow G41 1QH. Tel. 0141 423 1222. Or try Trident Ploughshares, 01324 880744.

Anarchist Trade Union
Network

To subscribe and get a bimonthly newsletter, Bread and Roses, send six stamps with your name and address and any union affiliation details to: Box EMAB (ATU), 88 Abbey Street, Derby DE22 3SQ. williamgodwin7@hotmail.com <http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/Parliament/2522>

Action Update/DoD

Monthly round-up of environmental and other direct actions from across Britain - the Earth First! newsletter. EFi AU, PO Box 199, Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE99 1TA. 0797 4791841 actionupdate@gn.apc.org www.eco-action.org/efau For heavier stuff, try Do or Die - 100's of pages crammed with ecological resistance for £5 from DoD, c/o Prior House, 6 Tilbury Place, Brighton, E Sussex BN2 2GY.

Solidarity Magazine

First issue out now - a publication for workers dedicated to workers' control and industrial unionism. Produced by Belfast Workers' Control Group. Solidarity Magazine, PO Box 505, Belfast BT1 1AE.

Infoshops Network

To join, 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.

LDMG - Prisoner Support

Some prisoners sentenced after J18 last year who would appreciate letters of support: Onofrio Lo-verso, TC3014, HMYOI Raleigh House, Portland, Dorset DT5 1DL (would appreciate Italian letters too). Sean Brown, BP5610, HMYOI Huntercombe, Henley-on-Thames, Oxon RG9 5FB. Mark Leighton, SB4402, HMYOI Feltham, Bedford Rd, Feltham, Middlesex TW13 4ND. Adam Rowley, FB4126, HMYOI Dover, Western Heights, Kent CT17 7DR. Updates from LDMG, BM Haven, London WC1N 3XX.

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