Direct Action

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THE PARTY'S OVER
THE ACTION'S JUST BEGINING...

inside... AFRICAN ANARCHISM
TO VOTE OR NOT TO VOTE? ETHICS:GENETICS
SOCIALIST LEFT-NEW OLD LABOUR
WHY WE DON'T MAKE THINGS ANYMORE

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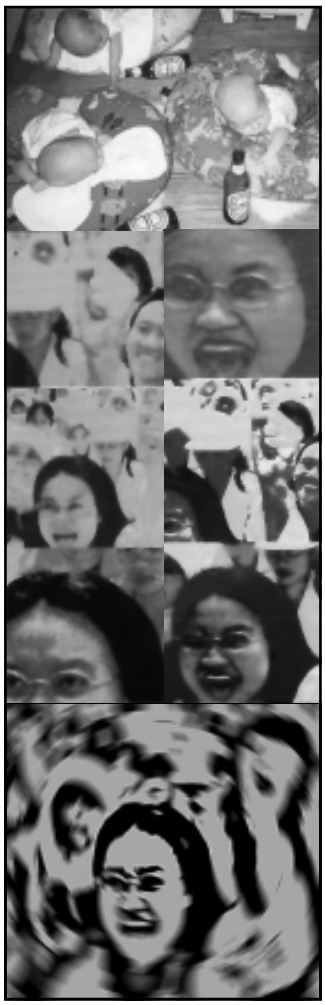
Democracy without parties.

Party's don't last forever. Sooner or later, the fun and the drug wears off. Staying fresh means trying something else.



Democracy is necessary. It is the only way we can hope to eradicate oppression and inequality. But the term has been misused and abused to the point of losing any specific meaning. This may be stating the obvious – but obvious is always a good place to start…

Democracy means the practice or condition of social, economic and political equality. In other words, we all have an equal say. To do this, we must all have free access to all information. Otherwise, how could we possibly come to a reasoned decision about things?

The Party is a group of people with a clear set of ideas, who want everyone else to agree to those ideas. Furthermore, they want people to let them take power and give orders, in the name of those people who agree. The Party is a special interest group – it is especially interested in itself.

The theory of the Party is that, although it is self-interested, since it must perform well in order to get re-elected, it will do what we want, and so incorporate our needs into its self-interested agenda. In practice, not true.

To get/retain power, a Party must promise more than the others. Inevitably, it must promise things it cannot deliver. There is a parallel here with capitalism. To make a fatter profit than the others, capitalist firms must make promises about products that are untrue. The only other choices are; cut back on costs and screw the workforce to increase profits, or; eradicate market pressure to raise productivity/reduce quality, by becoming a monopoly (bullying, destroying, buying, etc. the opposition) or finding a niche (using copyright, secrecy, stealth, etc. to not let anyone else compete). Invariably, capitalist firms do all three whenever possible. Only the ones 'best' at doing these things survive.

Only the Parties which lie most effectively can survive. 'Effectively' means their lies must not be found out by too many people, otherwise they run out of votes. In other words, they must withhold information. In short, the Party system means we are continuously told things which are not true and not told things we need to know.

To lie and get away with it, the Party only has one choice; to use the power it has assumed (your vote) for purposes other than those originally intended. A Party may stick roughly to its manifesto, but it uses power for many other things besides – all in the name of Party survival.

The Party is an inherently corruptible organisation. It will pay, cajole, persuade and connive to ensure its survival. It will do favours for the rich and powerful, and it doesn't even have to threaten the media that if the stories in the paper do not fit the party's image, life will be made harder for the hacks.

The corruption in Parties is in proportion to the power they have. You don't often hear too much about irrelevant left-wing Parties being involved in corruption. That is, unless and until they get some power, when they invariably make up for lost time.

The Party cannot possibly deliver democracy or the freedom of access that this requires, since it operates for the Party's interest, not ours. Reclaiming the meaning of democracy means everyone rejecting the lie that any Party could ever deliver it. The point is not that you should not vote, it is that no-one can deliver your democracy but yourself. And that delivery has to be done directly – not by post or proxy.
The only democracy is democracy without parties.

In short, canvassers can piss off. DA

regulars

6 ***blairedvision:***
Guilt-free shopping
Louise Casey, the Homelessness Tsar, objects to groups giving soup to rough sleepers. She reckons it makes them dependent on food - or something.

6-11 ***actions+comment***
7: Natfuscation
8: Big Eyes
8: Living, teaching SEXISM
9: Health care or Wealth care?
10: BSE & vCJD - What next?
Sidelines: DETR occupied; Simon Jones Victory; Charging Chickens; Killing Pays; Siemens Stains; Nazis on the Make; Faslane Goes Slow; Easy Money; No Sweat; The Real Terrorists; Ham and Eggs

12 ***international news***
Colombia; Haiti; France; Mexico; Turkey; Netherlands; Poland; Free West Papua; India; Bangladesh; Philippines; Ukraine.
Plus: Victory for the U'wa; 21st IWA Congress; People's Caravan; Future Events.

15 ***globalfocus:***
Nigeria
Parliamentary 'democracy' is still very young in Nigeria. Yet already, people are seeing through the bullshit. Interviews with members of the anarchosyndicalist Awareness League.

23 ***notes+letters***
Anarchist Social Work; Killing Inside; When Nike Don't Like Selling Trainers...

24 ***justicepage:***
Letters from Mark Barnsley and a Turkish prisoner.

34 ***DA resources***
SolFed info., forthcoming events, campaigns, actions, friends and neighbours.

reviews

25-29

reviewfocus: **Genethics and reality**
Genetic Engineering - Dream or nightmare?

music
Various Artists –Live at the Complex 2 - Entartete Kunst
The NO WTO Combo – Live from the Battle in Seattle - Alternative Tentacles Records

books and pamphlets
Against Parliament, For Anarchism - Anarchist Federation.
Anarchism – Arguments For and Against - Albert Meltzer
Bash the Fash - K. Bullstreet
Cold Catches Fire; Do or Die #9

theme thepartysover

4 **New Old Labour**
The Socialist Alliance: Is it a force worth turning out for, or is it just New Old Labour? What will prevent it simply becoming New (Crap) Labour in another 70 years' time?

11 **Dissing voting**
Disenfranchised, disenchanted, disengaged, disinclined...

18 ***centrestage:***
Politics is for life: Not just for polling booths
To many people, politics is Blair's ability to go through life unaware that he has the charisma of a whizzed up pharmaceuticals executive...

20 **We don't need no *(authoritarian)* education**
Talk about another brick in the wall.
We don't need a New Labour education
but we could use some self-education.
Not a new idea - but one that needs renewing.

31 ***closerlook:***
UKplc: On the slide
Tony Blair says it's the exchange rate (wait for the Euro). From Thatcher to New Labour, politicians have been manufacturing excuses for the decline of manufacturing for three decades. The truth is rather revealing.

Passed the test?
The world needs more pedants and proofers. If you've spotted the deliberate mistake on the cover, why not offer your services to the DA Collective? On offer is a generous package - basically, give time freely and make a difference.
Write to DA address opposite. (Bosses don't bother - DA is produced under direct workers' control).

New Old for New New?

New Old Labour

The Socialist Alliance: Is it a force worth turning out for, or is it just New Old Labour?

What will prevent it simply becoming New (Crap) Labour in 70 years' time?

The Socialist Alliance has set itself up as the new alternative to the Labour Party. It is urging the electorate, who are fed up with New Labour's move to the right, to join and support it. However, it has not set itself up as a party as yet. This is because it is made up of an amalgam of various parties along with a smattering of 'non-aligned socialists'.

Many of the non-aligned socialists are ex-Labour Party members who have finally realised that they were fighting a losing battle with Blairism. Some want to see a new party emerge based on a vision of an old Labour Party that never really existed. Others want to scare the Labour leadership into renouncing the rightward drift and return to a more centre-left position. This would allow them to re-join and engage in the historic right-left battles of the past, where they feel happiest.

The main parties involved are the Socialist Party and the Socialist Workers' Party (SWP). These two have been vying with each other within the Alliance since its inception. Both have their own agenda and see the Socialist Alliance as an opportunity to extend their influence.

The Socialist Party is basically the remains of the Militant Tendency who were expelled from Labour and forced to set up their own party and come clean about their Trotskyism. Their expressed aim is to get votes, and they see the Socialist Alliance as a vehicle for this. Their idea is for the Alliance to build a branch structure, and then these branches would eventually merge with the Socialist Party, absorbing any other smaller groups along the way. The SWP, on the other hand, are a revolutionary Leninist party and have no real interest in building an electoral party of the left. They have always defined their politics in relation to the Labour Party, whether it was asking us to "vote Labour with no illusions" ('97), or urging us to "defend socialists in the Labour Party" ('80s). They wish to use the Socialist Alliance in much the same way. They see it as a vehicle to spread their ideology and to recruit members. They are trying to keep one foot in the electoral camp while, at the same time, trying to keep in with the anti-capitalist movement by also espousing a crude version of direct action politics.

The only thing holding the Socialist Alliance together is their opposition to Tony Blair and New Labour.

The only thing holding the Socialist Alliance together is their opposition to Tony Blair and New Labour. This was demonstrated recently in Preston, Lancashire. Here, the death of left-wing Labour MP Audrey Wise right in the middle of a mini-crisis for the Labour Party saw the hurried forming of the Lancashire Socialist Alliance (LSA). The initiators were the SWP, who quickly contacted everyone they could. I even received a call but explained that taking part in elections was against my principles even as a tactical manoeuvre.

After some initial confusion over whether they would stand if Valerie Wise, the daughter of the MP, also decided to stand, they chose an ex-Labour councillor, Terry Cartwright, to represent them. He had resigned from the Labour Party and stood as an Independent Labour Candidate in the local elections and increased his majority. The LSA stated that it was not just being formed for the by-election, but intended to be a permanent grouping of the left. An attempt was made to get the official backing of the Radical Preston Alliance, a loose campaigning and information network, but this was complicated by the fact that the Green Party

candidate was also a Radical Preston Alliance member.

There was celebration after the vote because the LSA had managed to save its deposit. However, this was mainly due to the reputation of Terry Cartwright (most of his votes came from the area he represented as a councillor), and the abysmal turnout of less than 30%. They announced their intention of fighting the seat in any future general election.

This soon changed as tensions that were ever present during the campaign emerged. Terry Cartwright has indicated that he will not stand again. This is a blow to the LSA, as they have no other credible candidate. The reasons have been given as not having a say in press releases and leaflets, having his election agents foisted on him, in-fighting between the Socialist Party and the SWP, and the behaviour of some of his supporters, especially those bussed in by the SWP.

There was an agreement that in the door-to-door canvassing and on the LSA stall, the parties would not sell their papers or push their own literature. Needless to say this agreement was broken with people being asked if they wanted to buy papers on the doorstep and at the stall if no-one was looking. When this was mentioned to the LSA, they chose to ignore it as not to cause any disruption. Another factor was that most of the campaign funds were being supplied by the SWP.

This scenario or very similar will be repeated across the country, indeed, it is already. The fact is, the Socialist Alliance is a paper-thin alliance of convenience. The SWP regard themselves as the vanguard party of the working class; the Socialist Party think much the same. How can these two ever work together in any sort of formal alliance? The answer is, they cannot.

The Socialist Alliance is simply New Old Labour with a few added frills. It is pursuing the same old political agenda that has constantly failed the working class of this country. They have claimed that anarchists are involved. Either they are very lost and confused, or they are not anarchists.

It is time to go forward and not back, re-hashing the failings of the past. It must be hard for many on the left to break with a tradition that has revolved around the internal politics of the Labour Party for the past 100 years. Direct action is being talked about but in a superficial way at the moment, simply as one tactic among many. What we need is for it to be taken on board as a whole political culture, a way of approaching our everyday lives and the problems that confront us. Only then can the final break be made with the failed ideas of the Marxist brand of socialism. DA

The Party is over...

...but the action's just beginning

The Socialist Alliance is simply New Old Labour with a few added frills. It is pursuing the same old political agenda that has constantly failed the working class. They have claimed that anarchists are involved. Either they are very lost and confused, or they are not anarchists.

on the edge

DETR occupied

To remind the government why the last roads programme got dropped, just 25 activists was all it took to shut down DETR headquarters in December, occupying the offices of Environment Minister Michael Meacher, and Transport Minister Gus MacDonald. Once inside, they telephoned Blair, Prescott, the Whips office and many others on internal phone lists, saying, 'Hello, we're occupying the DETR. Several years ago the SACTRA report, which was endorsed by Government, stated, more roads, more congestion, hence more CO2! The Government is planning 139 new roads; we just thought we'd say, we've noticed, and we haven't gone away!' Source: Corporate Watch

Simon Jones Victory

On 19th December, the Director of Public Prosecutions announced that Euromin and its general manager, Richard Martell, are finally to be prosecuted for the manslaughter of Simon Jones. In April 1998, on his first day at work for Euromin, Simon was sent to work without training or protective clothing, and was dead within two hours, decapitated by a crane grab. The campaign has included shutting down Southwark Bridge, challenging the government's refusal to prosecute in the courts, and countless other actions to raise the profile of casualisation and where it is leading us. People like Simon die at work all the time! www.simonjones.org.uk

I don't particularly need a new pair of trainers, but there are a lot of hungry people out there...

NewLabour Election Pledge:

Guilt-free shopping

Louise Casey, the Homelessness Tsar, objects to groups giving soup to rough sleepers. She reckons it makes them dependent on food - or something like that.

Last Christmas brought with it the usual impassioned pleas from charities hoping to benefit from the 'festive spirit'. But their media campaigns are looking more and more out of place in "New Britain". As Neo-Liberalism is now the dominant model for the management of the economy, ideas like charity and redistribution are considered 'old thinking' by the political elite.

Wealth creation is seen by all major parliamentary parties as the most important factor in helping the world's poor, as it's believed that this new wealth will simply 'trickle down' to them in due course. In the language of the New Right, charity creates a 'dependency culture'. Louise Casey, the Homelessness Tsar, objects to the Salvation Army and other dedicated groups giving soup to rough sleepers. She reckons it makes them dependent on food - or something like that.

When, I wonder, will the rest of the world catch up with this 'new thinking'? The Church, for example, could come up with the next testament, based on the three pillars of 'faith, hope, and *prudence*'. The Good Samaritan could now walk on by, safe in the knowledge that to have lent a hand would have just encouraged this type of suffering. 'The Feeding the 5,000' would become the 'Earning of the £5,000', and it would be explained that all that stuff about the rich man, the camel and the eye of the needle was just a bit of a laugh. Dickens' *A Christmas' Carol* would now include an epilogue in which the Cratchets would come to rely on Scrooge's new-found generosity, and pretty soon become a selfish, ignorant and lazy bunch of scroungers, probably spending most of their ill-gotten gains on hard drugs. Maybe a Cratchet daughter could 'get herself pregnant' (such a strange term) just to get her own house off the poor old banker.

Maybe it's time for *Comic Relief* to adopt the 'Washington Consensus' and become champions of wealth creation. I can just see Billy Connolly, surrounded by African children, demanding that we go out and buy as many luxury goods as we can for 'the sake of these poor kids'. Cut to Jonathan Ross back in the studio looking up at a screen showing our GDP statistics and begging, "come on, buy another 15,000 computers and you'll see me get covered in gunge. And don't forget to keep buying too, folks. Do you really want to deprive a nine-year-old Indonesian of a full-time job just because you think that Nike trainers are a bit of a rip off?"

How comforting it is to know that only our sustained consumption of luxury goods, coupled with our extensive ownership of foreign resources, can help the world's poor out of poverty. We can dispense with the guilt we often feel after spells of decadence; we're simply contributing to economic growth - the best way to eradicate poverty.

But what of our continued guilt when we do 'walk on by'? Maybe Neo-Liberalism does not fit comfortably into most of our world views after all. Maybe it is the fact that so much of our literature, folklore and moral upbringing is based on the importance of sharing. Maybe it is because we are human.

Neo-Liberalism, indeed Capitalism itself, attempts to side-step our conscience with a theory that the best way for the rich to help the poor is to do battle with them in a competition for the world's wealth. Unsurprising, the West invariably comes out on top. World capitalism promises us a future when everyone on the planet will move up together. But this promise is constantly deferred. The gap between rich and poor is continuing to grow, and the 'trickle down' theory is continually exposed in reality as the lie it always was.

But hey, we shouldn't allow our selfish desire to be human get in the way of globalisation. I don't particularly need a new pair of trainers, but there are a lot of hungry people out there...

NATFUSCATION

The Higher Education unions were involved in "action short of a strike" on and off in January and February. After strike ballot results showed the majority of unions' members nationally wanted to take strike action, those good old democratic New Labour union leaders took the decision that… you guessed - we wouldn't take strike action.

The real fun started when NATFHE, the lecturers' union, decided that it would be a good idea to show employers how serious we all are by withholding student marks from examination boards. This seemed at first like a neat trick. First, we don't have to bother with picket lines and strikes crumbling because people will be going to work. They won't lose their pay, because they will be working to contract. Students will get their marks (they would simply not be given to boards) and anyway, because it is only the first semester, the all-important end of year marks and awards of qualifications to students, etc. would be unaffected. Basically, it would mess up the universities' massive red tape operation, and so be one in the eye for the bureaucrats who run the places.

Unfortunately, this early optimism involved two wrong assumptions. First, how pathetic NATFHE leadership is: Second, how corporate the employers are getting, particularly in the way they treat employees - buoyed up with New Labour free market logic as they are at present.

Perhaps the most outstandingly disastrous response (for them) by any management came from the vice-chancellor at Sheffield Hallam University, Diana Green. She hates lecturers, particularly those in unions, and uses her forked tongue in the classic teamwork/ authoritarian split personality mentality. In a previous life at Birmingham, she led an attack on the union which resulted in breaking the national pay bargaining agreement. Now in Sheffield, she was straining at the leash to have another go at her staff.

Her response to the action was to start docking a full day's pay for every day that each member of staff held back their marks from the boards. This is probably illegal. But the real problem for her was that it galvanised what was until then – it has to be said – a rather uncommitted bunch of teachers, into an angry, unruly mob. People started turning out three times a week at midday, blowing whistles outside her office, waving yellow cards (next one's red), etc.

However, Diana Green knew that when it comes to the crunch, she could rely on NATFHE bosses to cave in. Union leaders at national level claimed victory and immediately called off the industrial action. The vice-chancellors had agreed not to end minimum national terms and conditions and to reopen talks on the 3% pay offer. Like TUC unions everywhere, shut out in the cold for years by Thatcher, the mere mention of talks reinflates their tattered egos and self-importance is restored.

NATFHE immediately agreed to release the marks they had withheld and proclaimed; "vice-chancellors have certainly learned that NATFHE is a force to be reckoned with" - and immediately urged members to agree to suspend action. Despite the agreement to talk, the employers association, the UCEA, has remained adamant throughout that the 3% this year will remain.

Meanwhile, back in Sheffield, the local NATFHE branch had been given special dispensation to vary (i.e. call off) action locally in the face of that particularly nasty vice-chancellor, Diana Green. The agreement was they would ballot for strike action instead. Fortunately, the logic that if you aren't being paid, you might as well be on strike prevailed. However, the ballot papers never went out as events nationally overtook the situation (i.e. the national climbdown by NATFHE leadership). The local 'victory' was that NATFHE agreed to stop the local ballot and any further threat of strike action for the foreseeable future, in exchange for the vice-chancellor agreeing to pay back the wages she has stopped. In other words, in exchange for us sticking our tails between our legs in the characteristic manner she likes, she has condescended to pay back the wages she (probably illegally) took from our paypackets. The NATFHE has proved its worth – not much. Like so many TUC unions, its New Labour lap-dog union leadership seems to specialise in snatching defeat from the jaws of victory.

on the edge

Charging chickens

60 oversized chickens targeted the global grain trader, Cargill at the Liverpool docks. This was followed by a visit to the turkey producers Bernard Matthews, with 3 tonnes of GM-free animal feed - which Bernard Matthews claims is impossible to source. In December, oversized turkeys blocked an Asda depot to persuade them to 'stuff their GM turkeys'. Those who trade in GM products can expect a visit from oversized birds soon.

Killing pays

Corporate manslaughter is good for business! Balfour Beatty, who had key rail maintenance contracts which indicate responsibility for the Hatfield train crash, have been rewarded for their lax attitude towards safety by being handed a £125 million contract by Railtrack. This covers Wessex, Kent, Anglia and Great Eastern, and appears intended to make up for the £60m in contracts they have lost since Hatfield. Meanwhile, the manslaughter charges are pending...

Siemens stains

The new £77 million computer system designed to sort out the backlog of asylum seeker claims has proved to be bogus and has been scrapped by the government. The computer system was handed over to Siemens under the Private Finance Initiative, and they promptly sacked staff and made the service even worse. Despite the National Audit Office complaining about their incompetence, Siemens received bonuses because they were paid for reducing costs not for improving the system! The company have a fine record in privatisation cock-ups, managing to paralyse the passport agency two years back. The cost of a passport rose to £28 to cover the fiasco.

Source: Schnews

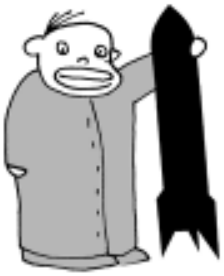
on the edge

Nazis on the make

Violent attacks by neo-nazis in Germany have risen by 45% in the last year to 13,753 incidents. In response, the German government has decided to offer them a package of benefits worth £30,000 to pull out of the neo-nazi movement. A telephone hotline has been set up to target young people who have been lured into the scene but wish to leave. Skinheads will be invited to inform and be offered new identities. The London-based Institute of Race Relations have published a report expressing serious reservations about the German government's approach, saying "the programme is unworkable. They are basically rewarding you for being a nazi and showing sympathy towards you, whereas the real victims are the 'foreigners' who have suffered". DA says "Get real! Take direct action against neo-nazi thugs".

Faslane goes slow

In February, several hundred people demonstrated at Faslane naval base near Glasgow. Police detained 185 people, and the blockade prevented workers from entering the base for two hours. The arrested were detained in a number of police stations in the Glasgow area. A Trident Ploughshares spokesperson said: "Today's blockade shows that more and more people are grasping the urgency of the threat posed by Britain's unlawful nuclear arsenal. We are delighted that so many have been ready to take this significant step towards preventing nuclear crime. Source: Trident Ploughshares



Learn to love the bomb.

Vote Labour.

Big Eyes

If we were meant to work at night, surely we would have big eyes?

Almost a quarter of the British workforce now works at some point between 6pm and 6am. This is the price being paid by workers for a US-inspired 24-7 society.

Fifteen percent of workers are now working throughout the night. Research shows that workers are now expected to work these anti-social hours for little or no extra pay. In other words, the premium payments once associated with working outside the old nine-to-five hours are being eroded. The number of people working unsociable hours is expected to double by the year 2007.

This is a far cry from the world envisaged by the free market zealots, who argue that the introduction of new technology will free workers from the drudgery of work. Far from liberating workers, the new technological age has seen an explosion of anti-social jobs, often with poor pay, poor conditions and little job security.

The increase in unsociable work can but lead to yet more health inequality. Research has shown that working unsociable hours, especially during the night, increases the chances of heart disease, cancer and a general shortening of life expectancy. It also increases the chance of mental health problems, such as depression, not to mention the increased stress of trying to balance the raising of children with the need to work.

Living, teaching sexism

Recent reports by NATFHE have highlighted the disparity in wages between women and ethnic minority lecturers and their (white) male colleagues in higher and further education. Those working full-time are usually on lower grades for doing the same job. Many are on part-time 'rolling contracts', which means that they never get the benefits of full-time staff, like sick pay and holiday entitlement. When a permanent full-time post does arise, they are overlooked and a younger 'whiz-kid' is employed. These 'high flyers' are recruited to do the prestigious research that brings money in the form of grants. In order to relieve the researchers from teaching, part-timers are employed. With the teaching comes the preparation, the tutorials, the marking and all the admin, and for women in particular, who are seen as 'good campus citizens', crowds of students seeking advice and guidance. So, having discovered this, you might expect NATFHE to mount a campaign to take action. In fact, the 'campaign' appears to consist of raising the issue while not doing anything about it.

One problem is a clash of interests. NATFHE does not want to alienate those who gain from this system and risk them leaving to join the AUT. Conflicts also arise from middle managers that pack the local union branches. Given the nature of the job, lecturers are not encouraged in solidarity, as they often seem to see themselves as individuals competing against each other for promotion, sabbaticals and research opportunities.

Even when a lecturer challenges this inequality s/he (less likely to be he) firstly has to convince the union rep to do something, anything, to take the case forward. Some have experienced being told to sort it out for themselves. This raises the question of what the union is there for in the first place, cheap insurance possibly?

What is needed is for those who feel they are being exploited to start to communicate with each other departments-wide, university-wide and country-wide to force the universities and the unions to change this built-in discrimination. Identifying others in exploited situations can help to build solidarity and achieve results by bringing a joint grievance. Raise the issue with your union or contact the EWN and we will put you in contact with others. Only by working together, discussing and trying tactics and ways of fighting back, can this be stopped once and for all.

Health care or Wealth care?

My idiot minder says we should get a slice of those European hospitals...

The move towards ever-greater free trade may be about to put at risk the status of free health provision across Europe.

The powerful US lobbying group "The Coalition of Service Industries" is putting increasing pressure on US politicians to use the World Trade Organisation (WTO) as a means by which US companies can target European state health provision. The Coalition of Service Industries' Chairman, Dean O'Hare, is also Chief Executive of Chubb Corporation, the world's biggest Insurance Company. He told a US Congressional hearing last year; "we believe we can make much progress in the WTO negotiations, to allow the opportunity for US business to expand into foreign health care markets".

Mindful that the US health care market has reached saturation, with 71% of US adults having private insurance, the sector is anxious to look to the potentially lucrative European health care provision as a means of expansion. Thus, US health care companies are arguing that state health provision in Europe is in breach of free trade agreements.

This is certainly the case. European countries have used restrictive practices to refuse to open up their state-run health sectors to private competition. However, while US health care companies are railing against European state provision, they are simultaneously taking massive state funding from the US government. The US state hands over $1 trillion to private health care companies every year, through schemes such as Medicare. As is the case with the railways here in Britain, state money keeps much of the US privately-run service sector in the black. And the similarities between Britain's railways and US service sector don't end there.

What's more, the handouts aren't necessarily 'legitimate'. Massive state funding of private companies in the US has led to widespread corruption, the scale of which is now being revealed – and it is almost unbelievable. In short, it makes scandals like that involving the people who run our good old friendly lottery look like a mere free lunch.

The FBI conservatively estimates that over $60 billion is defrauded by private health companies in the US every year. With so much money involved, in places like Florida, organised crime is abandoning street drugs in favour of health fraud.

It is difficult to track. Health companies bill patients for treatment they have not received. On paper, these claims appear valid, and with so many 'transactions', payments are made electronically. It took a 2 year undercover operation by the FBI into one of the US's biggest health care companies, HCA, just to prepare a single case for legal action.

Even here, although the company was forced to pay back $200 million, the case never got to court for fears it would be difficult to prove. Instead, an out of court settlement was reached, after which HCA attempted to claim that accounting errors were made, rather than fraud being committed. The FBI afterwards admitted that this case was only the tip of the iceberg, but hoped that it would send a clear message to private health companies that they were not immune and that fraud could be detected.

In Britain, the US companies may not have to wait for a ruling from the World Trade Organisation. Labour is already paving the way for ever-greater private provision. In November last year, the government signed an agreement with health care providers aimed at allowing them a greater role in the national health service. Though publicly they argued it was designed only to allow the private sector to help take the strain during flu epidemics in winter, the reality is that it opened the way for public money to be channelled into the private sector more freely than ever before.

On top of this, the health minister, Alan Millburn, has extended the private finance initiative programme to enable private consortiums to build 18 hospitals. On completion, these will be run largely by private companies - only the core medical staff will mainly come under the national health. Little wonder that US health companies are rushing to establish offices in London. Amongst those already here are HCA.

How long before Labour, under pressure from the US government, starts to argue within EU for greater deregulation of healthcare provision, to allow the all-powerful US companies to break into the provision of health care within Europe? The European states have so far protected decent state-run health provision through state regulation. Labour is the most likely gateway into Europe for the US Trojan horse to ride roughshod over European health care.

on the edge

Easy money

BP-Amoco is making £24,000 a minute - £1 billion a month. Along with Shell, they are currently suffering from massive inundation of profits. They are proposing to spend £200 million over the next five years on renewable energy. Giving something back to the environment? Not quite, they are spending £6 billion a year on oil exploration. Now George Trouble-ya Bush is in, they are set to get the green light to drill oil in Alaska.

BP's re-branding as the "Beyond Petroleum" company is perhaps the ultimate co-opting of environmentalist language and message. The plan is to make us all green. Already BP claims to be "the largest producer of solar energy in the world". They've bought Solarex solar energy for $45 million. But they also bought ARCO for $26.5 billion to increase BP's production capacity for... oil. BP spent more on their new eco-friendly logo last year than on renewable energy.

No Sweat

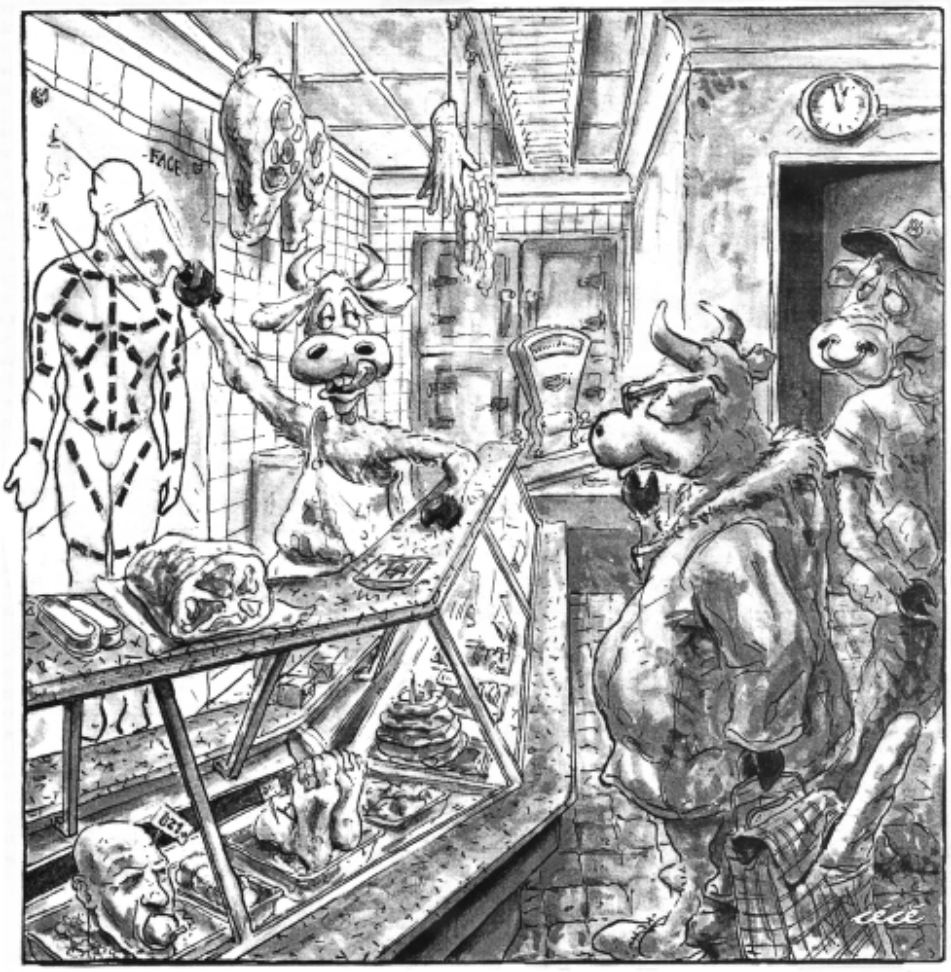
No Sweat, a UK based campaign against sweatshops, has been doing action against Nike and Gap. It is also working to unionise fast-food restaurants, shops and sweatshops in the UK. For stuff, contact: www.nosweat.org.uk; nosweatcamp@yahoo.co.uk; 07958 556 756.

Rising Tide

Following the high-profile actions at the Hague climate conference (see p. 13) future actions are planned against the oil industry and air travel. The next talks, COP 61/2 in Bonn in May, will also be the site of demonstrations. Meanwhile, join in against US policy on climate change every Saturday in Grovesnor Square, London. Contact: info@risingtide.org.uk, PO Box 9656 London N4 4JY

BSE & vCJD - What next?

When the NFU and MLC get on TV and start denying their profiteering intensive farming methods have anything to do with the latest Foot and Mouth, food poisoning, etc. epidemic, you can almost feel millions of sofas up and down the country wobbling as people shake fists and shout "lying bastards", or some such. It is not that long since the National Farmers' Union and the Meat and Livestock Commission were queuing up behind John Gummer and telling us beef was safe.



We do not know what the final death toll will be, but we now know who is guilty of murder

Food poisoning in Britain has been rising since the early 1980s, with reported cases alone now running at over 100,000 per year. Meanwhile, almost 100 people have already died in Britain from variant CJD (vCJD), all after appalling suffering. They all contracted vCJD by eating infected beef. Millions of cattle were killed to try to control the epidemic. Massive life loss has been complemented by £4 billion economic losses to the government – which inevitably, we will have to cough up for.

The death toll will continue to rise. No-one knows how many will die. Initially, projected deaths were put in possible millions. A recent study suggests a 'mere' 136,000 people will die from vCJD. The official BSE report is 16 volumes long, took two and a half years to compile, and cost £27 million of taxpayers' money. It exposes how, through the 1980s and 1990s, the Tory party and their henchmen lied, connived and presided over a disaster which was created by their rampant free market policies. For years, the beef industry and the Tories refused to act. They insisted British beef was safe to eat. The terrible truth – that beef could spread to humans – emerged on 20th March 1996, over 10 years after the first official BSE case.

In the 1980s, Thatcher's Tories pushed through a massive business deregulation programme. The bosses were given the green light to boost profits and forget health and safety. Cattle food manufacturers, such as the then Unilever-owned Fisons started using the carcasses of dead sheep as an ingredient in cattle feed. They also used the bodies of dead cattle, which had been declared unfit for human consumption to add to the cattle feed, thus amplifying the infection.

The Tories obfuscated, and only began to introduce any controls in 1989. Even then, they continued to state that British beef was safe, with cheap tricks such as the infamous John Gummer incident, when he as Tory Agriculture Minister, forced his small daughter to eat a beefburger on prime time TV. She found it disgusting.

The fact that BSE-infected meat causes the fatal brain disease vCJD in humans was deliberately suppressed for years. The result was that millions of people were fed deadly infection in the form of prions. The scientific debate continues over whether BSE originated as scrapie in sheep or elsewhere. Back in 1988, research by the neuropathogenesis unit suggested that sheep could be infected by just half a gram of BSE-infected material. It was 6 years later before scientists widely accepted that this was lethal. Now there is concern that BSE has found its way back into sheep, and then on into the human food chain yet again.

BSE cases have dropped markedly in Britain, with 'only' 962 cases in 2000. However, BSE cases are rising in France, Switzerland, Germany, and Spain, and it is spreading to other European countries. Free access to full information about our food is crucial, and the Food Standards Agency is not going to provide it. We do not know what the final death toll will be, but we now know who is guilty of murder – the Tories and their henchmen, along with the profit-mad animal feed manufacturers and cattle products industry. However, in sharp contrast to working class crime, there is no sign of New Labour ever getting tough on their own business and politician class. That is a task for the rest of us.

Dissing voting

disenfranchised, disenchanted, disengaged, disinclined...

With all the talk of an imminent general election, it is an opportune moment to evaluate the traditional anarchist "don't vote" call.

Last time round, the desire to put an end to eighteen years of the Tories may have been understandable. Having voted the Tories out, however, we only ended up with a shower of crypto-Tories in the guise of "new" Labour. Is a "don't vote" campaign more relevant than ever, then? The usual objection, at least from outside anarchist circles, is that a wasted vote is only an act of self-disenfranchisement. But what does "disenfranchisement" really mean? How does it relate to "don't vote"? How *should* it relate to "don't vote"? The answers to such questions should form part of a culture of struggle that is relevant not just on election day but on all the other days in between.

The notion of "disenfranchisement" can be understood in a number of ways. Most literally, it is not being allowed to vote, or having the vote taken away. Less literally, it is possible to be "disenfranchised" by the electoral process itself. The western media are always eager to hit us with all the incidences of intimidation and ballot rigging from the so-called "Third World" and "newly democratising" countries. The coverage is somehow more coy, however, when it comes to situations like Florida in the shambles that was the US presidential election, in which whole communities in some counties had their votes tampered with.

Unfair practices aside, the ins and outs of electoral systems themselves often cause the "disenfranchisement" of significant numbers of voters. In this sense, the vote is seen as pointless rather than disallowed. This is the case with the "first past the post" system in British general elections, where minority parties, and those who voted for them, get a representation that falls far short of reflecting their actual share of the total vote. The US presidential election, where Bush polled less votes nationally than Gore but still got elected, further illustrates the point.

A third possibility is "self-disenfranchisement", whether by refusal to register, refusal to vote or by spoilt vote. It is this category that "don't vote" campaigns aim to encourage. In this respect then, can the 28.5% of the electorate who didn't turn out in 1997 be taken to indicate significant opposition to the electoral system and to parliamentary democracy and capitalism, which the electoral system serves? Does the fact that the 1997 turnout was the lowest since World War 2 (notwithstanding widespread anti-Tory feeling) indicate that such opposition is on the up? Clearly, there is as yet no evidence to suggest that we are on the verge of a mass anti-electoral movement. In fact, just looking a little bit closer at people's reasons for not voting would reveal that most do so more out of apathy than any sense of rebellion. Of course, this is not to deny that apathy cannot reflect dissatisfaction with the current system, but it is rarely converted into something more positive – namely, active opposition to the status quo.

This brings us to another sense of "disenfranchisement", one that relates directly to what the electoral system is all about. We lack any input to, never mind actual control over, the decisions that affect our everyday lives. Through the electoral system, the power to make such decisions is handed over to professional politicians and to the big business interests that they defend. Electoral politics reduces political activity to putting a cross on a ballot paper every once in a while. Real, meaningful political activity, on the other hand, promotes the idea of taking control back for ourselves. Besides, this activity is not restricted to just one day in every four or five years – it goes on, in little ways as well as big, all year, every year.

Accordingly, to not vote through apathy, to refuse to do anything toward bringing real change, is little more than useless. If this is recognised, then a "don't vote" campaign can be seen as a welcome addition to continual political activity, rather than just an end in itself that comes and goes only at election time. DA

on the edge

The Real Terrorists

The Terrorism Act became law on 19th February – the most direct attack on people's human rights since the Thatcher's Public Order Act. Within days, Home Secretary Jack Straw announced 21 organisations banned under the Act for targeting foreign states. These include the Kurdish Workers' Party, ETA the Basque separatist group and the Tamil Tigers. A few years back, no doubt everyone in the UK who supported the struggle of Nelson Mandela and the African National Congress against apartheid in South Africa would have been included.

The deal is that now anyone can be stopped and searched, detained without charge and have genetic material taken and kept forever on a database – irrespective of whether charges are made, dropped, proved, etc. It is your human right to protest – the Terrorism Act is designed to give government and police the choice to remove that right and your liberty when they choose. They are the real terrorists.

For info., stickers etc: da@direct-action.org.uk.

Ham and eggs

In December, six protesters were cleared of charges made after the anti-capitalism demonstration in Birmingham last June. The arrests were pre-planned, with Public Order and Obstruction charges manufactured to justify the massive police operation. During the trial the court heard from a succession of police prosecution witnesses. The common feature of their evidence was a vague and generalised personal view: Spite, not facts. The pigs and their legal lackeys were left with egg on their faces. Needless to say, the £30,000 cost of bringing this pre-planned and meaningless state attack will inevitably be paid by us through taxes.

Victory for the U'wa

Colombia 1

Fidelity Investments has dumped 18 million shares of Oxy stock, approximately 60% of their holdings worth over $412 million dollars. This divestment came on the heels of mass protest around the world. Thousands of people demonstrated at over 75 Fidelity offices, occupied Fidelity investor centres, dumped blood and oil around Fidelity and generally generated tons of bad publicity for them.

Supporters of Colombia's U'wa people, who have vowed to commit mass suicide if Occidental Petroleum continues oil drilling on their land, are now turning their attention to Oxy's new largest shareholder, Sandford C. Bernstein. Write, call or fax their Vice Chairman: Mr. Roger Hertog, Vice Chairman, Sandford C. Bernstein & Co., LLC, 767 Fifth Avenue, New York, US. Sandford's parent company, Alliance Capital, has offices around the world. Contact: Rainforest Action Network at organize@ran.org; info at www.ran.org

Protest to the Colombian President asking that he ensure a peaceful, participatory decision-making process which includes the cancellation of Oxy's project;
Dr. Andrés Pastrana, Presidente de la República de Colombia
Palacio de Nariño, Bogotá, Colombia
Fax 571 3341940; Tel. 571 2843300

Demand Occidental Petroleum cancel their project on U'wa territory;
Ray Irani
Occidental Petroleum Corporation
10889 Wilshire Boulevard
Los Angeles, California 90024-4201

Check out Rainforest Action Network's website at:
www.ran.org/ran_campaigns/beyond_oil/oxy/index.html

Sample letters at:
www.ran.org/ran_campaigns/beyond_oil/oxy/index.html

Related info. at
www.moles.org/ProjectUnderground/motherlode/drilling/intro.html

Hard copies available from:
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1916A Martin Luther King Jr Way
Berkeley CA 94703
Tel.: + 1 510-705-8981
Fax: +1 510-705-8983
Email:
project_underground@moles.org

To keep up to date, subscribe to the U'wa urgent alert listserve. Send a blank e-mail from your account to:
uwa_updates-subscribe@igc.topica.com

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IWA (International Workers' Association); www.iwa-ait.com
SchNEWS; www.schnews.org.uk
Labournet; www.labournet.org/
ASeed; antenna.nl/aseed/
Earth First – Action Update; host.envirolink.org/ef/
Corporate Watch; www.corpwatch.org
Thr@ll; thrallnet@yahoo.com
Corporate Watch UK; www.corporatewatch.org
Anarchyaction; www.anarchyaction.co.uk
For updates & future events, visit antenna.nl/aseed/, www.anarchyaction.co.uk

21st IWA Congress:

The International Workers' Association, the global anarcho-syndicalist movement, held its 21st Congress in Granada in December. Among the many sections present were those from Colombia, who are actively opposing Plan Colombia and supporting the U'wa.

IWA groups exist across Europe and North and South America, as well as in the former eastern Europe, Russia, and Africa. They range from a few dozen to thousands of members, although the Spanish CNT remains the largest at present. At the Congress, new organisations were welcomed from the former eastern Europe, central Europe, and Australia.

Despite occupying a large University hall in Granada, there were so many people that live video had to be streamed out to monitors outside. Among decisions made were for a new globally co-ordinated campaign against casual work agencies such as Manpower. Also, the USI (Italy) agreed to host a conference to develop global action to oppose capitalist immigration plans such as Fortress Europe, and to support displaced people. For more details about the IWA, write to: SolFed, PO Box 29, SW PDO, Manchester M15 5HW. solfed@solfed.org.uk

Colombia 2

The US Congress has allocated $1.3 billion to the government of Colombia for a military intervention, which is dubbed Plan Colombia (PC). The official purpose of PC is to end the illegal growing of coca by destroying illicit crops, stop guerrilla activity and stabilise the economy. However, according to official figures, 84% of the money will flow straight back into US economy as military aid - primarily Huey and Black Hawk helicopters.

Plan Colombia is officially justified in terms of the "drug war". In fact, this is simply a pretext and the real motivation is to secure access to natural resources (especially oil) and to gain control over a geopolitical strategic region in order to continue the implementation of the planned FTAA (Free Trade Area of the Americas) to be discussed in Quebec (Canada) in April.

BP, Exxon and Shell (via Oxy petroleum – a sister TNC) have been granted generous concessions for oil drilling. Several megaprojects are planned, such as road infrastructure, dams, oil pipelines, monocultures and harbours in order to efficiently sap the country's resources. The displacement of the population by the government-supported paramilitary, matches exactly the locations of these planned projects. Plan Colombia's targets include the indigenous people who are calling for internal social change. Multinationals, backed by Western governments and the World Bank and IMF are rubbing their greedy hands over their plans for Colombia. With privatisation of national industries, water and power utilities, comes the opportunity to steal lots of land off the locals. There is a lot of money to be made.

Recent reports include US CIA trained paramilitaries chopping up people, cutting unborn children from their mothers' wombs, and numerous other murders and massacres. The message to the communities is clear: "Mess with us, and this is what you'll get."

If the US government is serious about attacking the drug lords, why do the counterinsurgency battalions target and attack the weakest and most socially fragile in the drug chain, i.e. the peasants, settlers and indigenous people? Why aren't they doing anything to stamp out drugs in the States? One of Clinton's last acts was to let off a known and convicted drug dealer who funded the Party. The real truth is, profit and power count, lives don't.

Info:
www.colombia.indymedia.org
www3.gratisweb.com/ciclocrisis
www.derechos.org./nizkor/colombia

Haiti

According to the web site, the subtle harmony of bitter and sweet oranges makes every sip of Cointreau an extraordinary, multi-sensory taste journey. The bitter oranges are grown in the Caribbean, the peel is separated from the pulp by hand, sundried, then shipped to the distillery in France.

In real life, the workers in Haiti do the hand-peeling, and have to endure horrendous pay and conditions in the process. At the Cointreau plant in the north of Haiti, men and women make $1.25 a day in squalid factory conditions. Working without gloves or protective clothing, the workers are soaked in orange spray and forced to inhale citric acid vapour - fingernails are corroded, and lung complications are common.

Last year, Rémy Cointreau recorded a net operating profit of 55 million Euros, a 163% increase compared with the previous year. The chairperson, Dominique Hériard Dubreuil, is ranked 5th in the Fortune list of the 50 most powerful women in business in the world. The workers have formed a union to press for basic rights, but Cointreau's Haitian managers are refusing to even enter negotiations. Respond to the Haitian Union of Cointreau Workers' appeal for help by asking Dominique Hériard Dubreuil to put this right and get the Union's right to begin negotiations acted upon (note: the Cointreau workers' Union is not threatening a boycott, so please do not suggest this in your letter).

Write to:
Dominique Hériard Dubreuil, Rémy Cointreau 152, avenue des Champs-Élysées, 75008 Paris, France.

France

Thousands of protesters from around Europe gathered in Nice in December to shut down the European Summit meeting. As 'our' European leaders arrived, tear gas filled the streets and police fought battles with groups of protesters trying to scale steel road barriers. In Paris, scuffles broke out at railway stations when members of a French unemployed group demanded the right to free travel to Nice. Meanwhile, on the French border, "Fortress Europe" was again in operation, with the French army denying entry to around 1,000 Italian protesters.

The general gist of European Summit was to agree equal removal of workers' rights across Europe, set up an army so we can die for our European as well as our national leaders, and hand over various powers to the WTO. The latter should ensure that future attacks on workers can be attributed to global economic 'realities'.

Mexico

Communities surrounding Laguna San Ignacio in Baja, Mexico, have spent five years fighting the Mitsubishi Corporation to stop a plan to convert the last undisturbed nursery for the Pacific grey whale into the world's largest industrial salt facility. In partnership with the Mexican government, Mitsubishi Corporation wanted to pump 6,000 gallons of water from the lagoon per second, and flood 116 square kilometres of adjacent land to create evaporation ponds.

Laguna San Ignacio was declared a United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) World Heritage Site in 1993. It is home to El Vizcaíno Biosphere Reserve Whale Sanctuary, the last pristine birthing lagoon for the Pacific grey whale, as well as home to many endangered species of plants and animals, including the rare pronged-horn antelope and black sea turtle.

A UNESCO team studied Mitsubishi's proposal and finally convinced the Mexican government and Mitsubishi to jointly announce the project's cancellation. In February, IFAW and NRDC announced the establishment of a one million pesos (US$100,000) fund to assist the communities surrounding Laguna San Ignacio, who stood up to one of the world's largest corporations to protect the environment.

Turkey

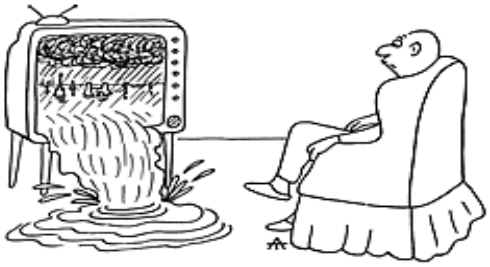
Nearly 1500 prisoners in Turkish prisons have been on hunger-strike or death-fast against the Turkish state. The Turkish police invaded 20 prisons in December to bring the conflict to a bloody head.

Hundreds of hunger-fasters were injured, and at least 15 died, many burning themselves to avoid the torture of force-feeding. Their message was "States are the Terrorists… Solidarity is the Weapon of the People… As long as there is one prisoner, nobody will be free".

See also page 24.

Poland

Last Christmas was cold in Poland – what's new? Anarchists and nurses organised a Christmas party in the middle of the street in front of the Ministry of Health, as it was being occupied by their colleagues. The police didn't dare to remove the tables blocking the street. Anarchists made warm tea for everyone except the police!



Netherlands

The wash-out talks on climate change at Den Haag (Netherlands) back in November were matched by a festival of opposition and direct action. Day-by-day ways were found to make the people's voices heard. On the Saturday, 2-3000 people built a dyke around the Conference Centre, while at the Climate Technology trade fair, activists 'raised sea levels' in the building by replumbing the basement. On the Sunday, a lunchtime critical mass of 200 cyclists preceded the opening of a 2 day 'Counter Conference'. On the Monday, activists wearing gags occupied government offices. In the evening, activists demonstrated at the press launch of a website where emissions are 'traded'. Elsewhere, hackers shut down the website. On the Tuesday, people entered the offices of the International Emissions Trading Association, while Wednesday started with 150 arrested at an antinuclear demo. Meanwhile, activists were infiltrating the Conference Centre and amongst other things, the head of the US delegation Frank Loy, was gateaued in the face by two women known only as Agents Cherry Pie and Sushi. Their statement read: "This pie, Frank Loy, was for you and all the vested interests you represent. This conference is a farce – it isn't about finding solutions to an ecological crisis; it's become a series of trade talks… The Western lifestyle is not sustainable, and the rich can't buy their way out of global warming. Today, you are being held accountable for your actions and you will continue to meet resistance."

Pieing info; www.asis.com/~bbb/

Free West Papua

West Papua declared independence on the 1st December. Indonesia is now employing brutal suppression tactics. Up to 80,000 Indonesian troops are deployed in the province; British-supplied Hawk planes fly overhead. Many people have been arrested after raising the national flag, along with demonstrators; members of the Papua Presidium Council have been detained without charge, and several people have been shot dead.

Info; www.eco-action.org/opm ; www.fpcn-global.org/

India, Bangladesh, Philippines - People's Caravan

Across India, Bangladesh and the Philippines, the growing peasants' movement took to the roads to call for a return to sustainable agriculture, local food security and an end to pesticide and GM-peddling multinationals' control of agriculture.

Organised by Pesticide Action Network in Asia and the Pacific (PANAP), the Tamil Nadu Women's Forum (TNWF), Kilusang Magbubukid sa Pilipinas (KMP) (Peasant Movement of the Philippines), and other groups from Bangladesh, Indonesia, Japan and Korea, the People's Caravan made a seventeen-day trek across India, Bangladesh and the Philippines. They held teach-ins, seed and food-sharing events, public meetings and mass rallies at which farmers from across the region compared their experiences of globalised agribusiness and their experiments in creating sustainable, equitable systems without excessive chemical use. One such was Mr Namalvar, a farmer from Tamil Nadu in India; "We have already done what has been said to be impossible, to grow food without poisons. We have moved away from hazardous pesticides and fertilisers and made use of available resources to grow our food. I am confident that the whole of Tamil Nadu can produce crops sustainably and profitably. Our aim is to make the villages pesticide free by the end of 2001". Other events included picketing of Monsanto's offices in Manila and Mindanao. The caravan was organised in response to the WTO's program of trade and investment liberalisation, which has opened the weak economies of the South to global pressures and, in the process, deprived them of land, water and even threatened the survival of self-sufficient national agriculture. The so-called 'green revolution' duped farmers into abandoning traditional agriculture systems and indebting themselves in order to buy "high yield" seeds and the accompanying agrochemicals. Yields rose for a time, but the chemicals are poisoning the land and the people who work on it, and the "modern" systems favour large farms over small, leading to concentration of ownership and reducing many small farmers to landless labourers. Now, GM crops will only widen the poverty gap further.

More info; www.poptel.org.uk/panap/caravan.htm

Ukraine

The European Commission is always keen to fund good causes and think of our health and a sustainable future. Hence, when Chernobyl nuclear power facility eventually closed down in December, they could be relied upon… They announced a US$585 million Euratom loan to the Ukrainian National Nuclear Power Company Energoatom to part-finance the completion, modernisation and commissioning of the two K2R4 reactors. The decision is a clear sign of the Commission's commitment to the nuclear industry, despite decades of broken

promises over safety and widespread public realisation about the unacceptability of the nuclear power. Increasing efficiency and cost-effectiveness of better alternatives like wind and other renewables has once again been ignored.

Info: www.bankwatch.org

Future events...

April 17-21
Quebec, Canada; People's Summit against FTAA http://wtoaction.org/ftaa.phtml

April 20-22
Quebec City, Canada; Summit of the Americas meeting. Another gathering of the rich, with the 34 leaders of North, South and Central America and the Caribbean (except Cuba) talking about hemispheric integration and migration, security and terrorism, democracy and human rights, as well as the proposed Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) agreement. Days of Action expected by the Anti-Capitalist Convergence. la_casa2001@hotmail.com

April 20
Quebec and Montreal, Canada; Carnival Against Capitalism Contacts: clac@tao.ca; phone 514-409-2049; web www.quebec2001.net; or post CLAC, c/o La Librairie Alternative, 2035 boulevard St-Laurent, 2nd Floor, Montreal, Quebec H2X 2T3, Canada.

April 21-24
London, UK; EBRD Annual Meeting alda@lanet.lv and www.ebrd.org

April 27-May 1
Cochabamba, Bolivia; PGA Conf www.agp.org

April 30-May 1
Washington DC; Spring Meeting IMF/World Bank Contact Friends of the Earth-US; cwelch@foe.org or www.foei.org/ifi

May 6-12
Tartu, Estonia; A SEED Europe Meeting on UN & Expanding Corporate Influence www.aseed.net

May 14-20
Brussels, Belgium; UN Least Developed Countries Conference (LDC III)

May 21-June 1
Bonn, Germany; Climate COP-6.5 - FoE-EWN lfrancesm@foe.co.uk

May 29-31
Valencia, Spain; African Development Bank Annual Meeting
www.foei.org/ifi

June 14-16
Gothenburg, Sweden; EU Summit www.eu2001.se and http://motkraft.net/gbg2001

July 20-22
Genoa, Italy; G8 meeting www.genoa-g8.it and www.g7.utoronto.ca

July 22-Aug 11
Denmark; Minority Course 2001 +45-7462-4700 or www.hojoster.dk

July 24-30
Zagreb, Croatia; A SEED Europe meeting of Worldbank in South-East Europe Stability Pact vanja@aseed.antenna.nl

July 27-Aug 5
Italy; Anti-imperialist Camp 2001. Anti-imperialist Camp's purpose is to encourage whatever form of struggle against injustice, to create the conditions for a united anti-imperialist front and to set the bases for a new uprising of a global revolutionary alternative. www.antiimperialista.com

Sept 20
Global; Car-Free Day www.carbusters.ecn.cz

Oct 2-4
Washington DC, USA; Annual Meeting of IMF/World Bank Contact Friends of the Earth-US at cwelch@foe.org or www.foei.org/ifi

Oct 29-Nov 9
Marrakech, Morocco; Climate COP-7 Contact Friends of the Earth-E[illegible]esm@foe.co.uk

African Anarchism

A year on from military dictatorship, parliamentary 'democracy' is still very young in Nigeria. Yet already, people are seeing through the civilian politician's bullshit. On the streets, a general strike has broken out. The Awareness League aren't pulling any punches. Veterans of struggle against the corporate henchmen of oil companies and the military regime alike, they are playing their part in training the spotlight on the failure of party politics.

The Awareness League is the Nigerian section of the International Workers' Association, the Anarcho-syndicalist International, which makes it sister organisation to the Solidarity Federation in Britain. This transcription represents two separate interviews conducted in June 2000, while the interviewer was being hosted by members of the Awareness League in Nigeria.

Interview #1

DL- I am with Sam and Igarriwey from the Nigerian Awareness League (AL), here in Afikpo, Ebonyi State. To start off, can you, Igarrey, talk about this radio project in Afikpo and how the AL got involved?

Ig- The radio station was actually informed by the fact that right here in the community, where so many of us are living, we don't have access to the mainstream media. The people don't get heard, and there is no way we can participate in the day to day activities around us. We are thinking that if we can have a community based radio, at least the people can get more information about themselves to the outside world.

DL- How did you first become involved with the AL?

Ig- As a law student at the University of Calabar, and later at the University of Lagos. We were writing to the IWA, and three years ago some of them paid us a visit, and strengthened us so very much. In fact they came as far as Afikpo, Port Harcourt, and Calabar. That visit was pretty much a turning point in my relationship with anarchosyndicalism.

The first interview is with Igarrey, co-author of the book "African Anarchism", conducted in Afikpo (Sam Mbah was also present). The Second Interview was with Sam Mbah, in Lagos. The original full transcripts have been cut ruthlessly due to the needs of space, but the words remain true, with only occasional term alterations from US to British. It was originally recorded on a hand held tape recorder, then transcribed by hand (hand-written it was 72 pages long!) Any questions can be directed to the interviewer at Esperanto@onebox.com or DA at da@direct-action.org.uk

DL- Sam was telling me that there is a lot of excitement here in Afikpo about the idea of having a locally based community radio station. What are some of the ideas you have heard of for programming?

Ig- Well, the programs have to be community oriented and community based, and there are various community groups that have already indicated interest. There are age-grades [age groups, both male and female], there are dance groups, there are even small co-operative groups (womens' and farmers') who we intend to bring into the program. The program will essentially be informative and partly educative. When it comes to entertainment, we are a very traditional people. We have a lot of traditional dances, masquerades. We have a lot of cultural festivals, which we can feature well in our programs. We also want to include folklore, folk tales.

DL- If there are about 1,000 registered members of AL nationwide, how many are public service workers, journalists, students and lecturers?

Ig-Why it appears now that our membership is a bit low is because it was very difficult to belong to AL (before). Up until a year ago, we were acting like any other banned organisation. It was very difficult to get people who would openly associate themselves within the AL. On the campuses, it was much easier - they had so many things to rebel against. Most journalists essentially had sympathies and would occasionally publish stories about us. Then there is the category of public service workers. Particularly during military rule, the Nigerian labour congress was quite active against the military. And it was very easy to collaborate with them. Sometimes, when there were strikes, we helped in organising.

DL-Interestingly, the community radio project represents a new type of activism that's not protesting against government-run radio stations, but actually starting your own. It's almost like ignoring what the state is doing and saying, "We can do it (radio) better."

Ig-The media under the military - not just the radio - was being completely controlled by the state, all aspects of it were controlled by the state. Information was censored. Today, in our so-called "democracy", it is still the state that controls the radio - that gives the licence for you to operate. So, even the one or two privately owned radio stations you have in the country are still heavily censored and monitored. So what we have now, our community-based radio, is going to be a revolution of sorts.

DL- The way AL began, it was a very intellectual conclusion that Communism had failed, so people were looking for another ideology; something that could perhaps explain the way the world works in a more comprehensive manner than communism did. Could you explain this process?

Ig- Well, it is true that basically the majority of us who became anarchists started off as socialists or Marxists in the very early beginnings of AL. In the Nigerian Universities you don't hear much about Anarchism. So the closest people come to it is Socialism/ Communism. Just as you rightly pointed out at a certain point in time, some of us saw that Socialism was doomed. It could not explain the contradictions around us. Actually, it started with Socialism, and became a project of thinking further. We saw that both Capitalism and Socialism are authoritarian. They both talk

about the state being at the centre of everything. That was how AL started.

DL- Considering the residue of the military dictatorship- the hang-over mentalities from years of military rule- an example might be the various checkpoints along the road where police still want dashes (bribes to pass). Are there other examples of hang-overs from that era?

Ig- The most prominent thing in my view is a pervading sense of fear amongst the people. The people are cautious, fearing the future possibility of further military intervention in politics. Because of this, we still do not behave like we are under civilian rule. People are not expressing freedoms. They don't feel free to say certain things for fear that the military may come back. Recently, a senator was suspended for criticising the president. There was so much fear. In fact, the senator called for the military to take back power- his accusation was that Obasanjo was no different from any other military dictator.

So, you still see that the people are not really sure about the sustainability of the democracy we have now. Fear is generally something that started with the military regime. People are still not sure about what rights they should exercise. There are so many other examples (of the military's legacy). The state is still very stratified along military ranks, a unitary system of government- a command structure.

Interview #2

DL- Sam, in regards to the AL, could you tell us some of the developments over the past year or so?

Sam- Let me say that the AL has really come a long way. The AL was conceived and born under military rule. And with the end of military rule, it seems like there is a kind of fatigue on the part of AL. It's nothing peculiar to the AL really (in the country). Most mass organisations suffer from the same fatigue after many long years of struggle against military rule. The new democratic transition that we find ourselves in has presented its own logic, and its own realities too. We are trying to look for more creative ways of doing things. Not just agitation and struggle. We could also be putting our energies into other creative fields. People are already beginning to get fed up, frustrated, and disgusted with the whole system, so it is within that framework that the AL will surely have to bounce back and reclaim its true position among the discontented.

DL- Just this morning we witnessed the burning tyre barricades in the streets in what was a one day general strike called by the Nigerian Labour Congress

(NLC). The government tried to unilaterally raise fuel prices from N20 (Naira) to N30 per litre (a 50% increase). Then, after the national outrage, they decided to supposedly compromise by lowering the price "down" to N25, which is still an increase of N5 per litre (a 25% increase overall). Could you comment on this?

Sam- What we saw this morning was an outpouring of frustration in which most Nigerians are trapped. The recent increase in the price of gasoline and kerosene has brought serious adverse consequences on many Nigerians. The strike was intended as a practical demonstration of the rejection of these increases on the part of the majority of people. After long years of military rule, nobody wanted a prolongation of it, and when this government came into power, it was given the benefit of the doubt. But after one year of being in power, many are beginning to look back and say, "Is our life any better than it was one year ago?" Believe me, the answer is in the negative. So, democracy came with a lot of promise, so what has become of these promises? The strike called by the NLC was an opportunity for the majority of Nigerians to vent their bottled anger against the government. It is not so much an endorsement of the NLC, as it is an opportunity for the people to voice their frustration at the vicious cycle of poverty that the majority of Nigerians find themselves in.

DL- Could you elaborate on the minimum wage – and the government tactic of giving with one hand while taking with the other?

Sam- The increase in the price of petroleum is a throw-back to the days of military rule. It's an indicator that we may have seen the end of military rule, but we have yet to see the end of military-style practices. Still, we see the same tactics in this government, which is supposed to be a democratically elected government. The whole thing is intended to pull the wool over the eyes of unwary, unsuspecting people. The government says, "Ah, but the minimum wage has gone up". But the truth is, the minimum wage has not gone anywhere; it's actually gone slightly down, because one has to measure the minimum wage against the cost of living, the purchasing power of the Naira at the end of the month.

DL- I'm guessing that the NLC has a big bureaucracy to support with all this dues money coming in. How can it be truly oppositional?

Sam- The NLC is not really an opposition union. In the past 10 years, before democracy, the NLC was virtually dead. It's only been in the past year that we've seen the NLC emerge from the doldrums to actually present an image of a body which is leading the workers. During military rule, the most dominant organisation in terms of mobilisation was JACON (Joint Action for Democracy in Nigeria). It did a lot to mobilise Nigerians, even in the face of intimidation by the military. JACON was a federation; an aggregation of different mass organisations, pro-democracy groups, professional bodies, etc...

DL- Including Amnesty International?

Sam- Of course, journalists and international organisations pooled their resources. What would happen was during a demonstration, you could demonstrate with a banner of your group, because everybody was united on the point that the military should go. It was very easy for everybody to submit to the notion of JACON. However, now most of the groups that operated under the umbrella of JACON are going their separate ways. The NLC has once again found its voice. The way the NLC operates, I am sure that they are going to accept the federal government's position (in the end). They will expect a compromise. They like to give the impression that they are fighting for the interests of the workers, whereas, really, they are not. After all, today's press conference, where the NLC president was talking today, was the banquet hall of the Nikon Hilton Hotel; the most expensive hotel in Nigeria. He could have addressed the press conference from the NLC office, or in one of the numerous press centres. It is significant that he chose to address the press conference from the Nikon Hilton. In fact, on some occasions, he has also shared a platform with President Obasanjo (on May Day), together addressing workers, which I find to be a contradiction in terms.

DL- About the 2 different perspectives within the AL concerning JACON, and whether or not the AL should remain as a member; could you briefly summarise the different arguments?

Sam- Since the end of military rule, two tendencies have emerged within the AL. One tendency says that we should remain actively involved in JACON, which emerged under the military and was a general umbrella for the struggle against military rule. JACON was a very powerful force led by the Lagos lawyer Chief Gani Koyime, quite a radical and immensely wealthy person too. At the end of military rule, with the handover of power to civilians, I moved that we should increasingly withdraw from the activities of JACON, because their activities under a military dispensation might actually be different from their activities under a civilian dispensation. While we were under military rule, they were not interested in political office. Certain elements within JACON now have already joined different political parties, and are active within those parties.

But another school of thought within the AL was of the view that we should maintain our alliance with JACON, arguing that this was a transitional period. Even though the military is gone, they are not quite gone. They are still lurking in the corner and could actually strike at any moment. And now that you have a transitional government in place, we should be a member of JACON in order to keep the government "on its toes", and play the same kind of vote that JACON used to play during the military.

DL- Doesn't religion distract from political organising, with all of those worship services, etc.?

Sam- Yes, as I said, with the orthodox churches there is no problem, but with the Pentecostals there is a big distraction, because they are forever going to church- always going to one program or the other. You certainly cannot combine Pentecostalism with any form of radical politics.

DL- One other interesting thing is Nigerian military culture. You said earlier that here in Nigeria, the military is associated in the public mind with marijuana smoking and homosexuality.

Sam- Yes, our culture is pretty much unique. Our culture retains certain practices, one of which is homosexuality or lesbianism. Even when it is practised, it is not discussed openly. It is something done in secret, that is, hidden, because if your neighbour were to know, it could lead to a form of ex-communication, or isolation, from the rest of society. That is because most Africans see (homosexuality) as being unnatural.

THE "DEMOCRACY" THAT WE HAVE HAD FOR ONE YEAR HAS NOT REALLY MADE ANY FUNDAMENTAL DIFFERENCE, EITHER IN THE STRUCTURE OF CONTROL, OR IN REGARDS TO THE SIZE AND REACH OF STATE POWER. MUCH OF WHAT WE HAVE SEEN IN THE PAST YEAR IS A CARRY-OVER OF THE MILITARY MENTALITY. LIKE A BAD HANG-OVER.

DL- What about the potential for the future legalisation of marijuana, if it is so prevalent and widespread?

Sam- I think marijuana will remain illegal for now, but everybody knows that every other person uses it in the military. In the barracks, marijuana is a common feature. Everybody has it and no one gets arrested for it. You cannot sack a military man because of marijuana, so in that sense it is not really illegal for them. In fact, senior officers even up to the rank of generals procure marijuana for their soldiers. I know that they officially budget money for it within the military. So, I think increasingly the government will move more towards the legalisation of marijuana in the future. On the streets it is very easy to procure. Most of these vendors who have just a few articles on their tables actually sell marijuana. So it is in widespread usage.

DL- There has been a lot of talk about democracy here. The country just celebrated a so-called "democracy day" exactly one year after the last election, which turned over power once again from the military to a civilian government. It seems to me, however, that Nigeria (at least on the surface) is a very undemocratic place. For example, President Obasanjo unilaterally, without even consulting the legislators in parliament, just decided on this fuel price hike which caused the current general strike. This action was of course at the urging of the IMF and the World Bank. The arbitrariness and the snubbing of the democratic process, shows a total lack of regard for the general population...

Sam- You are certainly correct. The "democracy" that we have had for one year has not really made any fundamental difference, either in the structure of control, or in regards to the size and reach of state power. Much of what we have seen in the past year is a carry-over of the military mentality. Like a bad hang-over.

DL- Finally, if you could just comment on the AIDS crisis in certain areas/ communities in Nigeria. I have been noticing lots of billboards around which are basically warning people about AIDS, saying "AIDS is for real," "It's a real disease," etc.

Sam- Yes. The scale and scope of the AIDS pandemic in Nigeria, like other parts of sub-Saharan Africa, is unimaginable. Interestingly, until two or three years ago, nobody was really talking about AIDS; nobody was giving it serious thought. Because of my involvement with covering football [soccer] for my old newspaper, there was a prominent goalkeeper who we were reliably informed died of AIDS. The doctors who treated him said he died of AIDS, but the family never revealed it. And of course, none of us believed it at first because we didn't have the facts to prove it. So, up until now, there has been this orchestrated cover-up of AIDS statistics and the menace of AIDS in regards to the general population. But I think that each passing day, the reality of AIDS begins to dawn on everybody.

I travelled to Makurdi and Osupo. These are the two major towns in Benue state - in the middle belt on the way towards the North. There is a particular local government called Ujuluku government, where it is said that one out of every five people have contracted AIDS. I spoke with the chairman of the local council and he told me that, for a long time, there has been this organised conspiracy *not* to talk about AIDS. He felt like it was time for him to distance himself from the official denial of the local authorities, because he saw the rate at which people were dying. He felt that if people did not become conscious about AIDS, more and more people would die. But, if they became conscious about HIV/AIDS, maybe the rate of infection could be minimised - and that is what he is doing. He's been holding workshops, telling villagers what AIDS is about, how you can contract AIDS through indiscriminate sex, through blood transfusion, etc.

Sam finished the interview by asking the interviewer (from Chicago) to convey his greetings to everybody in New York (the anarchists, syndicalists, and supporters), everybody in Chicago, The Autonomous Zone (Chicago), everybody in WSA-New York, Mitch, Steve Rubinowitz, Bob McGlynn, Peter Ford, comrades in Philadelphia, John Bekken in Boston, Duff MacIntosh in Morganstown (West Virginia), the IWW guys in Atlanta, Damon, and also Lorenzo Komboa, the guys in Washington DC, Baltimore, and all the others…

Politics is for life:

Politics is hard work. Proper politics, politics which these pages promote, politics of everyday life. Thinking and acting on issues that affect us. Responsible politics, where people think, talk, discuss, argue on just about anything and everything.

Politics with a small 'p' is... evenings writing articles, going to meetings, organising actions, sorting out solidarity for struggles around the corner and around the world, and because it is not about Anita Ruddock or Sting, no one even knows by who or why it gets done.

Proper politics is no glory, no monetary rewards and the ever-present possibility of burn out. So why be bothered? Surely it's easier to let apathy rule, but not just now' as there is something on Channel 5. Proper politics is about necessity, not in-the-driving-seat-ego-trip. Humanity is necessary to me. And that means solidarity. That means real politics. It's loads of hard work only because it's a minority activity. Not enough people are doing their bit in the evening after a day's work. The running around from one issue to the next is necessary because so few people actually do proper politics.

To many people, politics is Blair's ability to go through life unaware that he has the charisma of a whizzed up pharmaceuticals executive in an am-dram production of Oliver Twist vs. Hague's hang'em'n'flog'em and feed them to Widdicombe sex appeal. To a lot of people, politics is something other people do on their behalf, and their involvement is merely once in a while to help choose those who will do it for the next few years.

To many people, politics is Blair's ability to go through life unaware that he has the charisma of a whizzed up pharmaceuticals executive in an am-dram production of Oliver Twist vs. Hague's hang'em'n'flog'em and feed them to Widdicombe sex appeal.

Telling people not to bother voting is both meaningless and dangerous. Meaningless because even if it succeeds, people who vote will stop – and probably do nothing else. Dangerous because telling people to do things isn't very nice. Exposing the system and consequences of voting is more productive.

Too many activists try to persuade the inactivists to join in and share the load, to help progress things a bit further, by telling them not to even bother doing the one bit of political action they already do!

Millions of people do not vote in British General Elections. At every General Election there is a concerted effort to encourage potential voters to abstain. Why is abstention considered to be of itself a 'good' thing? In the election in May 1997, when Tony Blair was swept to power on a 'landslide vote', 28.4% of those registered and able didn't vote; the highest post-war percentage and noticeably up from 1992. Is this a success?

For a start, there is little evidence that the majority of those abstaining do so deliberately. Of those who do not vote, the vast majority do not persistently abstain, most vary from election to election as to whether they turn out or not. Of those who at any one election do not vote, when asked, two thirds of them give reasons for not voting which could be classed as involuntary, e.g. sickness, unable to get time off work and, by far the single biggest category; on holiday. Of the one third of non-voters who could be said to deliberately abstain, most do so because they could not be bothered to vote, not because they chose not to vote, or made a political decision not to vote - certainly not because they were active in politics the whole year round and saw voting for one or other political party an irrelevance. However, while surveyed differences in attitudes between voters and non-voters are not generally big, the largest rise in non-voters at the last election was amongst those who identified with the Tories.

Those that admit to not voting generally express a slightly lower level of interest in politics, very rarely discuss it, and have a weaker grasp of current affairs and politics than those that admit to voting - then again, those who vote regularly, generally also have a fairly low level of interest or knowledge. Even amongst those who state that they always vote, around 40% still claim they have no interest in politics. Very few have an active interest.

Turning our attention to an active, political minority; anarchosyndicalists have no reason to be against voting. Opposing Parliamentary Democracy and the idea of voting for representatives is essential. Essential because it is not in working people's interest, not because voting is wrong. A negative campaign against each election based purely on the lines of 'don't vote; a vote every five years for a crooked liar who merely claims to "represent you", and who is more likely to rip you off' is not really to the point. A more constructive approach would be to spend the whole of the five years working, using the tools of direct action and direct democracy, fighting and organising in terms of self-management and mutual aid (solidarity) in the community and workplace. Then, when the election comes, rather than sitting around waiting for it, it would be possible to just say "oh

Not just for polling booths

yes, that; I don't want a system that is inherently unfair, in which I get a minor say in appointing a representative who is beyond my influence once elected, and who, even then, will probably only have a negligible role." (But maybe with something a bit catchier?) It is possible to point to a better way of organising, point out that the parliamentary system is all about keeping the powerless where they are whilst giving the whole system a thin slime of respectability.

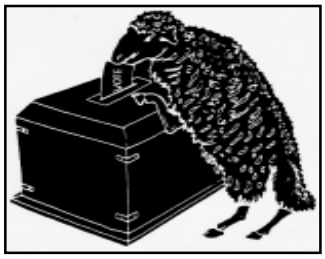
Calling for not voting is not a goal and it is not useful. It is largely irrelevant whether someone votes in a general election or not. Is it really so bad if someone votes to kick out an incumbent, as long as they recognise the bankruptcy of the system and how minor their voting role is in it? There may be joy in playing a small role in getting rid of Michael Portillo and his ilk, even if it is purely for personal satisfaction rather than political ends (shit, here he comes again). It is a side-track, a diversion, a bit of fun, but politics is bad enough without banishing fun. When people vote against someone, they are not voting for the system – even if the act of voting is used as a case for legitimising it by its supporters. The key is to channel our anger and frustration into the desire to achieve something more positive - direct democracy, which involves mandated, accountable and recallable delegates and officers; decisions taken by everyone acting collectively in the process.

Apart from the in-built bias in the capitalist democracies against anything that seeks to challenge in a meaningful way the power of the city and other elites, one of the major problems is that it actively encourages apathy. The act of voting in a general election takes little effort, even less thought, and from that little effort and little thought, the individual receives little in the way of direct influence. Political discussion is down to trivia – like Hague's pint drinking, his and Blair's sex appeal - or its pure self-interest, the "vote for us and we won't screw you as much as we will screw your neighbours, and certainly less than the other lot will screw you - and they are also soft on people like your neighbours". Parliamentary democracy relies on the vast majority of people to be content to do nothing. Which brings us back to the large proportion of the electorate who, when asked, express little or no interest in politics, rarely if ever discussing politics with friends or family.

We need to move away from the idea that voting is something not to do. Anarchosyndicalists definitely do vote - for mandated, accountable and recallable delegates, for decisions, for action. A genuine consensus must always be sought. What anarchosyndicalists don't do is vote for someone to go away and take all the power to make decisions away.

Given the appalling nature of the New Labour Government, it is all too tempting to sit back and say 'told you so' to the despondent people around who put a lot of hope in change of government last time around. (And why not? After all, there needs to be some fun.) But what needs to be addressed is how to let people see the fundamental flaws in the current system - and that there are viable alternatives. It needs to be pointed out that those who actively seek to represent us, who use hierarchical institutions and who rise in them, are those that are best at manipulating hierarchical structures to gain positions of power. To expect them to actually give a toss about anything except the maintenance and development of their own position is naive. It needs to be made clear that voting in modern western democracies is one of the lowest forms of political involvement going, involving little conscious thought or inconvenience. It gives even less benefit.

Crocodile tears of politicians over the apathy of the electorate are just that; as long as some people are content to come out to vote once every five years and do nothing in between, then politicians are happy enough. It can only be an abject and rather sad need for self-justification which makes them think about forcing us to vote by law. But apathy is something to really cry about. It is not possible to build a movement based on direct action and direct democracy unless that movement is based on activism. Activism requires active interest and involvement, in all aspects of our social and political movement. To avoid being crap, politics needs to involve a mass of activists.



Apathy and successful anarchosyndicalist organisation are not compatible. Structures on their own don't make things democratic; activists do.

We don't need no

Talk about another brick in the wall. We don't need a New Labour education but we could use some self-education. Not a new idea - but one that needs renewing.

From the earliest days of the industrial revolution in the 18th century, when workers were becoming aware of their potential as the productive class in society, there have been two viewpoints on working class education. On one hand, there was the view that the working class should be able to enjoy the benefits of bourgeois culture. Generally, these people were part of the liberal wing of the bourgeoisie. Throughout the 19th century, they actively campaigned for the lifting of all restrictions which prevented the working class having a 'full' education – in its capitalist sense.

This school of thought saw the accumulated mass of human knowledge as the common heritage of the human race, no matter what their class. Inevitably, it led to the demand for education for all children. Attempts to educate workers were made through mechanics institutes, and later, university extension courses, up to the present day Comprehensive Schools, and ongoing campaigns for equal education for all.

The other viewpoint rejects a culture which has been maintained and coloured by the prejudice of the ruling class. Here, education should be seen as aimed at meeting the specific needs of the working class as the working class. This is undertaken by the workers themselves, independent to and in opposition to existing education channels and structures.

The first group (bourgeois liberal) tends to regard education as an end in itself, that is, within the existing system, which accepts class as natural and inevitable. These protagonists think that the inherent conflict in class society can be 'educated out'. They believe that by raising the level/standard of working class education, they can mutualise class conflicts so that the interests of the working class will eventually merge with those of the ruling class.

The second group (radicals) put the emphasis on the class nature of society and think of education as a weapon with which the working class will be able to liberate itself from capitalist society. It is this second group that is of most interest to those of us looking for real change.

The first signs that workers were beginning to see themselves as a class appeared in the years following the French Revolution (1790s). At the same time, they became aware of the need for self-education. Groups sprang up all over Britain to discuss the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity, and their application to British working class lives. One of the first attempts in this direction was the London Corresponding Society, founded in 1792. This has been described as *"a sort of democratic and social seminary for labour leaders. From it issued most of the ideas and men that made themselves in the popular movements up to 1820"* (Max Beer, 1929). In fact, many others decided that education was more productive than political activity. Education was to prove more resistant to the decrees of authoritarian governments of the day.

The first signs that workers were beginning to see themselves as a class appeared following the French Revolution (1790s). At the same time, they became aware of the need for self-education... many decided that education was more productive than political activity.

After the Report of the Committee of Secrecy (1794), which listed corresponding societies in Derby, Stockport, Sheffield, Nottingham, and two in Manchester, the government decided that all political organisations were to be suppressed, and the Combination Act of 1799 was passed. However, they were a bit late – the habit had already spread across Lancashire and Yorkshire. The ideas of working class self-organisation for education were being planted.

This early movement laid great emphasis on everyone expressing themselves and having something to say. The methods of self-education they developed were highly successful. The liberal Francis Place said, with regret, there is "considerable difficulty in inducing them to give their confidence to those who are not, like themselves, working men". Place, no doubt, was like those well-intentioned people who started Sunday schools and would have preferred the working class to get their education from 'benevolent men' (sic) in the middle ranks of life. That way, there would be some control over what the workers were to be taught. Hazlitt wrote: "When it was impossible to prevent us reading something, the fear of the progress of knowledge…

(AUTHORITARIAN) EDUCATION

made the church and state… anxious to provide with the sort of food for our stomachs which they thought best".

While the church and state started to provide a form of education for the working class, the workers persisted in forming their own independent forms of educational activity. Moreover, they began using the knowledge gained for political and social advantage. As one writer commented: "The chickens hatched in the schools had come home to roost, wearing liberty caps". This was the beginning of a system of working class education attached to mass political action. There is a thread which runs from the corresponding societies, through workers' education groups, the Plebs' League, the National Council of labour Colleges, to the present day.

In the second half of the 19th century, there was a clear understanding of the need for working class self-education, and a corresponding massive growth in educational and political societies and organisations. However, the latter part of this period was also the golden age of the do-gooder. The philanthropists were involved in opening Sunday schools, working men's colleges, mechanics institutes, extension courses at universities, and the university settlement movement. Also, an educated working class was seen as desirable because developing technology required people to be literate. Of course, there was a danger in educating people; they could soon know as much as their teachers.

Education had a number of effects. For some workers, it made them dissatisfied with their life and they began to question the basis of a society which inflicted such terrible conditions upon them. Others saw the way out of their poverty as climbing up the educational ladder, thus leaving the working class and joining the ranks of the growing middle class. Many workers voted with their feet, and left the philanthropic institutions to the middle classes. This rejection was based on two issues. Firstly, they rejected these efforts to bring education to the workers on the grounds that they were acts of charity. Secondly, they reacted against the authoritarian methods used in teaching.

The tradition of independent working class self-education was based on the involvement of the learner. This approach developed the ability to analyse and reason, as well as encouraging their confidence.

Plebs' League

The Central Labour College was set up in 1909, following a strike of students and staff at Ruskin College in 1909. At the centre of the dispute were the two conceptions of what working class education should be. The radicals wanted collective self-education for and by the working class, whereas the philanthropists wanted the workers to get a bourgeois liberal education delivered to them by bourgeois institutions. The radical view was concerned with education which related to the life and livelihood of the workers, and not with making the worker a more 'efficient' citizen.

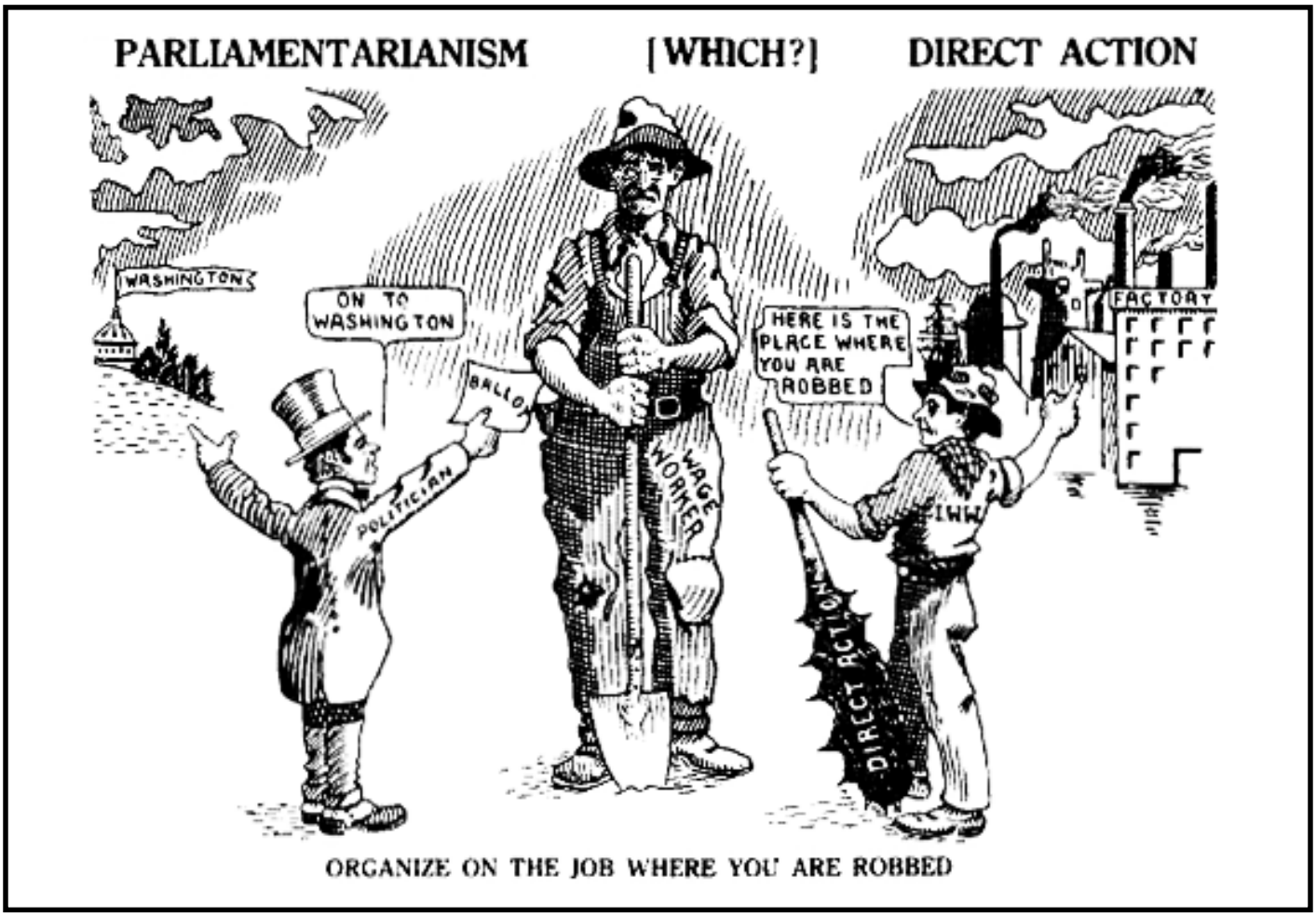
Workers had to – and still do – sell their labour in order to live. The bourgeois liberals had difficulties understanding the problems workers faced in the pursuit of knowledge. They had little idea of the exploitation workers had to endure. If there was any awareness of this, then it was seen as an obstacle which had to be overcome by getting an 'education' – thereby leaving the working class behind. Inevitably, this involved a degree of selectivity – something which is still current, and being re-vitalised under New Labour today. The natural result is a 'lumpen proletariat' – the unemployable, the 'untrainable', and the 'unsocialised', forming a dangerous class, which must be violently and systematically repressed to keep them in their place.

The worker is exploited as a worker; the 'citizen' is an abstraction. 'Citizens' or workers may have rights, but this is not the point. Education, to the radicals, was not a ladder, but a means of removing social and political obstacles to a decent life.

In the 'radical' classes, there were difficulties with obtaining books, paper, etc. and with finding the time. Often, classes didn't even start until 8.30 in the

(...cont'd on next page...)

...SELECTIVITY IS BEING RE-VITALISED UNDER NEW LABOUR. THE NATURAL RESULT IS A 'LUMPEN PROLETARIAT' – THE 'UNEMPLOYABLE', THE 'UNTRAINABLE', AND THE 'UNSOCIALISED', FORMING A DANGEROUS CLASS, WHICH MUST BE VIOLENTLY AND SYSTEMATICALLY REPRESSED TO KEEP THEM IN THEIR PLACE.



Self-education and anti-parliamentarian direct action - not a new idea, but a damn good one...

(...cont'd from last page...)
evening, after long hours of hard work. There were also students at very different levels of learning. Instead of waiting for others to catch up, they were encouraged to help the beginners, thus strengthening the collective nature of study. This acted as a counterbalance to the 'teacher' role, and brought a strong libertarian flavour to the exercise.

The Plebs' League (otherwise known as the Central Labour College, Labour College, NCLC, etc.) survived until the late 1960s. Up to this point, it played an influential role in the development of the British labour movement. However, in spite of its original ethos, it was brought down by its old enemy, bourgeois liberalism, which had seized the clothes of social democracy. State education had grown in leaps and bounds. The days of adults starting classes at 8.30pm were gone.

While the skills of reading, writing and arithmetic are not to be sniffed at, the skills of critical thought and analysis were (and are) not. The closure of the Plebs' league coincided with the decline of British working class consciousness – the result of which we are still struggling with today. Now, 'free' education and 'free' healthcare are under threat. The battles that were 'won' long ago will have to be refought again in the 21st century.

There is a rumour of a move to re-establish the Plebs' League, and good luck to the idea. However, no matter how noble the exercise, the fact is that the world has moved on. The Soviet Union has collapsed, the world's few remaining 'socialist republics' are not remotely socialist and are mainly Thatcherite in all but name.

While the clock cannot be turned back, this doesn't mean that independent workers' self-education is not possible today. The history of the 20th century left political parties makes disappointing reading. Socialism went up a blind alley. Amongst some 'leftists' the lesson has still not been learned and it is as if the Soviet Union still exists and Stalin is on his throne. Many on the left are quite excited by the emergence of the Socialist Alliance. Talking to these enthusiasts, it is apparent there is no answer to the question of what will prevent the Socialist Alliance going down the same road as the labour party – vote chasing.

Anarcho-syndicalism, which showed such promise before the First World War, was obliterated by Stalinism and facism. Now it is in resurgence. At its core is self-education, which leads to self-consciousness, self-activity, and direct action. The SelfEducation (SelfEd) Collective within the Solidarity Federation is reactivating the practice of self-education at the centre of an authentic working class life and struggle.

This article was written by a member of the SelfEd Collective, who run DIY courses and discussion on everything from history and ideas to skills and action. For info., contact:
SelfEd, PO Box 1095 Sheffield S2 4YR.
selfed@selfed.org.uk www.selfed.org.uk

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 in full.

ANARCHIST SOCIAL WORK

Dear DA

I am collecting contributions on the influence of anarchist thought and anarchists on professional social work. The publication might be aimed at the social work or anarchist press. Although uncertain at present of its readership, it will rely on case histories illustrating how anarchist thought and action has been used on the job. The finished document will have the smell of authenticity. Also, it will have some humour, and not be too scholarly; even its opinions are substantiated with case histories. The achievements of anarchist thought and action are invariably ignored, plagiarised, or co-opted by others. However, it is useful to see where ideas come from and what happens to them empirically. To some, the project may seem daunting, but libertarians have been getting their collective thoughts together, intermittently, for the past 35 years. I have the draft of a synopsis. At best, we will revise Bailey and Brake's, "Radical Social Work"; at least, there will be a sharing of ideas between former colleagues/duels between adversaries.

MG

KILLING INSIDE

Dear DA

I thought that your article, Killing Inside (DA17) did a fair job exposing the casual racism of prison officers which facilitated the murder of Zahid Mubarek in Feltham Young Offenders Institute. It failed, though, to place the killing in a wider context.

At the time of the killing, prisoners at Feltham were on 23 hour lock-up. The jail had been condemned in 1998 by David Ramsbottom, HM Inspector of Prisons, for operating a regime based around bullying and excessive lock-up, with severe overcrowding and a high suicide rate. Nothing had changed in the months leading up to Zahid Mubarek's death. Zahid's killer, Robert Stewart, was a profoundly disturbed young man - a psychopath, according to both prosecution and defence psychiatrists, with a history of assaults on other inmates and self-harm (including setting fire to himself). In many of his letters out, Stewart mentioned his hatred of the jail and repeatedly referred to the distress he felt at the prospect of continued "23 hour bang up."

In a sense, focusing on racism as the main issue in this case misses the point. Robert Stewart, a prisoner with profound psychiatric needs, was failed completely by those entrusted with his care at Feltham; he was set up just as much as Zahid. The real point though, is that the system failed both of them because it is supposed to. Under New Labour, the prison population has hit a record high, and Jack Straw has devoted considerable time to finding new ways of throwing people in jail, from speeding up juvenile "justice", through moves to abandon the option of jury trial with the Mode of Trial Bill, to the latest noises about forcing the disclosure of previous convictions during trial, rather than at sentencing. The reason is obvious enough; jail is a convenient way of putting manners on young working class men, giving them a taste of what the state can do. With privatisation and new prison work regimes, prison becomes a way of introducing the discipline of labour to the workless, while turning a bandy profit for the jail builders and jail runners who hang round the Home Office like flies round shit.

While Robert Stewart was on trial, the inmates of Osprey Wing at Feltham protested at their conditions and were beaten back into place by the Riot Squad. The mainstream press didn't report it - sadly neither have most of the left. Mike O'Brien, Home Office stooge, said recently that the only people he'd ever encountered who didn't call for longer jail sentences were prisoners and their relatives. As Labour moves to criminalise more and more of our class, those prisoners and relatives ought to be people we look to support, and the process of routine criminalisation is one we need to actively resist.

NS

NOT FUNNY

WHEN NIKE DON'T LIKE SELLING TRAINERS...

Nike now lets you personalise your shoes. You simply submit a word or phrase which they will stitch onto your shoes, under the swoosh. So, Jonah Peretti filled out the form and sent them $50 to stitch "sweatshop" onto his shoes. Here's what happened...

NIKE: Your NIKE iD order was cancelled for one or more of the following reasons: 1) Your Personal iD contains another party's trademark or other intellectual property 2) Your Personal iD contains the name of an athlete or team we do not have the legal right to use 3) Your Personal iD was left blank. Did you not want any personalisation? 4) Your Personal iD contains profanity or inappropriate slang, and besides, your mother would slap us. If you wish to reorder…

JP: My order was cancelled but my personal NIKE iD does not violate any of the criteria outlined in your message. Sweatshop is not: 1) another party's trademark, 2) the name of an athlete, 3) blank, or 4) profanity. I chose the iD because I wanted to remember the toil and labour of the children that made my shoes…

NIKE: Your NIKE iD order was cancelled because the iD you have chosen contains, as stated in the previous e-mail correspondence, "inappropriate slang". If you wish to reorder…

JP: …I disagree with the claim that my personal iD was inappropriate slang. After consulting Webster's Dictionary, I discovered that "sweatshop" is in fact part of standard English, and not slang. The word means: "a shop or factory in which workers are employed for long hours at low wages and under unhealthy conditions", and its origin dates from 1892. So my personal iD does meet the criteria detailed in your first email. Your web site advertises that the NIKE iD program is "about freedom to choose and freedom to express who you are." I share Nike's love of freedom and personal expression. I hope that you will value my freedom of expression and reconsider your decision…

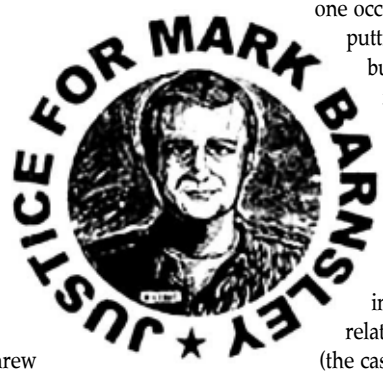
NIKE: Regarding the rules for personalisation, it also states on the NIKE iD web site that "Nike reserves the right to cancel any personal iD up to 24 hours after it has been submitted. While we honour most personal iDs, some may be (or contain) other's trademarks, or the names of certain professional sports teams, athletes or celebrities that Nike does not have the right to use. Others may contain material that we consider inappropriate or simply do not want to place on our products. With these rules in mind, we cannot accept your order as submitted. If you wish to reorder…

JP: I have decided to order the shoes with a different iD, but I would like to make one small request. Could you please send me a colour snapshot of the ten-year-old Vietnamese girl who makes my shoes?

(There was no response this time from Nike's usually prompt customer service team).

Letter from Mark

I have been consciously active as an anarchist since my teens, being involved in many areas of revolutionary struggle, in Britain and elsewhere. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, I was involved in the armed struggle, and as part of an Anarchist contingent which participated fully in the anti-imperialist and antifascist struggle in Lebanon during this period. In 1980, while carrying out a mission in support of the Palestinian resistance, I was arrested in Dover, England, and charged with possession of a small amount of explosives (c4), and subsequently imprisoned. On my release from prison, I immediately threw myself back into the struggle, and in 1983, began editing "The Sheffield Anarchist", which I edited/co-edited for 5 years, as well as editing and contributing to other anarchist publications. During this period, I continued to be active in a great many areas of struggle, from industrial conflict to anti-nuclear protest, and from militant anti-fascism to Irish solidarity. I also continued to be involved in prisoners support work (as I had been since the 70s), founding Sheffield Prisoners' Support Group in 1984. As a result of my activism and local high-profile, I was continually harassed and targeted by the cops, suffering numerous street and house searches, brutality and frequent arrests. There were also several attempts to fit me up, and on one occasion, I was even jailed for putting up a poster condemning busfare increases! Following a failed attempt to fit me up on criminal damage charges, I instigated legal proceedings for wrongful arrest and malicious prosecution. This involved cops from the same police station that were involved in fitting me up in relation to "the Pomona Incident" (the case I'm currently in prison for).



Not only that, but the cop in charge of the station was the very same cop who arrested me on the explosive charge back in 1980, at the opposite end of the country. At that time, he was a Detective Inspector in the Special Branch (Britain's political police). When, on June 8th, 1994, I was forced to defend myself against 15 drunken, middle-class thugs who were armed with bottles, drinking glasses and a knife, after they attacked me in broad daylight while I was out with my baby daughter and a family friend, the cops really pulled out all the stops to put me behind bars for a long time. The circumstances of my conviction will not stand up to the slightest honest scrutiny- the state didn't make a "mistake" here; they knew exactly what they were doing. My imprisonment, during which I have suffered a great deal of harassment and brutality, isn't really about what happened on June 8th, 1994, but about 25 years of militant political activism opposition that the state simply will not tolerate.

Always in struggle,
Mark Barnsley, HMP Wakefield

UPDATE

Mark Barnsley was moved out at 5.30am on Thursday, February 1st. He is currently at: HMP Wakefield, 5 Love Lane, Wakefield, WF2 9AG, England. This is Mark's 20th prison move so far. As Wakefield is primarily a high security prison for sex offenders, it is certainly one of the worst places they could send Mark, and clearly a punishment move. On arrival at Wakefield, Mark was put in an unheated Segregation cell with only one blanket (outside the temperature was below zero). At the time of writing, Mark's living conditions have not improved at all and he is still being denied

Letter from a Turkish prison

The hunger strikes and death fasts continued for over two months. 15,000 prisoners went on hunger strikes. More than 35 prisoners were killed in police raids. The main purpose of the action was to highlight conditions in the "F" Type prisons, characterised by tiny single cells, designed to stamp out the prison resistance movement. The effect is continuous solitary confinement. For anarchists, the problem is compounded and conditions unbearable. On one side is the Turkish authorities, on the other, the Leninist-Stalinist Left thugs, who are in power inside and build "prisons within prisons" for those they don't like.

"I have been an anarchist prisoner for five years. They (DGM, Malatya) [DGM is a state security court] gave me 15 years because I did not deny my anarchist identity and ideas. I had to deal with all sorts of problems. In Malatya prison, I was put in the block dominated by Marxist-Leninists prisoners. However, I was not accepted by them. I was told to stay only as an ordinary, non-political human being, not as an anarchist. Only PKK accepted me, with one condition: I was not to talk to anyone about anarchism. Although they gave way a little after I insisted, they did not recognise my anarchist identity. They were moderate towards me because in the past I had defended myself in DGM as a Kurdish anarchist. If this was not so, I am sure they would have never let me in their block. I had no choice but to demand my transfer to Burdur prison. There were four other anarchist prisoners in Burdur prison. They were people who converted to anarchism inside the prison walls. Like many other anarchists in prisons, they came from leftist background. At that time I was tortured when I was arrested. I had difficulty breathing, liver aches, ear and eye problems. Most importantly, I had serious trauma. My cell had no air conditioning and my health began to deteriorate even more. I was having problems with breathing and sometimes I fainted. I suggested to my anarchist comrades that we should demand to be transferred to a block with air conditioning. They agreed. But the prison authorities rejected us outright. We were told to contact the representatives of the Prisoners' Committee, which was controlled by Marxist-Leninist organisations. I explained to them about this matter. In the meantime, I could not see a doctor about my deteriorating health. I also talked to the representatives of MLKP (Marxist Leninist Communist Party) and PKK and asked them for help. They refused to help us because we were anarchists, not "revolutionaries". They did not see us as revolutionaries. They told us not to cause any more problems. Me and my comrades discussed the matter among ourselves. We decided to ask for a transfer to another prison where there were no Marxists. Some friends told me to stay in one of the political blocks until my health got better. First I refused, but then I got worried because I was fainting more frequently. I decided to tell this to the representatives of Prisoners' Committee. MLKP refused to let me stay in their block straight away. PKK, on the other hand, let me stay with one condition: I had to be an "ordinary" citizen. In the meantime, some of my visitors from outside were sent back by the Prisoners' Committee. The reason was that we were not revolutionaries... We were transferred to different places. I was sent to Konya/Ermenek prison. For about two years I lived there. For a while I stayed with Trotskyists, because they too were rejected and treated like us by the Prisoners' Committee. Finally, I realised how difficult it was to live with Marxists. My health was in danger in solitary confinement. I was sent to Ankara Numune Hospital and had an operation. However, they couldn't do anything about my severe headaches and ear problems… As you can see, the penalty for being an anarchist is very severe. You are confronted from everywhere…"

Solidarity needed now – to donate money towards his treatment, send cheques to "Emine Ozkaya" to: 162 The Avenue, Tottenham London N17 6JL. For info. contact: 5th May Group, PO Box 2474, London N8.
Ankara Anarchists (Turkey)
5th May Group (London)

access to his belongings. We urge supporters everywhere to flood the officials below with phone calls, faxes and letters as a matter of urgency. Please do all you can to demand that Mark's horrendous living conditions be immediately improved and that he be given access to adequate facilities. Stress that HMP Wakefield is clearly not a suitable place for Mark. That he has not been classed as a security risk prisoner so he should be moved immediately.

Letters, faxes, phone calls, etc should be sent to the following:
DAVID SHAW GOVERNOR HMP WAKEFIELD 5 LOVE LANE WAKEFIELD WF2 9AG TELEPHONE: (+) 01924 378282 FAX: (+) 01924 299315
MARTIN NAREY DIRECTOR GENERAL OF PRISONS PRISON SERVICE HQ CLELAND HOUSE PAGE STREET LONDON SWT 4LN
BILL BADE DIRECTORATE OF HIGH SECURITY PRISONS PRISON SERVICE HQ CLELAND HOUSE PAGE STREET LONDON SWT 4LN
PETER ATHERTON DIRECTOR OF HIGH SECURITY PRISONS PRISON SERVICE HQ CLELAND HOUSE PAGE STREET LONDON SWT 4LN ENGLAND FAX: (+) 0207 2176664

For more information about Mark's campaign: http://www.freemarkbarnsley.com e-mail: barnsleycampaign@hotmail.com
Or write to: Justice for Mark Barnsley, PO Box 381, Huddersfield HD13XX, England.

Against Parliament, For Anarchism

Anarchist Federation, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.
56 pages £1.50

This is an updated version of a 1997 pamphlet that overviews the current scene in British electoral politics. There are sections on why anarchists oppose parliament; the Labour Party; the Conservative Party; the Green Party; the Liberal Democrats; the left; the far right; the Scottish National Party and Plaid Cymru; and the anarchist communist alternative. The easy to read style suggests this work is aimed at a wide audience, at any rate an audience that goes well beyond the relatively narrow confines of the 'anarchist movement' – and as a critique of electoral politics, so it should.

Nevertheless, the pamphlet might have benefitted from a more extensive look at the Labour Party, which received half as much coverage as the Tories and less even than the Liberal Democrats. At fifty pages plus, it is unlikely to attract casual readers who might be considering voting Tory, say. Despite the quite widespread recognition of Labour's anti-working class nature, it is still accepted by many as the worst of a bad bunch.

A further improvement would have been to include a section on what alternatives there are for people to express opposition, not just on election day itself, but for the other 1,500 days or so when there are no general elections.

While this could obviously amount to a book in itself, not covering some possibilities for participation in the wider movement against the system that parliament upholds is a noticeable gap.

Despite these two minor criticisms, this pamphlet is well worth recommending to anyone you know who still hangs on to some faith in the parliamentary system.

Anarchism – Arguments for and against

Albert Meltzer

AK Press £3.95/$5.95
ISBN 187317657-0

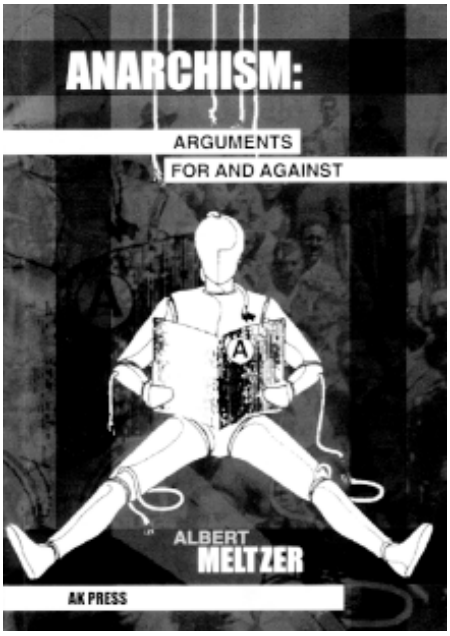
If you are new to anarchism, then Albert Meltzer's book, now reprinted, is a good, readable place to start. If you are well-versed in the ideas and arguments, then it is still likely to make an interesting and accessible read. But if you are an activist, then forget it, you know it all already.

Not quite. How many times have you talked to mates or acquaintances at work or pub and got into slagging off the government and capitalism, and how it should be/could be better? Everyone agrees with your reasoning. It may be about the waste of resources in your town by the local council, empty houses and rip off landlords or homeless people. Or even, on a more general level, about the fact that society is not looking after all of its community - just the ones that can afford to be looked after. Again, there is no resistance here to what you have to say; on the contrary, hardly anyone disagrees.

Then, you start suggesting self-organisation and self-management and everything changes. People respond with quips like "you will never get everybody involved in making their own decisions", and "it is easier just to leave the politicians to it and keep your head down, put up with the shit". Then, before you know it, they are off to talk about posh and beck and the match that should have been four nil not two.

This handy pocket sized book is the edition that Albert was working on at the time of his death, on May 7th 1996. The final conclusions quite often are not necessarily complex, but simple solutions to simple problems. It is quick and easy reading, yet challenging and thought provoking. The ideas are not necessarily new, but are easily picked up, so they can be easily passed on. One of Albert's worries about anarchism was that it had become ghettoised, and, in so doing, only anarchists talk to anarchists and thus, the spread of ideas cannot grow. If you or any of your mates/ acquaintances never wanted to face reading big thick theoretical books, that either bore you or turn you off or maybe make you feel small in contrast to the knowledge in them, then this is the antidote.

The best thing about *Arguments for and against* is not just that it is short and succinct, but that Albert has captured a style that is accessible to all and makes you feel more empowered with knowledge than threatened by it.



Genethics & reality

Contemporary discoveries in genetics are pretty unfamiliar to many. The genome is still largely thought of as an immortal biological blueprint which is stable, centralised, unchanging and subject only to occasional random mutations.

Genes are generally seen as static and staying where they belong. In ignorance, many imagine the development of an individual involves one way processes which are hierarchical, additive, non-interactive; involving a linear flow of DNA instructions to the growing organism. Allied to this idea is the belief that one gene or small group initiates a particular character trait in a one to one causal relationship. It is widely believed that nuclear DNA is the sole, or only significant, inheritance process.

All of the above beliefs are contradicted by scientific findings. Development of the organism and gene dynamics is a complex, decentralised, federalist and interactive process, in which causation and information is delocalised within a multi-dimensional, non-linear and circular super network. Even in the mature organism, the genome is living and constantly changing, just like everything else in nature.

The characterisation of processes as fluid, dynamic and federalist networks with complex many-pathed flows of information and causation, is currently popular as a scientific paradigm and social ideology. This can be seen in the development of the world wide web, systems ecology and chaos theory.

"There is an undreamed-of complexity and dynamism in cellular and genetic processes, many of which destabilise and alter genomes within the lifetime or the organisms. Base sequences can mutate, stretches of DNA can be inserted, deleted, or amplified, thousands and tens of thousands of times. The sequences can be rearranged or recombined with other sequences, genes can jump around from one site to another in the genome, and some genes can convert other genes to their own DNA sequences. These processes keep genomes in a constant state of flux in evolutionary time."

Bacteria, Viruses, pollution

It is now possible to create plants containing genes from Arctic fish or soil bacteria, supposedly increasing resistance to cold or disease. This modern marvel is accomplished through the construction and use of modified viruses, bacterial plasmids and other mobile genetic elements, that is; artificial GMvectors for moving bits of DNA between species. Natural genetic parasites, often associated with serious diseases, supposedly with their reproductive and pathogenic properties crippled, are modified in order to overcome barriers that usually prevent the transfer of genes between species. The potentially most hazardous of these GMV's are mosaic vectors, constructed out of bits of different genetic parasites. Unlike, natural host-specific parasites, mosaic vectors can infect a broad range of unrelated species. The use of such vectors as well as the DNA which they smuggle into foreign cells could potentially spread to all classes of organisms, by means of horizontal transfer and recombination of genes mediated by bacteria.

Bacteria are the most genetically promiscuous of all organisms. When faced with antibiotics or pollutants, they come together in groups, and by means of small tubes, swap DNA among themselves until they find a way of gaining resistance or utilising the pollutant as food. During these exchanges, natural genetic parasites are also able to travel. Sometimes these are able to recombine with pro-viruses - viruses which are able to interact with genetic parasites already attached to the genome. Bacteria also send out little pods containing DNA that can be picked up by other bacteria. Bacteria, as well as the mobile genetic agents, can also incorporate DNA lying around in the environment usually arising from decaying cells. DNA, especially in aquatic environments, may be utilisable for hours and even weeks. This means that there is no safe method of crippling GM vectors that are used in the laboratory. Horizontal gene transfer among the microbial population has emerged as a major mechanism for the spread of antibiotic resistance. There seems little doubt that these same mechanisms could facilitate uncontrollable genetic pollution, especially when combined with the construction of aggressive mosaic vectors specifically designed to overcome species barriers.

Horizontal gene transfer and recombination are the most overlooked dangers of agro-biotechnology. Microbial populations support many processes that allow for the multiplication of vectors and their DNA, enabling them to spread to other species. Viruses can be transmitted from one plant to another by insects that attack the plants. Studies have shown that vectors can infect mammalian cells and resist breakdown in the gut. Other research has shown the ability of bacterial plasmids carrying a mammalian virus to infect cultured mammalian cells, which then proceed to synthesise the virus, even though no signals for reading the genes are contained in the plasmid. This is because endogenous proviruses and other elements can provide helper functions. "A mobile genetic element called 'mariner', first discovered in fruit-flies, has recently been found to have jumped into the genomes of primates, including humans, where it causes a neurological wasting disease."

Despite the fact that "antibiotic-resistant marker genes from transgenic plants have been shown to end up in soil fungi and bacteria", there is presently "no requirement for monitoring horizontal gene transfer under current regulations." Minute pieces of DNA can spread throughout the whole biosphere because horizontal gene transfer mediated by

This article is drawn from a review which appears in *Anarchist 2000 Review*, by G. Purchase—www.geocities.com/juramedia/ All quotes and information from *Genetic Engineering: Dream or Nightmare* by Wae-Man Ho—the definitive introductory book on GE madness.

bacteria can potentially provide links with all living things. It raises the possibility of the "nightmare scenario of uncontrollable, cross-species epidemics that are invulnerable to treatment."

Fluid Genome - Implications

Gene expression states are heritable quite independently of changes in DNA. It is not simply what material is contained in the genome but how and whether it is expressed. Genes may be turned on or off (silencing), multiplied many, many times over (amplification), or jump from one part of the genome to another (transposition). Although the DNA is unchanged, it is expressed differently. These differences can get passed on to the next generation, a process known as 'epigenetic inheritance'. The genome has a ready-made tool box which springs into action during viral attacks and environmental challenges. It is part of the flexible response of the genome to an ever-changing environment.

The importance of these mechanisms is seen in insect resistance. When exposed to a sub-lethal chemical dose, the genes encoding enzymes that detoxify the chemical or increase the rate at which toxins are pumped out of the cell, are amplified many times over. Crops with built-in insecticides may prove ineffective because of such processes. Genetic material for biopesticides have all been sourced from soil bacteria which probably play "an indispensable role in natural pest control. If, as the result of commercial release of bio-pesticide-producing transgenic plants - insect pests develop resistance on a large scale, there will be nothing left for the ecosystem to fall back on." The dangers of using genetic material from soil bacteria arising from the genetically promiscuous nature of microbial life, are generally underestimated and compounded by the fact that soil-ecology is poorly understood in many key areas. Moreover, genetic engineers have little training in soil ecology. There are already well documented detrimental effects on wildlife of such crops.

Gene Silencing is a reason why the viability of transgenic animals and plants within agriculture is questionable. The genome has elaborate processes for silencing foreign DNA within the lifetime of the organism, and these markers are in many cases heritable.

The notion that biological nature in the form of genes is fixed and unchanging and can be sorted from environmental influence is not rooted in fact. "Genes and genomes need to be fluid in order to maintain stability", in a constantly changing environment. Genes are "shuffled and recombined" as they "respond to environmental changes" in complex "ecological interactions between organism and environment." The "natural or regional biodiversity" developed over many generations under field conditions leads to "stable genotype-environment interaction. A matching unlikely in unstable transgenic lines."

Other more well publicised and appreciated problems with transgenic agricultural crops include

unanticipated side-effects, such as allergies. "Because no gene ever functions in isolation, there will almost always be unexpected and unintended side-effects from the gene or genes transferred into an organism."

The most immediate and easily observable impacts of transgenic plants on the ecological environment are due to cross-pollination. Herbicide resistance in transgenic potatoes and oilseed rape have spread to weed relatives in a single growing season.

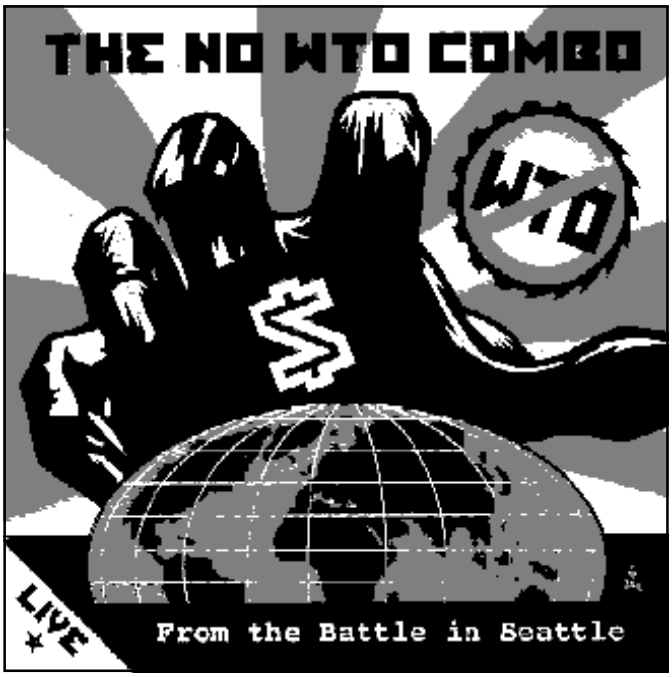
Dolly was not a clone

The cell contains many other organelles apart from the nucleus. Many of these were once free-living organisms which entered into co-operative and symbiotic relationships with others in the formation and evolution of animal and plant cells. Many of these organelles still contain their own, non-nuclear DNA which is inherited via the cytoplasm of the female egg-cell.

The cytoplasm, the collective name for that part of the cell outside the nucleus, also has an important role in inheritance and developmental processes. Cytoplasmic states can be inherited. Maternal inheritance is the name given to non-genetic states which are passed on through the processes of the egg rather than the nuclear-DNA. One really does inherit more from one's mother than one's father. And this extra information is the sum-total of heritable information contained in the egg. The egg cytoplasm is also important in making the proper body plan characteristic of the species independently of the nuclear DNA.

Dolly was not a clone. A nucleus was simply transferred into a 'mother cell' from another sheep. Body cells accumulate changes in their lifetime, and the cytoplasm of an egg line cell of another sheep was necessary to erase these marks.

GENETIC ENGINEERS HAVE LITTLE TRAINING IN SOIL ECOLOGY. THERE ARE ALREADY WELL DOCUMENTED DETRIMENTAL EFFECTS ON WILDLIFE OF SUCH CROPS



The NO WTO Combo – Live from the Battle in Seattle

Alternative Tentacles Records www.alternativetentacles.com 2000

Well, the WTO have done some good! They brought together Jello Biafra, Krist Novoselic, Kim Thayil and Gina Mainwal for a punk super group one off. As it says, it's live from the Battle of Seattle.

It all kicks off with a spoken word piece from Jello Biafra (ex-Dead Kennedys and ongoing US punk godfather collaborator with loads of people). If you have heard any of Biafra's previous spoken word output, you will know what to expect – if not, imagine Chomsky as a San Francisco punk. As ever, his targets are well-sighted "Clintonoid Yuppies", the media, big business and powerful US elites. His criticisms are fairly spot on, if verging too far toward the conspiracy theory end rather than shared interest this reviewer prefers. His solutions are libertarian with a big 'liberal'. He rightly rails against the purer-than-thou approach to politics, seeing one of the great things about Seattle was that people with different interests and different backgrounds were meeting together. He does encourage people to vote for fringe (Green) Presidential candidate, seeing it as a way of beginning to overcome apathy towards politics and undermining the identikit democrats/republicans. Personally, I don't really give a monkeys if people who are politically active vote for some 'slightly better candidate' or not. I can see some point of a negative vote; it just isn't something I would encourage. Non voting (in Britain at least) is largely to do with apathy, not a rejection of representative parliamentary government (see *DA6*). However, the step to actually voting is so small and not really a positive one, so why waste time getting people to do something so transitory and unhelpful? Surely it's better to get people active in a local campaign, in a union, an environmental campaign - something that is ongoing and builds a sense of activity and solidarity? To give Biafra his due, he does promote these as well, encouraging his audience to go out and talk to their friends, neighbours and work colleagues – something DA would endorse wholly, though remember it is okay to talk about other things as well! There are also references to keeping it fun, direct action, pranks and the like (look on other pages of DA for examples).

The remaining four tracks are the top end quality punk you'd expect from such a line up. Track 2 is a glorious not too radically different version of 'Let's Lynch the Landlord', from the Dead Kennedys' classic 'Fresh Fruit For Rotten Vegetables' – a song about slum clearance and property speculators that isn't dated at all. Tracks 3 and 4 are new Biafra compositions: 'New Federalism' is about free trade and what the WTO and its ilk are really all about. Track 4 'Electronic Plantation' takes on the high tech industries and worker monitoring that goes on in them; the horrendous sweatshop conditions that are endured in places like call centres, where your every activity can be monitored, and the pressure is always on, and toilet breaks are a disciplinary matter. Musically, they are both fine, fairly standard Biafra material. The final track is 'Full Metal Jackoff', another old one, though not quite as old this time. It's a pretty impressive run through what is the standout track from the excellent Biafra/DOA collaboration 'Last scream of the missing neighbors'. A couple of the lyrics have been changed to reflect the anti-WTO activities of the whole thing.

The CD also comes with a booklet with lyrics, pieces by Jello Biafra and Krist and an article about the WTO and its attempts to get food labelling (such as GM free, organic, dolphin friendly) banned as being a constraint of world trade!

Cold Catches Fire

This is a book about climate change which places the human drama center stage. It looks beyond the statistics and puts some passion into the danger.

The real bonus is that it is structured as a reader – with various formats of prose and poetry providing a range of styles and moods. In Shades of Equity, Anju Sharma illustrates how the United States seeks to promote a definition of global equity that further disadvantages the south. The Melt of the Eternal Ice tells the story of a mudslide in Munster, Switzerland and brings home the point that global warming acknowledges no North-South divide and is happening now and everywhere.

The Human Costs of Climate Change is the focus of the book. It considers the immediate direct threats to humanity such as increased hunger, health problems and shattered infrastructures, and also presents the issue of ecological-economic refugees, the many and more of whom climate change unchecked will bring. Jeremy Seabrook's Life of Migrants is a description of just how dire forced migration is - on both the ones who leave and those who stay. Salfrina's new beginning and Lina Magaia's rich personal narrative about the Mozambique floods should present the reader with a strong sense of the devastation angry waters leave behin, and place a human face on the facts offered earlier by Hulme and others. Andy Caffery's eloquent and emotional account of his own encounter with an extreme weather event reminds us that Americans too are vulnerable, and are, have been and will continue to suffer from too much heat, too much rain, too much cold or other that climate change will bring.

If earth poetry attracts, try Ginsberg's Death on all Fronts for the misery and carbon chaos generated on a macro-level by the neo-liberal institutions and multinational corporations. Primo Levi's elegant and mesmerising opening story of a carbon of atom contrasts tellingly with the vulgarities and human madness which are the subject matter of the three following articles concerned with the carbon basis of capitalism, the role of big oil corporations in aggravating the problem and the odiousness of a world bank predictably attempting to profit from the change in the weather.

If you need the short version, Douglas Dowd's short essay sums up the premise of the book that it is we who must change our values and our views if the climate is going to be stabilised at a life-affirming level.

(Source; ASEED)

Bash the Fash

Anti-fascist recollections 1984-93

K. Bullstreet.
Publication date: January 2001
As pamphlet, 36 pages.
ISBN 1-873605-87-0
Price £2
Kate Sharpley Library, BM
Hurricane, London WC1N 3XX

This little booklet is basically one person's memoirs. That person happens to have been an anarchist member of Anti-Fascist Action. There is no doubt that modern working class history – including that of the essential struggle against fascism – is sadly lacking and as such, this is a valuable addition.

I personally am not much into other people's diaries. There is little in the way of analysis here, and even less in the way of lessons for current anti-fascist resistance. But, to be fair, this is not what this booklet is about.

The real reason to read Bash the Fash is to get an insight into a period when Thatcherism was rampant, fascists were trying to get a foot in, and groups of anarchists/anarcho-syndicalists and Marxists were out to stamp them out. And herein lies the rub – there is not really a great difference between these times and today – just put Tony Blair in a dress, slash the fascist movement to a couple of sad dozen, and you are well on the way.

The author was a member of the Direct Action Movement, the precursor to the Solidarity Federation. 1980s issues of the then newspaper version of this mag, Direct Action, covered the stories and indeed, feature in the booklet. But you cannot (and probably wouldn't want to) get hold of 1980s issues of Direct Action – whereas this booklet is fresh and new.

Where Bash the Fash really scores is in its uplifting storyline. Event after event, the fash were kicked into touch and left looking pathetic and cowardly. If you don't understand the gratuitous way in which violence against fascists is glorified here, you haven't seen fascists at 'work'. Personally, I cannot stand gratuitous violence and I oppose unnecessary violence against humans, animals and the environment generally. But I make a special exception for fascists.

If you think that the fight against fascism stopped in 1945; or that stopping neo-nazi violence can be left to the police or that a small group of people can't improve things, then you should read this booklet.

Do or Die #9

ISSN 1462-5969. £5 inc. p+p from: Do or Die, c/o Prior House, 6 Tilbury Place, Brighton BN2 2GY. www.eco-action.org/dod/

Reviews of earlier DODs have appeared in DA - if you saw them, then for #9, read ditto. If you didn't, then send off your £5 now.

Whether you participate as an environmental, urban street-fighting, or armchair activist, or if you'd just like to be one, DOD will help you. With 21 in-depth stories of actions, reports on adventures and reflections on tactics, the coffee/bedside table allure of this tightly-packed 200-odd page tome makes it, quite simply, a necessary bargain. And then, there's the contacts pages...

Various Artists – Live at the Complex 2

Entartete Kunst 2000 (Entartete Kunst, PO Box 411194, San Fransisco, Ca 94141-1194 USA entartekunst@excite.com

An interesting and mysterious item this. A CD of 17 tracks of "no field abstract electronic" stuff, recorded at a place called the Complex, in San Francisco, released on a small label which doesn't appear to be the same as the Canadian one releasing left field post rock stuff, though it is hopefully available through distributors throughout much of Europe and the US.
It's most definitely worth checking out. The music moves round drum+bass, to hip hop, through industrial beats and back again via its own little paths. Tracks from a whole collection of people I have never heard of and who I will probably sadly never hear of again. In addition, there are some poems/spoken word pieces by Raw Knowledge that are not at all the lyrical ballad end of the performance poetry spectrum. Visceral, direct and passionately delivered, they speak of a life of abuse, being battered and growing up angry and full of hurt and bile.

The CD itself has little information, basic track listing (in a barely legible font) a few contact details for the people involved, and a note saying there is also a Mumia benefit 10" out there somewhere. If you see it, get it!

UKplc: On the slide

Tony Blair says it's the exchange rate (wait for the Euro). From Thatcher to New Labour, politicians have been manufacturing excuses over the decline of manufacturing for three decades. The truth is rather revealing.

Free market economic ideas have dominated in Britain for nearly 30 years. Their real heyday started under Thatcher in the early 1980s. Profoundly anti-state interventionist, the core of Thacherite thinking held that firms should be left to sink or swim in the market. Those firms unable to compete must go under.

It is no secret that so-called Thatcher economics were intensely political. It was important that the decline was particularly steep in those sections of manufacturing which were in the nationalised state sector. Moreover, the idea was that the decline of these traditional manufacturing industries would give way to a growing high-tech service-based economy, where private sector ruled.

In a few long years of the early 1980s, nearly 25% of Britain's manufacturing sector was destroyed. It was important that manufacturing industries should appear to look like a sad, economic mistake (especially where they were unionised and/or nationalised), so that the resulting massive loss of jobs could be made to appear somehow inevitable. The idea was, the government could not intervene. Apparently, it did nothing.

The free market ideas were further reinforced with the ideas of globalisation, which argued that the new technology was creating a new global market, rendering the state powerless. In the brave new-tech world, all-powerful footloose multi-national companies would relocate to the developing world, where labour was cheaper. Furthermore, the final triumph of free market ideology was to come with the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Lies and losses

As it gathered strength, free market rhetoric was used to intellectually underpin the attacks on trade unions in the developed world. Meanwhile, in the developing world, post-war Marxist liberation struggles were undermined both by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the increasing dominance of free market thinking in international trade bodies. Here, increasingly, there was now only one game in town; embrace free trade and IMF restructuring programs and await the arrival of the multi-nationals, which would industrialise the country out of its poverty.

In Britain, free market ideas have underpinned the Blairite assault on Labour. As a result, it has been transformed from a social democratic party, with a strong belief in state intervention, to an authoritarian free market version, modelled on the US Democratic Party. Hence, the first new Labour government has been characterised by its love affair with the booming US economy and its constant attacks on over-regulated, bureaucratic Europe.

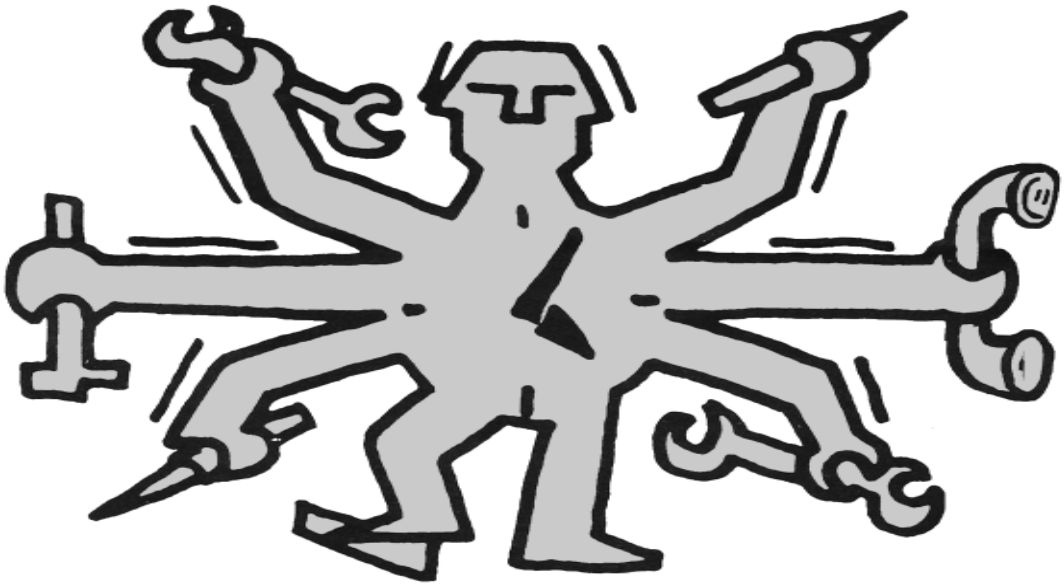
As with Thatcher's early years, Blair has spent his first years ruling over the deep decline of Britain's manufacturing sector. In the last two years alone, over 300,000 manufacturing jobs have been lost in Britain. According to the government's own figures, a further 670,000 manufacturing jobs are to be lost in Britain by 2009. Faced with this advanced manufacturing meltdown, Labour has stuck to its new Thatcherite heritage. The loss of manufacturing jobs is seen as somehow inevitable; Britain's future lies in the service sector. Labour's manufacturing strategy has been little more than a sad shake of the head in sympathy with those affected - unless you also count the endless targeted retraining packages aimed at turning skilled redundant workers into IT/call centre workers, in the new, bright satanic mills of the knowledge-based economy.

However, there are growing signs that all is not well in the brave new free market world. Gone are the heady days when Thatcher successfully sold the perceived failure of state intervention, and made this to blame for rising inflation and unemployment. Then, the free market was presented as a new alternative. Decades on, there is nothing else left to blame. It has become a victim of its own success. It has swept all before it, scapegoats and all. The free market has once again been tested fully in reality. As in the past, it has been found to be fundamentally flawed.

The all-powerful US free market model, used by the free market right as a club to beat the supposedly inefficient European and Asian economies, is now on the edge of recession. At the same time, the idea that manufacturing no longer matters in advanced capitalist economies is increasingly exposed.

Boom and bust

The long US boom has been fuelled by consumer demand. This demand has led to the US sucking in manufactured goods from both Asia and Europe. Theoretically, this would not be a problem provided the US exported the services that now dominate the US economy. However, the service sector has proved not to be the great export earner it promised to be. Hence, the US



now has mounting balance of payments problems. In the medium term, trade balance matters. A nation that allows its trade position to deteriorate too far for too long cannot expect to remain the world's leading economy.

One of the real problems for the US is that its high consumer demand has not stemmed from high earnings. Rather, it has come from mounting up debts and a stock market bubble. As a result, it now has the lowest saving levels since records began. This has profound implications for investment – which can only come from savings. Instead of being directed towards investment in the deregulated US, money has poured into a consumption binge and gambled on the stock market – often on high tech, virtually non-existent companies.

The lack of US investment is already hitting. For instance, the current high price of oil is partly to blame on the fact that crude oil cannot be refined fast enough. The gas-guzzling US economy has failed to invest in a single new oil refinery in the last ten years. Why bother putting money in plant and machinery with a long term yield, when speculators can throw money at the stock exchange and double it in a year? Perhaps the sight of mighty free market California having to endure electricity cuts will one day soon come to symbolise the failure of free market ideas.

Evidence of free market failing extends way beyond the US. The much-hyped globalisation simply hasn't happened as hyped. The idea that multinationals are footloose and can transfer production at the drop of a free market hat is pure nonsense. Multinationals are based in and dependent upon highly developed state structures. They cannot survive without the state. Who else would provide a healthy, educated workforce, infrastructure, finance, research, provide a dependable and capitalist based legal system, etc.? All this is lost on the free market thinkers who view the world according to theory rather than reality.

MANUFACTURED REALITY

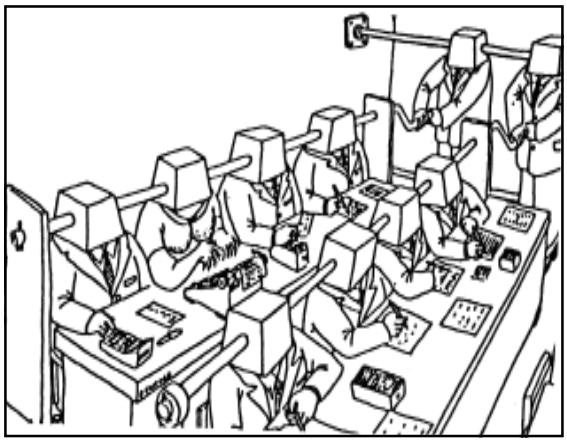
They have fallen for their own media trick. In their eagerness to rid the developed world of manufacturing, no doubt associated with nasty cloth-capped trade unionists, they seem to have totally misunderstood how manufacturing works. They push technological development as if it exists outside manufacturing. The reality is that manufacturing, like every other sector of the capitalist economy, is driven by profit, which in turn drives technological change. The manufacturing sector is being transformed and is now hi-tech itself. It can cost as much as $1 million per worker for the machinery used in manufacturing electronics. Similar ratios apply in textiles and steel. The types of steel now being produced for use in cars and computers did not exist ten years ago.

Increasing technology now means highly automated factories where labour costs are low. In many manufacturing sectors, these now account for as little as 3% of total production costs. The imperative of seeking to lower the cost of labour by relocating to developing countries simply no longer applies. Coupled to the fact that, anyway, multi-nationals are dependent on state support, the result is that manufacturing remains rooted in the advanced economies. The most productive and sophisticated producers of textiles are in northern Italy, not Bangladesh. The most productive and technologically advanced steel industries are in Europe, not Brazil.

What is occurring is that low-tech labour-intensive goods assembly is being transferred to the developing world. This provides little benefit to the workers, who are forced to withstand slave wages in appalling conditions. The finished goods are either returned to the developed world for sale, or sold in the country where they are assembled. Either way, the profits return to the multinationals in the developed world. The multinationals were supposed to relocate in search of lower wages, in fact, they view the developing world as potential competitors. The transfer of technology has been tightly controlled, for fear it may be used to build a competitive manufacturing base.

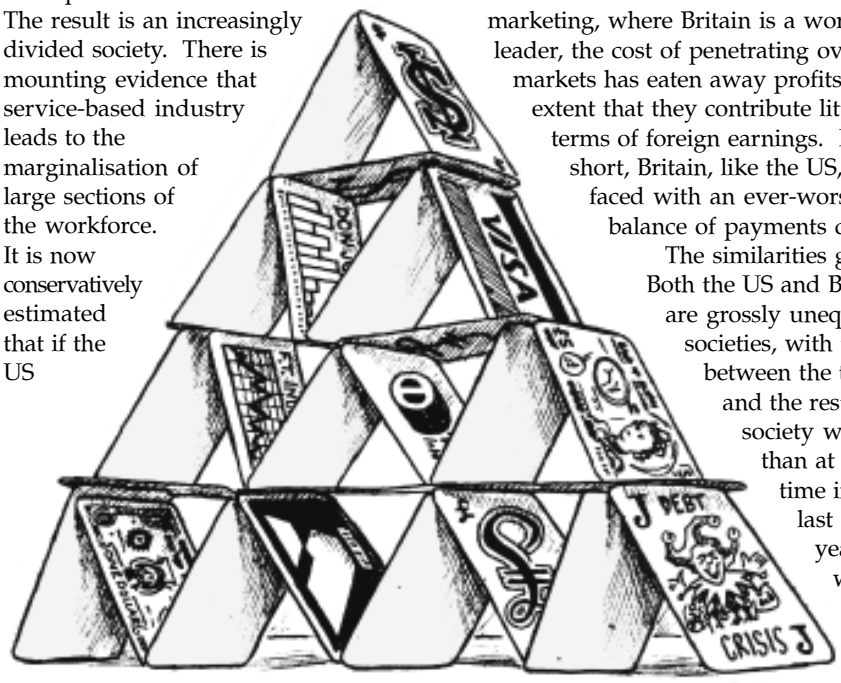
So manufacturing has remained owned and based in the developed world. Moreover, it has flourished most in those countries that have resisted the cult of the free market and used state regulation to direct investment into the manufacturing sector. These same countries have, through this state investment, been able to generate rapidly rising incomes. The free market vision dictated that it would be the service based economy which would generate the most wealth for its citizens. This has not been born out in reality. According to OECD figures, income growth between 1980 and 1996 in the US lagged behind twelve other countries, all of whom devote a larger share of their labour force to manufacturing. Britain,

LABOUR'S MANUFACTURING STRATEGY HAS BEEN LITTLE MORE THAN A SAD SHAKE OF THE HEAD IN SYMPATHY, UNLESS YOU COUNT THE ENDLESS RETRAINING PACKAGES AIMED AT TURNING SKILLED REDUNDANT WORKERS INTO IT/CALL CENTRE WORKERS, IN THE NEW, BRIGHT SATANIC MILLS OF THE KNOWLEDGE-BASED ECONOMY



arguably the most service-orientated economy in the world, came 21st out of the 24 countries examined. In terms of average wages, the US, at $12.37, has now been overtaken by both Germany ($21.01), and Japan ($14.70). These figures hide the gross inequality that also accompanies the move from manufacturing to a service-based economy. It is now woefully apparent that manufacturing-based economies are able to maintain a far more balanced workforce, with a high number of semi-skilled manufacturing jobs.

In the service-based economy, skilled jobs are concentrated in the professions, who receive far higher rates of income. However, the majority are stuck in less skilled service work, such as catering and caring, which is pitifully low-paid, often part-time and casual. The result is an increasingly divided society. There is mounting evidence that service-based industry leads to the marginalisation of large sections of the workforce. It is now conservatively estimated that if the US continues to deindustrialise at its current rate, a further 25 million people will be marginalised within the US economy in the next 10 years.



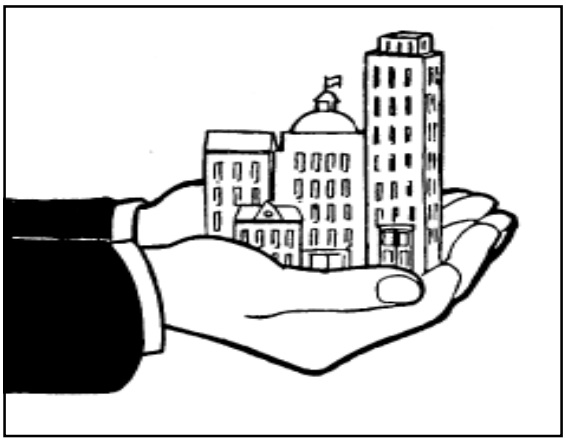
SPECIAL RELATIONSHIPS

As a rule of thumb, to see what we are in for in Britain in the next 5 years, look at the US. And indeed, Britain is already suffering the same symptoms as the US. Amongst the dominant British service sector, the financial sector is the most influential. This flagship sector has proved hugely disappointing in terms of export potential. Foreign governments are loathed to see their financial sector come under foreign control, and have consequently refused to play by the free market rules, and instead set regulatory obstacles to protect their domestic finance sector. In other services such as marketing, where Britain is a world leader, the cost of penetrating overseas markets has eaten away profits to the extent that they contribute little in terms of foreign earnings. In short, Britain, like the US, is faced with an ever-worsening balance of payments deficit.

The similarities go on. Both the US and Britain are grossly unequal societies, with the gap between the top 30% and the rest of society wider than at any time in the last 150 years. As wages fall in real terms, savings disappear, and debt becomes the main way of financing consumption. However, here, Britain is in much worse state since its economy is so much smaller. Furthermore, Britain is in Europe, where other countries have been reluctant to go so far down the free market road. While Britain has been deregulating and allowing much of its manufacturing base to collapse, other European economies have been directly investing in manufacturing. Sweden, Germany, France and others have targeted investment as a means to boost manufacturing. Not surprisingly, they now outstrip Britain, not least in terms of productivity.

Less industrialised countries such as Spain are actively attempting to develop their industrial base, while Switzerland is perhaps the best example of a European country rejecting the free market road. Although free market theory would predict that Switzerland's approach would be disastrous, the result is the opposite. Best known for its financial sector, it is now a world leader in machine tools and produces sophisticated equipment used in the textile, chemical, and electricity generating industries. As a result, Switzerland has an income per capita of $41,411 - the highest of any OECD country. The strategy of ensuring a healthy manufacturing industry has resulted in a healthy balance of payments, higher investment levels, increasingly higher standards of living, a more equal society, and better welfare and infrastructure.

Though Britain can boast higher employment levels than some pro-active manufacturing countries, this is due in the main to the impact of increasingly



THE LIKELY END OF THATCHER'S FREE MARKET DREAM, KEPT ALIVE BY NEW LABOUR, IS A SERVICE-BASED ECONOMY CENTRED ON SOUTH EAST ENGLAND, IN WHICH THE LAWYERS, FINANCIERS, BROADCASTERS AND OTHER HANGERS-ON REAP EVER HIGHER REWARDS, WHILE HAIRDRESSERS, CARERS, AND PIZZA DELIVERERS STRUGGLE BY ON POVERTY WAGES

starvation level benefits and decades of authoritarian welfare-for-work programs forcing people to take low paid jobs. The other main factor has come from checks on European currency growth, caused first by German unification, and then the Euro, which has been slow to stabilise.

LOSING THE PLOT

It was simply not supposed to be like this. Free market deregulation was supposed to lower costs, especially labour costs, leading to high investment, resulting in greater productivity and a reversal of Britain's hundred-year decline. In reality, the opposite has occurred. Britain has been unable to direct money away from consumption into investment. As a result, the investment and productivity gap between Britain and its main European competitors has grown ever-wider.

One much-hyped idea has been that Britain's pitiful wages will attract foreign investment. The case of Motorola is telling. When looking to build a new cellular phone factory, Motorola decided to locate in Germany. They chose the country with the highest wage costs, mainly due to its world-beating manufacturing infrastructure, reliable delivery service, honest regulators, etc. As the Chairman of Motorola pointed out, the advantage of choosing a lower-wage location such as Britain, given the low percent of wage costs in terms of total costs was negligible. In contrast, Germany had many more advantages to offer. Once again, reality is opposite than free market theory would suggest. In short, without domestically generated investment, Britain cannot hope to compete successfully with its European partners.

And competition is inevitable. The whole European single market project is aimed at increasing European competition as the means of raising 'efficiency'. The long term aim is to create a European superpower strong enough to outcompete and so eclipse the US. As competition within Europe gathers pace, a comprehensive reshaping of corporate Europe will take place. Weaker companies will go under or be taken over by their more efficient competitors. The result will be only a handful of surviving companies in each industrial sector. Around each company, there will be a wider supporting industrial cluster. That means a lot of jobs and prosperity rides on the initial competitive phase.

The reshaping of European industry has barely started. Nevertheless, as it stands, it is hard to see how Britain's low investment, low productivity, low wage and low skills economy will be able to compete. With the possible exceptions of finance and the arms industry, Britain looks exposed economically. The likely end of Thatcher's free market dream, kept alive by the converts in New Labour, is a primarily service-based economy centred on south east England, in which the lawyers, financiers, broadcasters and other hangers-on reap ever higher rewards, while hairdressers, carers, and pizza deliverers struggle by on poverty wages. Outside the south east, whole regions will have to survive on a low wage service sector, leaving whole sections of the population economically marginalised.

The failing of free market ideology will become increasingly apparent over the next couple of years. The result will be changing attitudes and possibly, a realignment of the left. A coalition of Marxist groups and elements of the old left may well come together to argue for an end to free market dogma, in favour of greater state regulation, aimed at greater equality and domestic investment in industry. It is not hard to envisage a coalition of state interventionists emerging to the left of the main political parties. Though this will be couched in revolutionary rhetoric, the aim will be to switch the British economy away from the free market model to a more manufacturing orientated European social market economy.

More promisingly, another reaction to the failing of free market ideas is taking shape. A new wave of radicalism, centred on opposition to globalisation and free trade is emerging. This is opposed to the social democratic idea of using the state to regulate capitalism to make it less recession-prone and more egalitarian. Instead, this new radical movement aims to confront capitalism head-on and to eventually replace the system with one in which human lives are central rather than profit. The anarcho-syndicalist model, with its long history of direct confrontation and libertarian organising has much to offer the embryonic new radical movement. In the rapidly expanding International Workers' Association, the combination of a history and experience of struggle and the energy of new growth is becoming a powerful anti-capitalist force. So goodbye to the Thatcherite free market and no thanks to the social democratic 'alternative'. It is time to build a revolutionary resistance.

SF Contact Point:

SF, PO Box 1681, London N8 7LE
Tel. 0208 374 5027 Email; solfed@solfed.org.uk
www.solfed.org.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. 0208 374 5027.
Red & Black Club, PO Box 17773, London SE8 4WX. Tel. 0207 358 1854.
South West Solidarity, SWS, Box 43, 82 Colston St, Bristol BS1 5BB.
South Herts SF, PO Box 493, St Albans ALI 5TW. Tel. 01727 862814.
West Midlands SF, PO Box 6705, Redditch, Worcs. B97 6SQ.
Lancashire SF, c/o Bookseller, 9 Meeting House Lane, Lancaster LA1 1TJ. tel 01772 464853. lancsolfed@blueyonder.co.uk
Manchester SF, PO Box 29, SW PDO, Manchester M15 5HW. Tel. 0161 232 7889. manchestersf@scandrac.demon.co.uk
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 people near you.

Direct Action - delivered

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About Solidarity Federation...

Solidarity Federation was formed in March 1994. It is a federation of groups and individuals across England, Scotland & Wales. Everyone involved is helping to build a non-hierarchical, anti-authoritarian solidarity movement. The basic foundation used for doing this is the Local group.

LOCALS

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, forming a basis for 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 anarcho-syndicalist International Workers' Association (IWA). 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 five 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 21st IWA Congress in Granada, Spain, in December 2000, three new groups were welcomed into the IWA, to add to the seven new sections welcomed at the last Congress four years ago.

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 (above left).

Events/Campaigns/Gatherings...

Solidarity Federation

Education Workers' Network
Strike ballot news issue out now. For everyone in the education sector; cleaners, teachers, students, lecturers, admin., etc. Info from EWN, PO Box 29, SW PDO, Manchester M15 5HW.

South-west Solidarity
Swindon-Bristol based with contacts across SW England and always looking for more. Write for a free newsletter. South West Solidarity Federation, Box 43, 82 Colston St, Bristol BS1 5BB.

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. Tel. 01727 862814

Manchester SolFed
Support and Advice Sessions Drop in, first Wednesday of the month, 7pm, followed by Discussion Meeting, same day, 8.30pm.

April 4th - Capitalism in Crisis

May 2nd - Modern US Imperialism

June 6th - Images...

All sessions open & free at: The Brow House, 1 Mabfield Road, Fallowfield, Manchester. Or contact Manchester SF, PO Box 29, SW PDO, Manchester M15 5HW. Tel. 0161 232 7889

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. 0208 374 5027.

Lancashire Solidarity Federation
We are newly formed and ready for action! If you are in Lancashire and up for it - contact us: Lancs SolFed c/o Bookseller, 9 Meeting House Lane, Lancaster LA1 1TJ Tel. 01772 464853 lancsolfed@blueyonder. co.uk

Catalyst

Freesheet of the Solidarity Federation - IWA

LYING BASTARDS!!!

3rd issue of the quarterly freesheet is out now - with an emphasis on making the difference at work.

If you like DA, you'll like Catalyst. Send a stamp or phone for your copy - or for a bunch to hand out at work or play.

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

Tel. 0161 232 7889. Email; manchesterSF@scandrac.demon.co.uk

Selfed Collective

For self-education - we develop and share ideas and skills for revolutionary activity

Following the success of our 99/00 course... we've gone online. 'A History of Anarcho-syndicalism'. 24 pamphlet-sized Units, plus the opportunity to participate in discussion meetings.

Pamphlets are a quid each - or get them ALL FREE in FULL VERSIONS - easily downloadable from the new SelfEd website.

Online FREE course 2001 - register now-

www.selfed.org.uk

DA ON THE WEB

DA is pretty monochrome - and that may change. Meanwhile, if you like pretty colours, get on the Web for the only technicolour DA production. Just slip into your local cybercafe or switch on, and at the right moment, type:

http://www.direct-action.org.uk

Friends and Neighbours

[To get listed here, write to; DA (F&N). PO Box 1095, Sheffield S2 4YR, da@direct-action.org.uk]

Asylum in the 21st Century
Discuss and relaunch the radical network Psychology Politics Resistance. 14th July 10.30-5.30, Manchester Metropolitan University, Hathersage Rd, Manchester. Registration £2.50. Details: Janine Acott, Conference Office, MMU, Hathersage Rd, Manchester M13 0JA. Tel. 0161 247 2535. Also: Asylum, mag for democratic psychiatry. £12 for 4 issues: 29 Heathbank Rd, Cheadle Heath, Stockport, Cheshire SK3 0UP. tmclaughlin@asylum-online.net

Labour behind the label
Wear fair: Labour behind the label campaigns for women organising in the garment industry. Contact them to borrow an exhibition for local display. NEAD, 38 Exchange St, Norwich NR2 1AX. Also: Women Working Worldwide at www.poptel.org.uk/women-ww Also: Clean Clothes Campaign at www.cleanclothes.org

Emergency Response Network
Relaunched to facilitate action among prison activists, supporters and campaigns. Hosted by Houston ABC: www.houstonabc.org or check out www.abcf.net If you have no net access: Houston ABC-SG, PO Box 667233, Houston TX 77266-7233, US.

Social Ecology Courses
For artists and activists, culture jammers - if you fancy an educational trip to the US… Sustainable Design, Building & Land Use (June 1 to 22, 2001). Arts, Activism & Social Change Workshop (June 8 to 17, 2001). Ecology & Community (June 23 to July 21, 2001). http://www.social-ecology.org or 1 (802) 454-8493

Mayday 2001
Questions or information email info@mayday2001.co.uk http://www.mayday2001.co.uk

Italy: Anti-imperialist Camp
2001, Italy, July 27th - August 5th Gathering for struggle against injustice. www.antiimperialista.com

AnarchyAction
What's happening near you? www.anarchyaction.co.uk/events Legal advice - Loads of great advice for protesters - www.anarchyaction.co.uk/legal Plus lots more from www.anarchyaction.co.uk

Corner House
NEW Corner House Briefing Paper Corner House Briefing 21: "Genetic Dialectic: The Biological Politics of Genetically Modified Trees", available free by email from cornerhouse@gn.apc.org. Contact The Corner House for details of printed paper copies: The Corner House, PO Box 3137, Station Road, Sturminster Newton, Dorset DT10 1YJ. Email versions; cornerhouse@gn.apc.org

Anarchist TU 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

Covance Campaign
Covance Inc. claim to be the world's largest contract animal testing organisation, with labs and breeding centres all over the world. To get involved in surprise demos, weekly pickets, etc. at the Harrogate Lab, or to get campaign materials, contact Covance Campaign, PO Box 323, York. Tel. 07977 637 293.

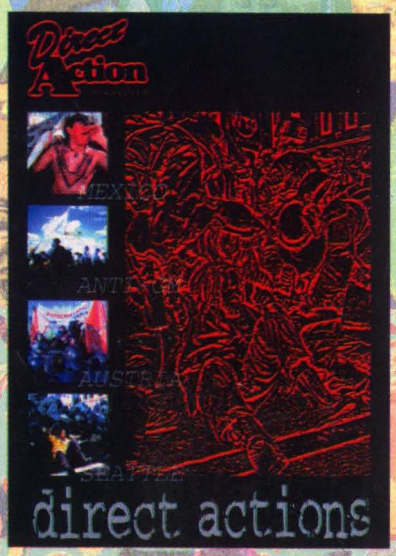
Pride
Pride (London) aims to re-establish the Pride March as a community event in 2001. Pride (London), BCM Box 6097, London WC1N 3XX. Tel. 07071 781904. info@PrideLondon.org http://www.PrideLondon/org

Loombreaker
Send a stamp for a copy- c/o Manchester EF!, Dept 29, 22a Beswick St, Manchester M4 7HS. loombreaker@nematode.freeserve.co.uk Also, join the Riotous Assembly for action planning - 1st Tuesday of the month, 7.30pm, Yard theatre (opp. Junction Pub), 41 Old Birley St, Hulme, Manchester.

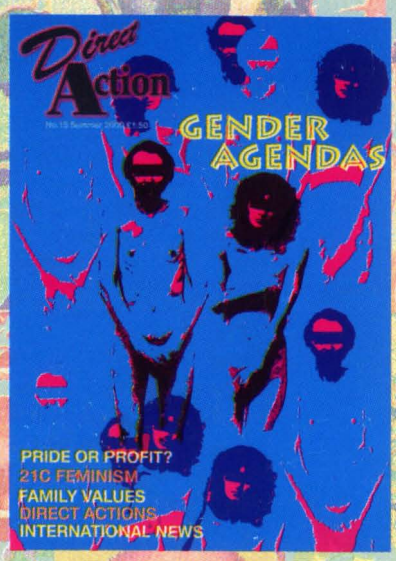
Kate Sharpley Library
KSL - the long running source and publisher of lesser known gems of history. For details of backlists, current pamphlets and projects, contact KSL, BM Hurricane, London WC1N 3XX. Send a stamp for a current newsletter.

National Civil Rights Movement
Support for asylum seekers. Pickets of ASDA by Manchester Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers, c/o Immigration Aid Unit, 400 Cheetham Hill Rd, Manchester M8 9LE. Email; Markrantz@aol.com Nationally, contact NCRM, 14 Featherstone Rd, Southall, Middx UB2 5AA. Tel. 020 8574 0818.

#14. Terrorism Bill, EMU and You, Huntington Death Sciences, GMOs, Seattle, DA and Violence, Chomsky.



#15. Gender Agendas, 21C Feminism, May Day, Clause 28, Pride or Profit, New Lads, HIV/AIDS, Family Values.



#16. Self Management, Anarchism vs. Marxism, Inhuman Resources, Profit out of Prison, Asylum Resistance.

#17. Education, Corporate Killing, Transport off the Rails, Prague, Blaired Vision, Support the CSI3.

EVERY ISSUE OF **DA** IS **PACKED** FULL OF STIMULATING ARTICLES, REVIEWS, NEWS CONTACTS AND IDEAS FOR **ACTION**.

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