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ClearFutures:

Apocalypse Soon

Rogues, States & Sons of Star Wars

beyond capitalism - A Gift Economy

personal futures - Beyond the Agony Columns

creating futures - The Spirit of Anarcho-Syndicalism

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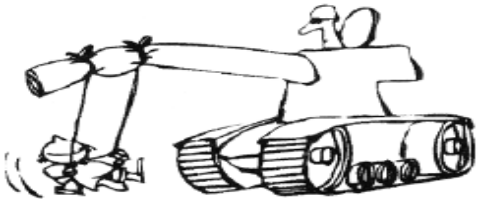
We live in times of uncertainty. Nothing is given anymore. Bullshit.



Clearfutures is not about 11th September, nor is it about prediction.

Nothing has ever been given or predictable, except the fact that to bribe people into supporting war, you have to say something like 'the gloves are off, forget yesterday, now is new and threatening, get ready to be violent and see violence.' Nothing fundamental has changed; the US has had plenty of home-soil killings before (state prisoner murder programmes, Oklahoma, Waco, Civil War, etc. spring to mind).

Long-term prediction by active participants is dangerous. Sooner or later, the involved predictor will become so wedded to their forecast that they will try to bring it about, then they can say something like; "see, I told you so". Consequently, the predictor tends to lose sight of democracy (accepting others' views as equal to their own), and instead develops ideas, theories and activities which will take him/her to the pre-determined goal of making predictions come true. Ideology thus opposes democracy. Only basic principles, which underlie how we wish to relate to each other, can be agreed in advance – in other words, a few things like direct democracy, solidarity and mutual respect.

So, for those of us who reject leaders in favour of democracy, and ideology in favour of principles, there is always a dilemma when talking about the medium-term and beyond. Clearly, prescriptive talk strays into dictating futures, and the path leads nowhere nice – like removing the rights of people in the future to decide their own.

Yet, planning is critical. The human need to plan and prepare for future security and sustainability is a basic one. It is a clear cop-out to simply say we'll sort it out when we get there, or rather, that people then will sort it out. So, we are left with one option. We have to have a stab at a few detailed sketches, where nothing is inked in – well, except those basic principles.

In short, Clearfutures is about two things. It is partly about exposing the near future for capitalism, the state and how their associated authoritarians are using every opportunity (sick or otherwise) to cynically spread and further their power. But it is also about peering into the medium future, armed only with the candlelight of basic principles and (hopefully) a twinkle of imagination. This is no dreamtime exercise - one day, everyone will be faced with sorting out our society amongst ourselves, and we could always do with some more preparatory homework. So knuckle down and strap in!

Exposing the near future under capitalism and the state is easy peasy. Capitalism will never get friendly with us, the working class. The state will never recede or relinquish its power. State-sponsored war brings cash profits (*What T.W.A.T. really means*, p.4). Globalisation is built on state power, not on eroding it; capitalism needs the state like a fish needs water. In other words, if you think Afghanistan is the end of it, think again - things are already shaping up for the worse (*Apocalypse soon*, p.31).

Exploring the medium future is no picnic. Basic principles might be simple, but imagined futures based on them may not be. We like complex societies; they are where humans evolved from, so they are what we are good at, and they are what most people will likely choose. Hence, to fill the yawning gap in our need to explore each other (left by capitalism dividing us into isolated competing individualists), we will inevitably have to relate to each other personally as well as politically (*Beyond the agony columns*, p.18).

We also need to look more widely at the way in which basic principles might relate to power, democracy and the way future democratic societies may choose to organise them/ourselves. This is not a dry, mechanistic job, any more than we would want a boring, steady-state future society to live in; it is about exercising our powers of making things up and kicking them around the coffee table – as it will alwaysl be (*Spirit of anarchosyndicalism*, p.22). Even coming up with a system for producing the things we need, in other words, some sort of economics, is less about sums and more about fun (*A gift economy*, p.6).

Clearfutures says the post-capitalist society might happen much sooner than you think. We live in times much like the last 200 years – when the only thing certain is that capitalism will end one day.

Only by continuous resistance and imagination will we bring this date forward, and help make sure what follows is something sane instead. For those after a date for their calendar, don't bother asking – that would be prescriptive, ideological, and plain silly. DA

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What T.W.A.T. really means

Anarchosyndicalists have always seen war as totally against the interests of the international working class. This opposition has often expressed itself through direct action, with the ultimate aim of a general strike against war. In April 1999, for instance, during NATO's war on Serbia, the USI, the Italian IWA* section, called a general strike. The strike spread across many industries and localities, and was so successful that workers came out in many towns where USI had no members. Such action is a reminder of the strikes and demonstrations during World War One organised by revolutionary syndicalists in the French CGT, many of whom paid with their lives.

Britain is once again in the grip of wartime patriotism, xenophobia and outright racism. In such an atmosphere, what contribution can anarchosyndicalism make to the anti-war effort? We are not in USI's position as a relatively small union confederation, albeit one with some influence among the wider Italian working class. And as for the French 'revolutionary syndicalist committees', they comprised almost half of France's only union confederation of the time. On the other hand, the best that some TUC leaders have to offer is complete silence – the rest are unquestioning supporters of Bush and Blair.

In the current climate, produced by a combination of the 'Thatcherite' policies pursued by every government since the late '70s and the complete cowardice and complicity of the trade union leadership, workplace organisation around even routine matters affecting wages and working conditions is never easy. Given this backdrop, you might wonder then how it could ever be possible to successfully agitate at workplace level for action against war. Well, there may be a way forward, even if it is not a straightforward one.

Anarchosyndicalism is about much more than workplace agitation. Anarchosyndicalist organisations and unions work both within the workplace and within communities. The 'community' side of struggle is mainly where we get to grips with agitating against war. In the absence of any immediate prospect of a general strike to stop war, only a massive upswell of public opinion against it will make the government take notice. With limited resources, we can only contribute a small part of what is needed. It takes such things as John Pilger writing regularly in *The Mirror* for the reality of the terror faced by defenceless people to be brought home to significant sections of the general public.

It also takes broad based coalitions, such as those that have sprung up around the country, to channel growing public disenchantment into ever larger public demonstrations of opposition to the war. There are many strange bedfellows built around lowest-common-denominator type slogans such as 'Stop the War'. They range from 'political Islamists' whose opposition is based on support for Al Qaida, through 'revolutionary defeatists', who see any Western military defeat as victory for the working class, to those in agreement with the US's broad aims but who disagree with bombing as a response. We just don't allow ourselves to be drawn into supporting any of these positions. There are also those more interested in manoevring, infighting and capturing control of such coalitions. All of these present problems, but not to the extent that we are unable to participate. Should the problems be too much in particular local circumstances, we can always adopt a half in, half out tactic of working outside the coalition when it suits us, but at the same time taking part in their demos and distributing our own propaganda with our own particular message.

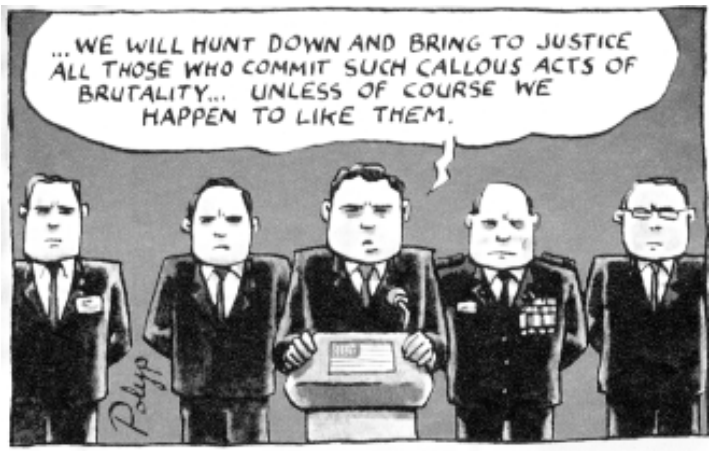
But what does that message contain? Well, the bottom line is that the working class gains nothing by supporting war. 'War is the health of the state' and 'war is good for business' have been popular slogans in their time and not without reason, for it is those fundamentally anti-working class institutions, the state and capitalism, which benefit most from war. A couple of illustrations of this came within days of September 11th. Firstly, there was immediate talk that our 'freedom' can only be safeguarded through more measures for state control, including the old chestnut of identity

* *IWA = International Workers' Association, the anarcho-syndicalist global association.*

Warmakers

"Why, of course the people don't want war. Why should someone want to risk his life in a war when the best he can get out of it is to come back in one piece? Naturally the common people don't want war: neither in Russia, nor in England, nor for that matter in Germany. That is understood. But, after all, it is the leaders of the country who determine the policy, and it is always a simple matter to drag the people along, whether it is a democracy, or a fascist dictatorship, or a parliament, or a communist dictatorship. Voice or no voice, the people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders. That is easy. All you have to do is tell them they are being attacked, and denounce the peacemakers for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger. It works the same in any country."

Hermann Goering (a Hitler Nazi).



cards. Secondly, during the same week, the largest ever arms deal in history was announced, the building of a new generation of US fighter planes.

The reality is that the West is on a permanent war footing, able to send massive resources halfway across the world almost at the drop of a hat. The arms industry, of course, benefits most directly from this state of affairs, but it is also a direct cause of it through its vital role in the foreign policies of Western states, policies that are responsible, directly or indirectly, for most of the war and terrorism that our hypocritical politicians claim to abhor.

This hypocrisy of the British and other Western capitalist political elites goes largely unchallenged by a tame media which allows the likes of Bush and Blair to define 'terrorism' and 'terrorists' in their own terms and have this presented as the truth with hardly a critical comment in sight. Those who planned and carried out the attacks on New York and Washington are undoubtedly terrorists in anyone's book, but an acceptable definition of 'terrorism' goes beyond what we're likely to read in or hear from the British or any other Western mainstream media organisation.

'Terrorism' is surely the use of force or the threat of force against civilians to achieve political objectives. This seems straightforward enough. However, Bush and Blair and their mouthpieces would have us believe that their own use of force against the Afghan population or the sanctions that have caused, according to some estimates, the deaths of half a million Iraqi children, are morally justified and cannot therefore be called terrorism. These people of high morals protest that there is no moral equivalence between, on one hand, flying aircrafts full of civilians into buildings full of civilians and, on the other hand, bombing the civilian population of a country whose government is said to harbour the alleged brains behind September 11th. Equivalent or not, civilians are being killed to achieve political objectives, be they bin Laden's or Blair's.

Hand in hand with the West's own terrorism goes the sponsorship of the terrorism of others, including organising, underwriting and provision of safe harbour to state and non-state terrorists alike. Instances of such activity on the part of the US and Britain are too numerous to provide a complete list. It includes sheltering and funding anti-Castro Cuban terrorists; it includes training and equipping outfits like the Nicaraguan Contras; it includes arming and other support for regimes like Turkey, Israel, Colombia and Indonesia, which systematically terrorise whole sections of their own population. Western and Soviet Cold War policies and their subsequent continuance by the West have in fact largely created the deadly spiral of war and terrorism that has characterised the last half century. And the selfsame Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden who are now the ultimate in terrorist bogey men are direct products of the West's anti-Soviet efforts.

The role of the US and its allies as major sponsors of terrorism may be downplayed by Western media machines, but it certainly hasn't escaped the notice of many people outside the West. There's also a parallel here with the Western inspired economic policies that are forced onto Third World countries by the IMF and World Bank, and which are directly responsible for the increasing worldwide poverty levels. While such policies are presented as aid packages in the Western media, the reality is completely different. Indeed, the link between war and economics runs deeper than mere parallels. War and the ability to wage it are about the protection of corporate access to resources. So where does the current war fit in? To claim that September 11th was somehow manufactured by US corporate or political interests would be more than a bit fantastical. But nevertheless, the US has seized the opportunity to build a permanent military presence in central Asia, a region that is becoming increasingly important in terms of its oil wealth. Already agreement had been reached with neighbouring Uzbekistan to station US troops there.

In the coming decades, the world is set to coalesce economically around three large blocs based on North America, Europe and Eastern Asia. These blocs will come increasingly into economic conflict, such as conflict over access to resources, like central Asian oil. Part of such conflict will continue to be foreign policies based on economic, political and military interference, as well as

cont'd on page 8...

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A gift economy:

Notes on alternatives to the market

Cashless living has its attractions. No overdrafts, no out-of-order autobanks... But won't we all just stop working and empty the shops?

There is plenty wrong with the capitalist economy. Top of the list is disgusting and inhuman inequality. Or is it bullying and slavery? Either way, capitalism is exploiter-led and state-guaranteed; it is wasteful and leads to continuous over-production. But it must do some things right – for an indication, we could look at the old Soviet Union, where certain things we take for granted under capitalism didn't happen; there being stuff on the shop shelves that we need, for example.

At some point, we have to make sure that the alternative economy we all need will work. But first, it might be useful to get the boring stuff out of the way – exploding a few myths.

Myth 1: We won't work unless we have to. Roughly 60% of work in Britain is already unpaid – it is done voluntarily, charitably, by parents and carers, neighbours and other 'giving' types. In other words, most of our society is already run as a gift economy. The only reason a chunk of it isn't, is so that a few people can make profit out of their capital and other people's wage slavery. And the only reason more of us aren't 'giving' types is because we are forced to work our balls off in order to make ends meet, in a society where we are instructed to be selfish, mean and deceitful – where we are rewarded for ripping each other off. Human nature is sharing. Co-operation is where human society came from. Our species succeeded because we clubbed together. It is a testimony to the strength of our gift instinct that our society is still fairly decent and co-operative – despite capitalism's efforts.

THE TRUTH IS THAT WE DON'T JUST WANT AN ECONOMY, WE WANT A JUST ECONOMY.

Myth 2: When everything is free at the point of use, we'll empty the shelves. Well, some education and health (again, despite capitalism's best efforts) is already free at the point of use, as are numerous other services, goods, etc., and people don't generally take/use what they don't need. Only when shortage occurs are people likely to act selfishly. Shortage won't happen (read on to find out why). Add to this the fact that once people see what others are getting and doing for it, they are much more co-operative and collective, and today's selfishness will subside anyway. One of the big problems with cash is that you can hide it, so no-one knows what others have got, and this creates a trust problem. Get rid of sharedealing, capital accumulation, unseen perks – in short, make the economy transparent – and everyone will know where they are.

Myth 3: Capitalism does what it says on the tin. Now, consumer is supposed to be 'king' (sic), and we as consumers are supposed to drive the economy by somehow 'demanding' the products we want – then we (as workers/producers) supply it (as an aside; a sub-myth is that the economy is made of consumers and producers – in fact, we are both and the same; in fact, the two groups in the economy are the mass of people, and the very few controllers/bosses who make all the money from us). Bosses plan production for profit and profit only, not to satisfy people's needs. They manufacture demand by marketing, etc. Production is also highly planned - they couldn't afford to set up a modern production line, take the goods to market, and then find no-one wanted them. So they plan production for demand they have lined up. The idea that the planned economy and the market economy are two extremes is silly – neither would work in reality.

Myth 4: Money makes happiness. Money makes misery because it concentrates resources and wealth in a few hands/accounts. If capitalism was really set up to meet needs/create happiness, then those who plan production would target those with the most basic unmet needs to produce for. Instead, the profit-led system ensures we only make goods for those with the cash to buy them – and who already have their basic needs met. Without getting into the fact that these rich people are guilt-ridden (or should be), it is obvious to my 5-year-old consultant that a system which is set up for profit, not needs, is not a just economy.

Enough on myths – the truth is that we don't just want an economy, we want a just economy. The capitalist economy has been built around the elite (bosses/politicians) ideas of greed and dog-eat-dog. Our future economy must be built around our ideas of how we want to live. So, let's start with principles, and then build our economy around them.

Principle 1 has to be federal autonomy. In other words, in a gift economy, local communities and federations of communities will have autonomy as to what forms of economic exchange they use, subject to other basic anarcho-syndicalist principles we are just coming to. There will be no state, and there is no blueprint gift economy, nor should there be.

Principle 2 follows on from the fact that we need to avoid the problems at the core of capitalism. So there will be no mechanism for profit, or any possibility of concentrating wealth or capital. In other words, no-one will own or employ others, all goods and services will be produced for needs, not pockets, and any big piles of money will become big piles of metals and paper, all of virtually no use.

Principle 3 does democracy. Again, full of myths and misuse, what democracy means is that all organisations and communities must be communally-run and directly democratically controlled. Direct democracy means we start with mass meetings. At

work, everyone in the workplace is invited and participates on an equal basis; in communities, at street, village, or neighbourhood level, sthe ame applies. When there is a need for workplaces to talk to each other, e.g. to plan production, resources, etc., or for communities to co-ordinate together, then each mass meeting can elect delegates – people who must be instantly recallable and operate to mandates from the mass meeting. In other words, they must act in the expressed interests of the mass meeting, and the mass meeting can replace them anytime they like.

Principle 4 puts property in its place. The ownership of property means the right to deprive others of it and to make a profit out of it (since even when you don't need it, you will continue to demand rent, interest, etc. from others who do). At risk of wringing the rhetoric, why would a gift economy want to do that? Of course, we will all have the right to our own living space, personal things, and daily possessions, etc. The communal house might work for some people, but most will probably want their own place. Fair enough.

Principle 5 is the other side of property – work. All work will be voluntary, and all labour free. Just as the gift economy cannot morally afford property-based exploitation, neither can it afford to exploit people (which is what employment means). What if people refuse to work? Then they have a grievance. It is all about motivation, you will only stop if you have a grievance. Provided it is sorted out in the workplace, people will work. Even 'problem work' – the things society needs but people don't want to do, is routinely done already unwaged as discussed above. If no-one has organised cleaning the sewers, the community will organise a rota or whatever. No rocket science needed.

Finally, principle 6 – planning. The myth that capitalism isn't planned is already in smithereens. However, there is also going to be a significant element of planning in the gift economy. We will all need to fill in a form at the shop from time to time (or maybe Tesco's already have the software we need to collect our stated preferences and email it to the producers). Knowing what people like will help workers plan to make things better and in the right quantity. They may also use resources, environmental and labour criteria when doing research and development into new production systems and new products, to improve efficiency as well as product durability and quality. This contrasts massively with central planning in the Soviet Union, where everything was planned from Central Committee in Moscow and everyone followed orders regardless (aside from demand assessment problems and bad management, the Soviet System collapsed because of crazy state priorities overriding basic needs; there was a nuclear arsenal but no food).

So, starting with principles, the basic form of our gift economy is already pretty clear. Much of the economy can best be local scale – local planning for local production and consumption. Regional or global-scale planning will be only for larger-unit, complex modes of production, for reasons of scale or resource efficiencies and locational factors. Between regions, integration might be on gift, barter or exchange basis.

There will still be producers and consumers, but we will be the same people, instead of being divided and ruled by bosses and politicians. Since production is driven by workers who also see themselves and their families as consumers, the strongest production driver will be for quality goods which work, produced in happy and rewarding working conditions. Thus, the gift economy will be dynamic, but driven in the right direction, rather than for profit.

Functionally, the gift economy will be as simple as possible. Why take lettuces half across the world and back, screwing the climate and hiking the price? Capitalism has the answer but no sane system does. With planning, insanity can be planned out – there will probably be fewer goods altogether. Less choice? No. Real choice, even for capitalists, relies on having 'perfect (complete) knowledge' of the products on offer, what they can do, how, for how long, to what quality, etc. Most current choice is between 'cheap and cheerless' and 'decent quality but you can't afford it' – we can forget making the former for a start. When it is between a hundred different computers – how many people know which is really best/most appropriate for us, anyway? Basically, only the producers – so they might as well concentrate on supplying these, not 'built to rip you off' crap.

Small scale, local where possible, sized for needs, not profit – all in all, the gift economy will be efficient as well as sane. It will be locally and direct-democratically run, ethically sound and it will vary widely between communities and regions, within a few basic principles. The secret is in the source – let's start with basic principles of solidarity, not the greed mania of the rich and powerful.

The last word is that there will never be a last word in the gift economy. It is not some far-off, static, steady state (boring) utopia. It will be constantly needing attention, new needs, new problems and opportunities; it'll never work perfectly. But let's face it, anything remotely along the gift economy lines has to be better than the daily bullying at work, the routine killings, wars and the spiralling global destruction being wrought by capitalism and the state.

Small scale, local where possible, sized for needs, not profit – all in all, the gift economy will be efficient as well as sane. The secret is in the source – let's start with basic principles of solidarity, not the greed mania of the rich and powerful

This article was written by a member of an economics group within SolFed. It is a personal view and does not necessarily represent the views of SolFed. However, if you want to raise questions or find out more about the work of this group or about Solfed, contact:
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on the edge

Tony's Greedy mates

With the government set to raise taxes to put money into the NHS, it is time to see where it is really likely to go.

A private healthcare company headed by one of Tony Blair's closest allies is already making millions of pounds from the NHS. Reed Health Group, chaired by the former Labour Party general-secretary Lord Sawyer, is set to steal £5 million profit this year from charging hospitals over £40 million to supply nurses, physiotherapists, radiographers and other medical staff.

According to a financial report prepared by the company's own stockbrokers, Reed Health aims to profit from the 'structural deficiencies with the NHS [and] the continuing shortage of nurses and specialist healthcare staff, and an ageing population'. When a hospital calls up Reed Health in desperate need of nurses, the company charges 25% more than the hospital would normally pay. Since being floated last July, its share price has soared 40% in a flagging stock market.

Turd award

Workers from the Bristol Against Casualisation Campaign (BACC) entered Manpower's plush city centre office to hand over the prestigious 'golden turd' award for crimes against the working class. Manpower made £1500 million in profits off the back of our labour last year. No bosses were available or willing to accept the special award from the workers, which proves that capitalists really can't handle any shit. Contact BACC at c/o Box 43, 82 Colston Street, Bristol, BS1 5BB. E-mail: bristolacc@hotmail.com. Meanwhile,the IWA is organising simultaneous demonstrations against temporary work agencies - see page 35 for details.

Bog off Scotts!

Last summer saw a series of actions against the peat works on Thorn and Hatfield Moors, just south of Doncaster in South Yorkshire.

The Moors, owned by English Nature, are two of the last peat bogs in the country. Peat bogs provide a diverse habitat for around 5000 species, and some of these are now becoming very rare; notably the Thorne Moor ground beetle, Mire Pill beetle, long-headed fly, Hairy Canary and the Scarce Vapourer.

Britain has already lost 96% of its peat bogs, and it is estimated that the rest may be irreparably damaged within the next 10 years. Thorne and Hatfield Moors may even run out in the next couple of years, despite the fact that they could soon get 'Special Area of Conservation' status. The problem is that the government and English Nature are stalling so much about giving the moors protected status that Scotts, the multi-national involved, are rushing to take as much peat out of the site as possible. Meanwhile, the local authority will not remove the mining consent, because they could be liable to a large compensation claim from Scotts.

The sites are now a dry and barren wasteland of drainage ditches. On the nearby area of still preserved peat bog, the real height of the water table is clearly visible, while dragonflies dart through cotton grasses, a graphic illustration of how beautiful the whole site could be. At present it is not too late to restore the sites to their former glory, but if the peat continues to be stripped away, then the damage will be irrepairable, since peat bogs take millions of years to form.

As the peat must be dry to be mined, it is a seasonal activity for the summer months. Hence, if work does get stopped, it makes a significant difference to the amount of peat they can harvest. From Easter until late September, the peat is stripped from the land, piled up by the sites private railway and then gradually sent for processing throughout the year. It is then sterilised, mixed with fertiliser and bagged.

There have been between 5 and 10 days of actions on the two sites, and they have all managed to stop all work on the site for the rest of the day. It has been a very successful summer for this campaign and not one person has been arrested in relation to the actions. Various people from a mixture of local groups, 'Friends of the Earth' and 'Earth First!' activists, have taken part.

The actions have involved filling in drainage ditches, blocking the path of the mining machinery and generally getting in the way. Mysteriously on at least one occasion, the trains on the site railway seemed to de-rail themselves and a few of the diggers stopped working.

The plan is for the actions to resume next year. For those of you unable to attend, please lobby your local garden centres and supermarkets to stop selling peat based composts. Also lobby any large-scale municipal and commercial users of compost to go peat free and end the market for this destructive product.

More info on the campaign from Leeds EF! 0113 262 3536, leedsef@ukf.net or Friends of the Earth, www.friendsoftheearth.org.uk. Action pack; send a large 66p SAE to Bog Off Scotts, c/o Cornerstone Resource Centre, 16 Sholebroke Avenue, LEEDS LS7 3HB.

cont'd from page 5...

support for corrupt and repressive regimes. As long as this pattern continues, and there is no reason to suppose that it won't, not while Western capitalist ideology is in the ascendency, then there will always be enough people with enough grievances to sustain anti-Western terrorist campaigns.

Despite talk of 'The War Against Terrorism' lasting two years or more, and despite the fact that most of the shooting in Afghanistan, at least this time round, may already be over, war and the threat of it, terrorism and retaliation against it, will be permanent consequences of Western capitalism's dealings with the rest of the world. In the same way as capitalism cannot tackle the real roots of social ills like crime and drugs – the class system and its massive inequalities that are part of capitalism itself – it also cannot tackle the real reasons for terrorism – exactly the same inequalities maintained by the world debt 'crisis' and other free market policies, backed up by arrogant and heavy handed foreign policies and ultimately the threat of war.

To boil this down into a clear-cut message for the anti-war movement requires three main points. Firstly, capitalism and war are inseparable. Secondly, capitalism and therefore war is fundamentally anti-working class. Thirdly, if we organise against capitalism on a permanent basis, we are by definition organising against war. In other words, the message is the same in times of war as at all other times, only the emphasis is different. The stronger our particular brand of anti-capitalism becomes, both in working class communities and in workplaces, the wider the anarchosyndicalist message spreads, and hence the more possible it is to turn opposition to war into the kind of direct action conducted by USI in Italy.

Private-private partnerships

The Government's new "Partnership for Social Care" is nothing less than a concrete plan for full privatisation of Social Care services for the elderly. Having underfunded local authorities to the tune of £700 (according to the King's Fund), the Labour government now finds itself with a major, national-scale 'bed-blocking' crisis.

This latest partnership 'agreement' document is, unfortunately, not simply empty rhetoric, like much of what passes as Labour 'policy'. It has substance. It says nothing about the care that local authorities are providing; the substance is all focused on transferring public money and assets to private companies. If it wasn't already, the end-game is now abundantly clear; the government is intent on ending local government residential and home care services. The goal is full privatisation.

RAGEnational.com, Residents' Action Group for the Elderly, offers support, guidance and advice to community and trade union campaigns fighting to stop the privatisation of public residential care facilities across the UK. With the help of UNISON branches nationwide, they have just completed a national survey of the current state of local authorities' plans for residential care. The results clearly demonstrate how rapidly the Government's privatisation agenda is moving forward. RAGE campaigners condemn the Government's new proposals for the 'modernisation' of care services for the elderly as "nothing more than the asset stripping of local government public services" and "putting a sticking plaster across what is a gaping wound."

This is really bad news for all our communities, now and in the future. Recently, Blair was praising public sector workers in the United States. Now he's planning to demolish public elderly care and the jobs of the corresponding workers here. The announcement was made in October, and we all know everything the government announced in that month was deliberately putg out at a time when everybody was looking the other way. Evidently, hypocrisy is a constitutional principle of Government.

For further information, contact: Mark Oley, Citizens advocate (human and civil rights), RAGEnational. Email: mark.oley@aut.org.uk, Phone: 07752 300436
Also see www.RAGEnational.com or www.labournet.net, or type 'RAGE' in search engine.

Total Bed loss / Total Value loss – by category, £000's	
Bed disinvestments – Closure	*1,530*
Total disinvestments value – Closure	*£12,750*
Bed Disinvestment – PFI / Transfer	*4,440*
Total Disinvestment Value – PFI / Transfer	*£37,000*
Bed Disinvestment – Best Value Reviews	*1,200*
Total Disinvestment Value – Best Value Reviews	*£10,000*
Bed Disinvestment – Care Standards implementation	*1410*
Total Disinvestment Value – CSA implementation	*£11,750*
Total Disinvestment beds by category	**8,580**
Total Disinvestment value by category	**£71,500**
Macro totals	
Macro total number of public home units affected	*396*
Macro total number of beds affected	*11,880*
Macro total Disinvestment value (£000)	*£99,000*

on the edge

Breast policy

Amongst its many crimes Burma's military dictatorship is responsible for: refusing to transfer power to an elected government; millions of men, women and children in forced labour; one and a half million internally displaced people; the detention of 1500 political prisoners - many routinely tortured; thousands of refugees who have fled the country; the production of most of the world's illegal opium and heroin; escalating HIV transmission rates, and more child soldiers than any other country in the world. The bra, nickers and undies company Triumph International is providing support to the military dictatorship in Burma and operates a military-owned factory there, where it manufactures its underwear for sale in the West.

Consumer power can and does make a difference. British Home Stores, Burton and River Island have all pulled out of Burma in direct response to boycotts, and even Next, Nike and H&M all now have policies not to source clothing from the country. You can email protest from www.burmacampaign.org.uk/action.html

Killing cover-up

The government's policy of slaughtering cattle and sheep has been taken to its logical conclusion; the logic of death. If they have the disease now, kill them. If they haven't had the disease, kill them in case. After all, they can't be exported, so they aren't 'worth' much anyway.

Now it is (almost) over, the obvious thing to do to avoid panic next time is to inquire into what happened, how it was handled, and to seriously examine the system of farming which produced it. But Labour doesn't run on logic; it prefers hush, spin and pretend.

on the edge

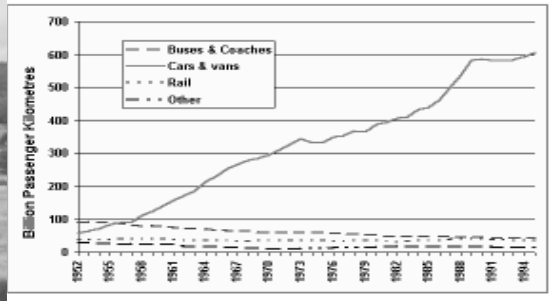
Legal killing

Bosses, relax! Killing your workers won't get you locked up, even if you do it on their first day, like Euromin bosses did to Simon Jones. Sent to work by casual labour company Personell Selection after just a few minutes "training", Simon was decapitated as he was unloading cargo inside a ship, due directly to cost cutting by the boss (see previous DAs).

Casualisation caused his death, and it was implemented by Richard James Martell, general manager of Euromin. The Health and Safety Executive and the Crown Prosecution Service had to be slowly backed into taking the case on, by a lengthy, relentless direct action campaign. Eventually, two High Court judges told them their refusal to prosecute was "baffling" and "beggared belief" – and they performed a historic U-turn and prosecuted Euromin.

Simon was one person among hundreds. On the docks alone, within four years of the end of the National Dock Scheme in 1989, casualised labour brought the accident rate on the docks up by a third. Profits for the dock bosses leapt, helped by a 41% saving in the wages bill, five thousand redundancies and a cheaper labour force with few rights.

As the Simon Jones campaign said, "We are painfully aware that, in 21st century Britain, the fight for the most basic of workers' rights - the right not to be killed or injured at work - is still being fought". The fact that the verdict was 'not guilty' of manslaughter, and Martell only got a £50,000 fine with £20,000 costs for breaking health and safety rules, does not prove the HSE and CPS were right to be reluctant to prosecute. It proves that, in the final analysis, and even in the face of common sense, the legal system and state bodies will always rally round to ensure their capitalist chums get away with murder.



Silent Road-building

The government's policy of disengaging the public

After the past successes of the anti-road movement and the support it received from the general public, the Labour government have been keen to show off their environmental credentials and avoid confrontation. The spin might be greener, but the policies are not.

The Government has outlined their commitment to promote alternative modes of transport and take environmental issues into account in proposed road building schemes. In reality, this commitment is overshadowed by their unwillingness to invest in major public transport improvements or engage with the public about the unsustainable nature of car use. Meanwhile, they are quietly continuing the trend of tarmacking our countryside.

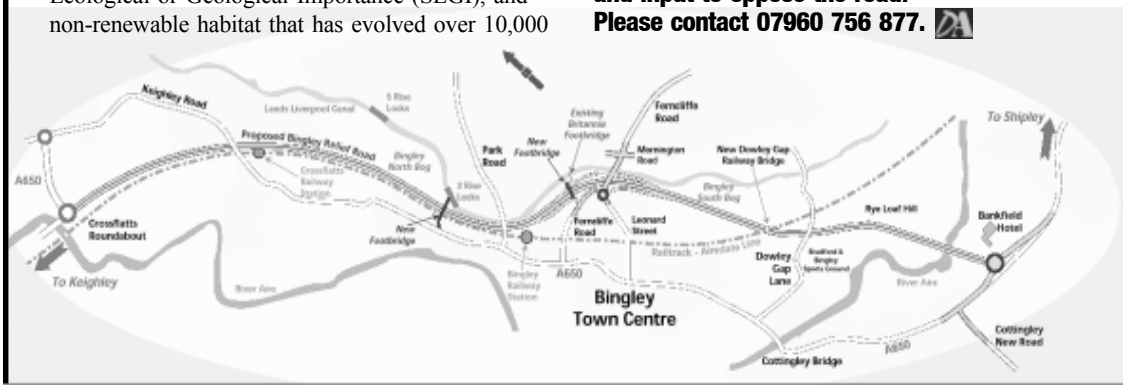
One such development is the construction of the Bingley 'Relief' Road in West Yorkshire. The road has been sold to locals as easing congestion in the area. What they haven't been told is that it will form part of a major trans-Pennine route between Yorkshire and Lancashire, bringing with it increasing traffic and pollution levels. The level of misinformation is characterised by the fact that up until a few years ago, the government were calling it a 'bypass', despite the fact its route passes within 50m of the centre of Bingley. Alternative solutions proposed by local opposition groups have of course been ignored.

Their concern with the environment is such that no Environmental Impact Assessment (required by EC and UK law) has ever been done for the road. The route will destroy an area of great natural beauty and a 'protected' conservation area, passing straight through Bingley South Bog, a Site of Ecological or Geological Importance (SEGI), and non-renewable habitat that has evolved over 10,000 years. The bog is the national northern or southern limit of six species that are currently hybridising. 55 specialist wetland species, a rare combination of 9 sedges, 12-15 species of butterflies and over 40 invertebrates, which are currently resident in the bog, will also be endangered. It then moves through Bingley's North Bog, a remnant of original Airedale marshland that is recognised as an important area by English Nature and Bradford's Ecological Advisory Service. The route will also cause the re-routing of the historic Leeds - Liverpool canal and affect Bingley Five and Three Rise Locks, both listed buildings and local tourist attractions.

By focusing on the road as a local issue, the government have largely managed to isolate its construction from public debate. In this way, they very dubiously portray the road as an answer to all Bingley's local problems (i.e. transport, economic). It is however very unlikely that the residents of Bingley will be happy five years down the line, when the reality of two congested roads running through the centre of town hits them.

The de-linking of the road from national issues is born of the fear that public debate will highlight the contradictions of the government's transport policies. Studies have shown that, far from easing congestion, building roads merely increases car traffic leading to the ensuing detrimental environmental effects. How, then, can roadbuilding be part of a sustainable transport plan? How much more of our countryside are they going to destroy before we start challenging the true problem – car culture?

The Bingley Relief Road is under construction NOW. We desperately need your help, ideas and input to oppose the road.
Please contact 07960 756 877.



The immoral moralists: Poorstepping the Jehovah's Witnesses

Diane Pretty was stopped by law from electing for assisted suicide. Despite the fact that her debilitating and irreversible illness means that she will be unable to take her own life by the time she no longer wants to live, she has been prevented by the courts from seeking her husband's help in this matter legally.

In contrast, an item appeared in the local paper recently about a young man of 22 who had died following his refusal to accept a blood transfusion. He was a Jehovah's Witness. I don't know if this tragic death might have been avoided if he had consented to the transfusion, but refusing it was apparently a certain suicide sentence.

Appalled at this waste of a young life, I pondered on a belief system which leads to such terrible consequences. No doubt everyone has had a visit from mild-mannered Jehova's Witnesses, selling the Watchtower to promote their beliefs. The people and the consequences seem to jar a bit.

It was time to turn the tables and pay *them* a visit - to meet the lions in their den. The initial response was bemusement as to why I had turned up on their doorstep (sort of; "we sell things, we don't buy"...). Polite and pleasant, they gave their time to an unbeliever, but were not able to turn to the Old Testament page dealing with blood transfusions. Eventually, I had to make do with a verse from the Acts of the Apostles which, I was assured by the now assembled Witnesses, said the same thing.

Despite being unable to locate the key quote, they remained confident of their position, although unable to conduct an argument in a logical manner. Their alternative to logic is to quote scriptures.

When I suggested they were using an interpretation of Jewish Mosaic Law referring to diet, in order to prohibit a modern surgical procedure, any mutual understanding seemed lost. They did not, apparently, keep to the Mosaic dietary code, so they happily ignored the Old Testament's condemnation of the consumption of bacon sandwiches. They seemed unable to grasp why I found their 'interpretation' and blatant selection of which rules to follow rather strange.

Despite eventually producing a pamphlet "which would explain everything" as regards transfusion, they remained unable to establish any logical argument. Then they asked me to leave, as they had to go to a meeting of "elders".

While the arguments of the Jehovah's Witnesses are bible-based, and devoid of logic, they do have a very clear, worked-out position. Based on bollocks it may be, but it seems to provide them with a confidence which is almost entirely lacking on the political left. As a long-time anarcho-syndicalist, I would struggle to match their simple dedication to their 'truth'. Democracy, especially the only real democracy - which is that without leaders/gurus, leadership or pre-ordained 'truths' - is nebulous, tenuous and has the tendency to reduce clarity. Unfortunately, this can, but needn't and shouldn't undermine our confidence in our ideas and morals.

Morality is social in origin and application. Fundamentally, our morals should promote the well-being of the human race and our planet as a whole. Rights should be of equal worth, whether of Afghanis or Americans. Anarcho-syndicalism involves ethics as well as politics, society, economics and culture.

The cheerful, clear-headed Witnesses may be confident, but they are immoral moralists. I was told I could come back some time, which was fair enough - I would rather argue with them on their doorstep than mine.

on the edge

Allied thought policing

In the US, 15-year-old Katie Sierra was suspended from her West Virginia High School for passing out fliers opposing US military action in Afghanistan. The school principal also ordered her to stop wearing a red T-shirt on which she had scribbled messages criticising Republicans and President Bush's declared war on terrorism. Her parents filed suit, pointing out that other students were allowed to wear the American flag as a fashion accessory.

But a state judge sided with the school, saying that while Katie is free to believe what she wants, "in a school educational setting, those rights are not absolute." "I'm walking down the street, and I'm seeing all these cars with flags, and Katie can't even express her opinion," her lawyer fumed. "It scares me for America."

Oh well, it could only happen in the US. Here in Britain, the style was different. The Labour Government instructed teachers to remain 'impartial' over the war and not to condemn it. Guidance cautioned that they must only give pupils accurate information, with appropriate discussion. In other words, no badges or stickers or leaflets against the war.

"Schools should ensure that strongly partisan political stances are avoided". In other words, only one true moderate political position exists and this was to be upheld to the letter – i.e. Labour's bloodthirsty cheering on, as US planes carpet-bomb starving people. Apparently only one line is suitable to trot out to pupils – that we have to support smashing every last piece of broken concrete into dust. Fortunately, many teachers stopped listening to such a crazed government's latest missives a while ago.

on the edge

Blunkett Ban

The Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Bill, currently being rushed through onto the statute books (despite trips in the Lords), is a classic piece of knee-jerk catch-all police statism by New Labour. It is only a bit over a year since the last Terrorism Act came into force, a shameless piece of anti-civil liberties law in itself - and already being used against peaceful protestors.

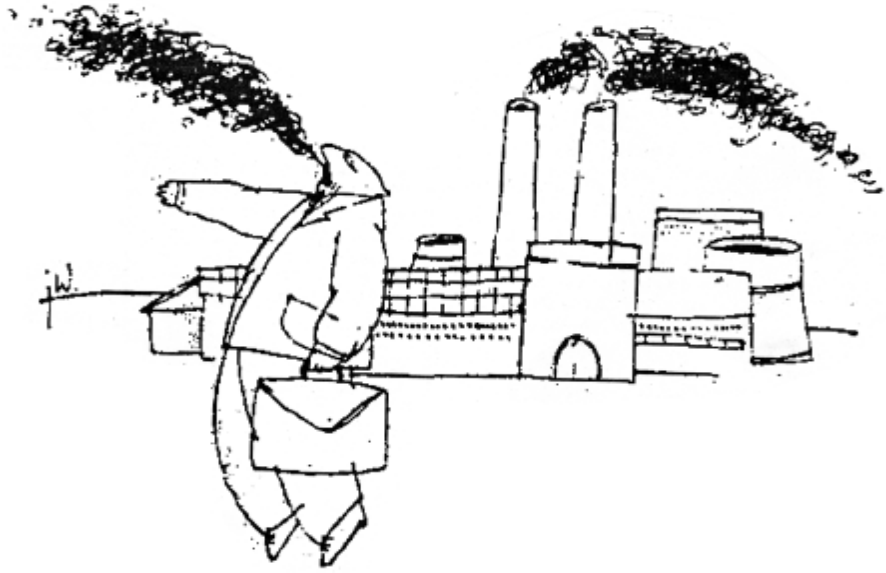
The new legislation puts the government on a head-on collision course with Article 5 of the European Convention on Human Rights, since it will permit detention without trial. Basically, its centrepiece is intended to allow the indefinite detention of 'suspects' (anyone the security services do not like). Once in detention (which could be forever), appeals will be allowed, but only to an internal tribunal, and without access to the security information that led to their arrest in the first place. Even better, the suspected terrorist could remain in prison indefinitely, subject only to six monthly reviews. To the horror of health and legal experts, even long-established doctor-patient confidentiality is to be swept aside as police forces across the world will get unrestricted access to British medical records and bank details.

Blunkett may dismiss concerns over civil rights as the worries of 'airy-fairy liberals', but his 'Clause 17' makes it legal for police across the world to receive documents from public authorities, whether they are relevant to a criminal investigation or not. The Bill lists documents covered by 53 different laws, the privacy of which was previously guaranteed. Under the Bill, police will be able to access them in investigating any crime anywhere in the world. Previous British government forays into detention without trial include internment, re-introduced in Northern Ireland in 1971 to help crush the IRA (didn't work and led to widespread injustice), and during the Gulf War to lock up anyone who may be linked to Iraq/people Britain didn't like any more (you guessed - didn't work and led to widespread injustice).

More stuff at www.statewatch.org

BPLA strike

Members of the Belgian Pumpkin Liberation Army stole 53 Halloween pumpkins. The oversize veg. were taken from gardens in Leuven and given to Food not Bombs to make free soup for a street kitchen. The seasonal terrorists responsible said they want to set up a global network of groups "fighting against the improper use of pumpkins."



Caustic Squabbles

Ineos Chlor, the Belgian chemical producer which bought the former ICI plant at Runcorn, Cheshire have announced their intention to begin legal proceedings against ICI.

Within months of the purchase, the Environment Agency issued a warning against Ineos Chlor for failing to carry out safety work. Further bad news arrived with the announcement that almost 500 redundancies would be made despite assurances to the workforce that their jobs would be safe.

Ineos allege they were misled about the condition of the plant, which produces 80% of chlorine and caustic soda used in the British chemical industry. They claim there has been a thirty year lack of investment on the part of ICI, and that sections of the plant are using out-of-date technology. Of particular concern are the mercury rooms in which the chlorine is manufactured. Some buildings have had no refurbishment since the mid-1970s.

Ineos' chairman, Jim Radcliffe, has asked trade and industry secretary Patricia Hewitt for government funding as an aid package to help secure the 2,000 jobs which would disappear should the plant close down. Experts believe a further 100,000-130,000 jobs could go nationally if the Runcorn plant shuts.

Ineos are also requesting cancellation of a £100 million loan which ICI made to them in order for them to purchase the plant from ICI in the first place. In a further twist to this farce, it has become apparent that ICI have retained a 15% interest in their former plant. Quite what the Ineos Chlor legal representatives will make of this is anyone's guess, but ICI have stated their intention to support any application Ineos Chlor make to get their hands on taxpayers' funds. No wonder.

To put the plant in working order, Ineos Chlor reckon they need £635m. Officials of the GMB union are waiting to see if the Labour government will be as open-handed with Cheshire chemical workers as they were with Cheshire landowners at the height of the Foot and Mouth crisis.

Labour-controlled Halton Borough Council have remained tight-lipped through months of news stories about spreading pollution. No doubt they are nervous about upsetting one of the borough's biggest employers. They have, however, applied for National Lottery funds to clean up a golf course in Widnes. Nothing like getting your priorities right.

Four days after news of the impending legal battle, a cloud of chlorine gas escaped from the plant and blew across the town. Ineos attempted to play the incident down, but for over two hours, major roads and the Runcorn-Widnes bridge were subject to massive traffic jams. Local radio advised residents to keep windows closed until the 'all-clear' was sounded. No loud speaker vans were despatched to warn outdoor workers and shoppers of the danger, and the Health and Safety Executive have announced their intention to hold an enquiry into the incident.

Should the government cough up the funds to bring the plant up to scratch, it would undoubtedly save many jobs. It would also be paying the huge dividends ICI dished out to their shareholders for thirty years, not to mention the massive salaries of their directors. No doubt if the real Tories were still in power, awkward questions might have been asked in "the House" by one of the areas two Labour MPs. Not much danger of that these days though.

VERTWASH

France

In October, activists from France, Belgium, the Netherlands, England, Germany, Denmark, Nigeria and Spain gathered in Paris outside the headquarters of the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) to protest against the first meeting of the Business Action for Sustainable Development (BASD) group. The BASD, a joint initiative by the ICC and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) represents the main business strategy for next year's United Nations World Summit on Sustainable Development, also known as Rio+10.

Business will use the World Summit to portray themselves as "key actors in solving environmental and social problems. Such lies as "business is part of the solution and not the problem", and numerous buy-off projects and spin strategies are designed to demonstrate new-found 'responsibility' and 'concern' for our planet and people. Yet, behind the PR campaign, profits remain their core business, and profits only come from selling more, using more resources and intensifying wage slavery.

The Amsterdam and Ghent, 'Rhythms of Resistance' samba band met arriving Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) of several large transnational corporations, while banners sported alternative slogans like "Business Action for Sustainable Domination" and "Business is the Problem and not the Solution". A 'greenwashing' event then ensued, as activists washed a number of corporate logos green and hung them up on a washing line, including Monsanto, Shell and Nestle, all members of the ICC and the WBCSD.

Colombia

Carlos Geovanny Blanco Leguizamo, a student from the National University at Bogotá, Colombia, was shot dead when police forces invaded the university campus. Students protesting against the war in Afghanistan were subjected to an unprovoked attack by police forces, and the murder took place almost immediately the police entered the grounds.

Carlos was part of a growing network of independent activists in Colombia opposing economic globalisation and the war in Afghanistan. Police deny they were the authors of the shootings, but numerous witnesses indicated that the shot clearly came from the police lines. The corporate media in Colombia have operated a blackout and the case has gone largely unreported.

ActionIdea: Send letters and messages of protest to your nearest Colombian embassy or consulate.

This international news could not have been brought to you without the following excellent WebSources:
A-Infos News Service; www.ainfos.ca/
DAMN (Direct Action Media Network); http://damn.tao.ca/
IWA (International Workers' Association); www.iwa-ait.org
SchNEWS; www.schnews.org.uk
Labournet; www.labournet.org/
ASeed; http://antenna.nl/aseed/ &: www.aseed.net
Earth First – Action Update; http://host.envirolink.org/ef/
Corporate Watch; www.corpwatch.org
Thr@ll; thrallnet@yahoo.com
Corporate Watch UK; www.corporatewatch.org.uk
Anarchyaction; www.anarchyaction.co.uk
WSA Info Service; wsany@hotmail.com
Hazards magazine; www.hazards.org/disasters
For updates & future events, visit antenna.nl/aseed/, www.anarchyaction.co.uk, www.schnews.com/guide.htm

Indonesia

A thousand workers from fifteen branches of the Matahari Putra Prima department store went on strike in November. The workers get a monthly wage of between $40 and $50, and are seeking the obligatory $2 per day food and transport allowance, which the company has not being paying.

On November 8th, the workers assembled in the company compound at 7am. By 2pm the bosses had still refused to meet with the workers, and the police issued an ultimatum for them to disperse by 3pm. At 3.10pm, workers heard the police commander issue orders to disperse the workers and beat them.

Scores of police then attacked, injuring 31 workers, mainly with wounds to the head and severe bruising from being kicked while on the ground. Eight union leaders were arrested, including FNPBI Chairperson, Dita Sari.

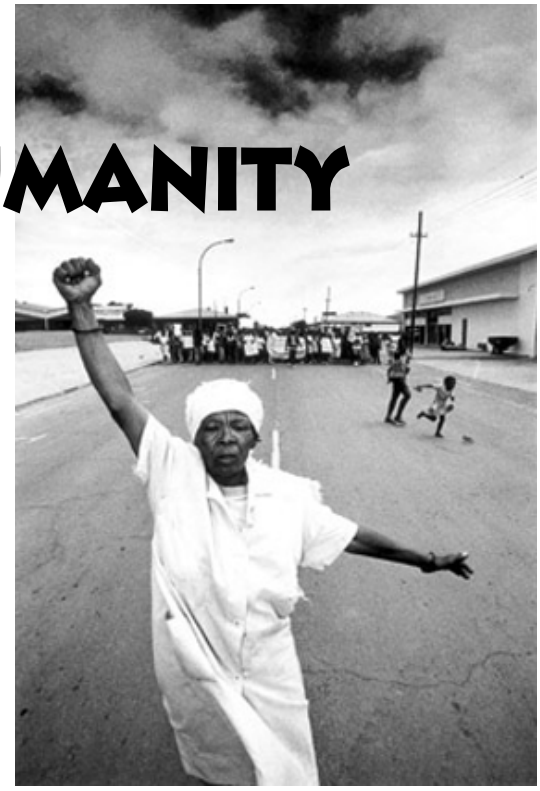
ActionIdea: Protest faxes can be sent to: National Police Headquarters: 62-21-7261771
Jakarta Metropolitan Police Headquarters: 62-21-5225646
or to your local Indonesian Embassy or Consulate.

Sweden

Brand, the 103-year-old Swedish anarchist magazine, went on trial in early December on charges of incitement to riot. One identified member of Brand's editorial collective will be standing trial as the "responsible publisher". The Swedish Secret Police (SÄPO) is behind the action, which has attracted widespread Swedish mainstream media coverage in the "lynch all things anarchist" climate they have tried to establish since the EU meeting in Gothenburg last summer. The charge refers to a flippant, ironic article in the International Women's Day, 8th of March 2000 issue, entitled "The A-Z of ensuring your riot is a success". The entire issue is a parody of mainstream women's magazines and this article is a parody of their "How to make your party a success" columns.

ActionIdea: This is a blatantly political trial. Please picket or demonstrate outside Swedish embassies and consulates, info.: www.utrikes.regeringen.se/inenglish/missions/index.htm
Info. on the case: www.free.de/asti/anarchistnews/brand.htm
anon.free.anonymizer.com
www.ainfos.ca/00/sep/ainfos00051.html
Brand's editorial collective can be reached at: brand@motkraft.net; www.motkraft.net/brand

Fighting Capitalist Crimes against Humanity



South Africa

Over two thousand sufferers of asbestos-related disease, along with relatives of those who have already died, are demanding justice from Cape plc.

As well as fighting the case through the English courts, the asbestos victims have been backed by a number of campaigning organisations, including the 20-million-strong International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Unions (ICEM), its South African affiliate, the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), and ICEM-affiliated British unions.

Cape mined asbestos in South Africa for almost a century. Children were employed, unprotected, in the most hazardous tasks of sorting asbestos with their bare hands and trampling it with their bare feet. Due to the atrocious conditions at the mines and mills, thousands of South Africans developed the fatal asbestos cancer, mesothelioma, and the debilitating disease of asbestosis.

Cape closed its British asbestos factory in 1968, a 'mere' 42 years after the first confirmed death due to industrial asbestos exposure. However, it kept its South African operation running for another decade after that, and lobbied the apartheid regime to suppress information about the health risks.

While Cape has agreed compensation for British asbestos workers, it has fought against making similar provisions for the South African victims.

"Are you one of the 1 in 7 destined to suffer or die from this epidemic of capitalist killing?
Three thousand people murdered in a year across the UK. A quarter of a million will die before 2020 across Europe.
Meanwhile, millions of people are being killed across the world".

For more info on Asbestos in the UK, contact Catalyst, PO Box 29 SW PDO, Manchester M15 5HW. Tel. 07984 675 281 solfed@solfed.org.uk

Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka has dropped plans to introduce the world's strictest anti-GM regulations, which would have required importers to certify their food's GM-free status. The US had threatened effective legal action against Sri Lanka through the World Trade Organisation, claiming the ban would discriminate against US exports. Evidently, US and biotech corporations are worried about the example a GM-free Sri Lanka would set to other countries.

Australia

In November, Federal Australian government elections predictably returned Kerry Packer. In Brisbane, F.U.C.K.E.D. (Freedom Urban Collective Knowledge Expansion Division) ran a successful 'Don't Vote' campaign with the slogan, "A Change of Rulers is the Joy of Fools". It focused on the fact that Parliament is inherently conservative, elitist and exclusionary; that any party in control will likewise become conservative and work for the elite business class before ordinary citizens; that the only way we will ever have true democracy 365 days a year, is by abolishing Parliament and creating a non-hierarchical federation of workers and communities that operate through direct democracy and direct participation.

Canada

In mid-November, the G-20 international financial meeting took place in Ottawa. About 300 people turned out to make a point against globalisation and corporate dominance. They sported mild-mannered banners with polite claims such as "Smash the State".

Predictably, riot police arrived, made much noise by banging on their shields, and attacked and arrested people. In the violence, windows were smashed at a downtown McDonald's, and a slogan appeared on the nearby Bank of Canada building reading; "It has to start somewhere; it has to start sometime; what better place than here, what better time than NOW?"

India

Following the exposure of Unilever's mercury thermometer factory in Kodaikanal, for illegally dumping toxic mercury wastes adjacent to a school, workers went on the offensive against the bosses who had kept them in the dark. Both workers and ex-workers demanded information and explanations about both the toxic nature of mercury, and why bosses stood by for many years, as it was handled casually in the workplace. Testimonies from workers indicate an appalling scenario of workplace exposure to mercury and mercury vapour, compounded by the lack of appropriate protective gear for the workers.

Unilever's workers have demanded to see their health records in preparation for an independent assessment of health effects from their exposure to mercury. They have also demanded meaningful financial compensation for closure of the factory and a long-term plan for health monitoring and remediation.

Unilever's response has been to ignore both demands. Instead, it has stepped up the harassment of the workers by ordering their relocation to a Unilever factory in Kandla, Gujarat, more than 1,000 miles away. Those who fail to relocate within the stipulated time are threatened with loss of pay. Workers responded by occupying the factory premises for three days.

For more info; www.pucl.org

Korea

This year, 218 union activists have been imprisoned, bringing the total under the government led by Nobel Laureate President Kim Dae Jung to 663. Hence, taking this as a key worker's oppression indicator (sic), he has surpassed the target of 632 set by his predecessor in the five years prior to the current administration.

Arrest and imprisonment, followed usually by release, has become a routine Korean industrial relations weapon – a sort of "revolving door" bullying and punishment mechanism. Anyone who faces up to the current waves of stern 'structural adjustment' measures is imprisoned, regardless of the legality or reason for the industrial dispute.

Thus, state violence against all who question its policies has become endemic and routine, and all the more callous for it.

http://kctu.org/news/prison-011015hot.htm

ActionIdea: Details for sending protest letters can be found at: http://kctu.org

Belgium

The massive explosion at the AZF chemical plant in Toulouse, France, in September caused one of the worst disasters ever in the European chemical industry. On 1st October, a fire broke out at BP's Chembel chemical plant in Feluy, Belgium. The fire was eventually brought under control, but several people were injured. With the Toulouse disaster still fresh in their minds, a 12-person shift of chemical process operators at Chembel asked for additional safety measures. In particular, they called for a check on the installations, some changes to operating procedures and an urgent enquiry by the plant's Health and Safety committee. BP-Chembel's response was to reject the workers' requests and suspend all of them for insubordination and refusal to work! Three days later, all twelve were dismissed for gross misconduct, and dismissed without notice. The sacked workers include a union representative on the plant's Health and Safety committee and the secretary of the works council. Despite a strike by workers throughout the plant and union attempts at negotiation, as DA goes to press, BP is still refusing to take the fired workers back and court action is pending.

ActionIdea: Tell BP why you are boycotting them until they reinstate the workers.

South Africa

Workers and communities are paying a high price for privatisation in South Africa, not least those who have been caught up in the sell-off of water industry assets.

The former Fort Beaufort municipality, now Nkonkobe, sold its water industry to Water and Sanitation Services South Africa (WSSSA, the local subsidiary of French multinational giant Suez-Lyonnaise) seven years ago. The deal was secretive, and also saw the privatisation of water and wastewater treatment plants in several small municipalities in KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape and Western Cape.

The privatisation contracts were secured on the basis that they would deliver improved service, lower costs and better benefits for workers. Seven years of cuts and empty promises by bosses followed, culminating in a strike in October. Meanwhile, communities are up in arms about leaking pipes, incorrect billing and health concerns. The latter have been highlighted by the discoveries of dead dogs in reservoirs, and human foetuses in water purification areas.

Spain

Solidari@s con Itoitz, the direct action group, have been continuing their actions against the planned Itoitz dam (see DA17).

They decided to attend the ceremonial laying of the first stone of the Canal of Navarra in front of the world's press pack by the Spanish Environment Minister, Jaume Matas. The Canal of Navarra is being built to deliver water from the Itoitz dam southwards, and its construction follows the Navarra government's declaration that all obstacles to construction have now been overcome, so the filling of the dam can go ahead.

Three members of Solidari@s con Itoitz managed to get through heavy security, including Guardia Civil and Navarran regional police. The three naked Solidari@s hung banners and, as the minister began his speech in an improvised marquee, they started shouting slogans about the project's environmental impact, risks and cost. The three were arrested and handed over to the Guardia Civil. They later received "disorder" charges and were released.

Engineering experts, together with the Coordinadora de Itoitz, have demonstrated the possibility of one of the hills slipping where the dams' foundations are laid. The consequences could be catastrophic, such as a repeat of the one at Vaiont (Italy) in the '60s, which killed 2,000 people. In technical reports, they warned that in the event of an accident, the overflow would be between 50 and 750 times the current volume of the Irati River. Meanwhile, the Canal of Navarra link will be built over 15 years at a cost of over 100 billion pesetas (£425 million). The political message is that this will supply water to the regional capital, Iruñea (Pamplona), and provide dam water for Southern Navarra's agricultural districts. However, many believe the real purpose is the transport of water for the Mediterranean tourist industry.

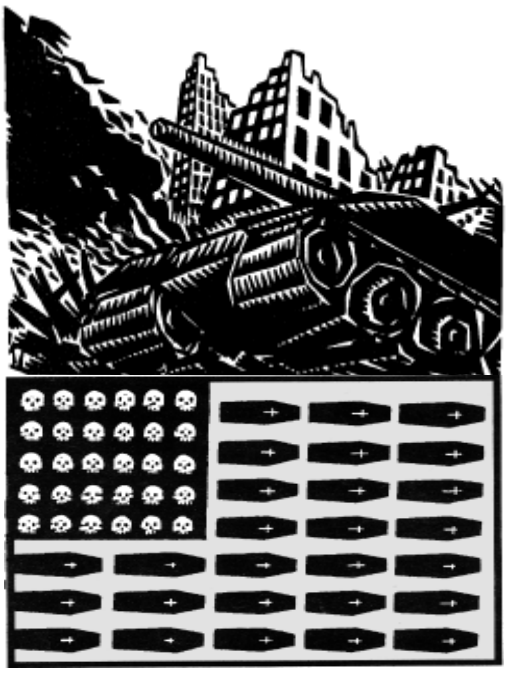
Brazil

Following the highly publicised actions in South Africa, Brazil will soon be producing patent-breaching cheap generic AIDS drugs for its estimated 200,000 AIDS sufferers. The Health Minister recently ordered the public health laboratory to begin producing a generic version of Nelfinavir, a drug patented by Swiss firm Roche, which is used by around 25% of Brazilian AIDS patients.

www.corporatewatch.org.uk/news/Brazil_AIDS_drugs.html%20

On "New Evil"

Terrorism has definitely been taking place in Afghanistan. Cold-blooded murder has not been confined to the Twin Towers.
Even if bin Laden did organise murder, at least he didn't try to justify it in our names.



When it all 'began', president George Bush stated to the nation; "Freedom itself was attacked this morning by a faceless coward, and freedom will be defended." In case you need reminding, prime minister Blair stated in similar terms; "This mass terrorism is the new evil in our world today. It is perpetrated by fanatics who are utterly indifferent to the sanctity of human life and we, the democracies of this world, are going to have to come together to fight it together and eradicate this evil completely from our world". In Britain, prime minister Blair declared, stands "shoulder to shoulder" with America against the "new evil of terrorism".

According to conventional wisdom we are now living in an "age of terrorism". The picture of terrorism as fanatic-led, is painted by government ministers, the mass media and academic "experts". However, it is devoid of context and conveniently forgets the historical origins of terrorism. The events that actually gave birth to the word "terrorism" in its modern sense took place in post-revolutionary France between 1792 and 1794, and the terror was orchestrated and executed by the state (see "No to Bush's War, page 26, for more on this). In short, the concept of terrorism has undergone a remarkable transformation in meaning, or rather, the likes of Blair and Bush, Lenin and Stalin, Hitler and Mussolini are/were by far the greatest perpetuators of terrorism, so they and their followers have chosen to adopt a technical meaning for the word instead of its real one, to try to let themselves off the hook. In common, the real terrorists are dominated by three major political ideologies - Liberalism, Marxism and Fascism, which have a common ideological assumption, i.e. the necessity of the state. This common assumption is what makes all three ideologies authoritarian in character. Like the religious doctrines of the middle ages, these political ideologies have been used to justify the suppression and murder of millions who refuse to internalise their values.

In this cold-blooded pursuit of economic imperialist interests, the Afghan people murdered by the US forces are simply collateral damage.

Bin Laden; Bin Bush

World leaders have been cajoled into a fight against terrorism – under its cover, the US is pursuing its imperialist agenda. The Caspian Sea region has oil and gas resources worth $4 trillion. Mr. Cheney, CEO of Halliburton Oil, told oil industry executives in 1998, "I cannot think of a time when we have had a region emerge as suddenly to become as strategically significant as the Caspian".

To advance its oil interests, the US must establish effective control over the oil resources in the region, which means it needs a pro-US Government in a unified Afghanistan.

The US has exploited an opportunity to gain complicity from other world powers in its campaign to strengthen its global economic hegemony. In this cold-blooded pursuit of economic imperialist interests, the Afghan people murdered by the US forces are simply collateral damage.

World powers have not resisted the US, even though people have – in our millions. Despite US managed-media bullying, we have stood up to the "you are for us or against us" rhetoric.

Anarchism and Terrorism

The establishment version of terrorism has definitely played a part in anarchist history. However, it has really only played a very small part and was largely the result of frustration caused by anarchists becoming isolated from the working class movement. As anarchist historian Daniel Guerin explains, *"When they found themselves a small minority, the anarchists abandoned the idea of militancy within large popular movements … The anarchists turned in on themselves, organised themselves for direct action in small clandestine groups … The Berne Congress launched the slogan of "propaganda by the deed … The defection of the masses of the working class had been one of the reasons for the recourse to terrorism. ("Anarchism", p74-75).* Later, Guerin acknowledges that *"Kropotkin deserves credit for being one of the first to confess his errors and to recognise the sterility of "propaganda by the deed."* In a series of articles which appeared in 1890, he affirmed *"that one must be with the people who no longer want isolated acts, but want men of action inside their ranks."* He warned his readers against *"the illusion that one can defeat the coalition of exploiters with a few pounds of explosives." (p78)*

Since anarchism is not a political ideology, a cult or secular religion, there is no official line on terrorism. However, anarchists, more than most, recognise that the state is by far the greatest perpetrator of mass terrorism. Anarcho-syndicalists continue to advocate a different sort of direct action through boycotts, sabotage and the general strike. All agree - it is now clearer than ever who are the real terrorists - and it isn't us.

A few FAQs

Where did the Taliban and bin Laden come from?

The Taliban were the victors in the many sided Afghan civil war that followed the Soviet defeat and withdrawal. The Soviets had originally invaded Afghanistan in 1980 following the failure of their client government in Kabul to keep power. The Taliban and bin Laden were part of the forces created by the American Central Intelligence agency (CIA) and Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) to defeat the Soviets. These forces were funded by the CIA and heroin sales facilitated by the CIA. Most members of these forces were not aware of the role they were playing in US plans for the region, believing instead that they were only fighting a jihad (holy war) against the godless forces of the Soviet Union. Osama bin Laden, a rich exile from the Middle East, turned against the US for what it did in supporting Israel against Palestinians, and in attacking and destroying Muslims in Iraq during and since the Gulf War.

Should we attack countries that "host" terrorism?

Some in the US military-political establishment would like to use this excuse to rid the world of all those governments which oppose or resist US interests. The US had plans prior to September 11th to invade Afghanistan. When someone goes gun-crazy at a school or shopping centre, we don't attack the neighbourhood where the perpetrator lived. Nor do we blame all the people from that part of the world.

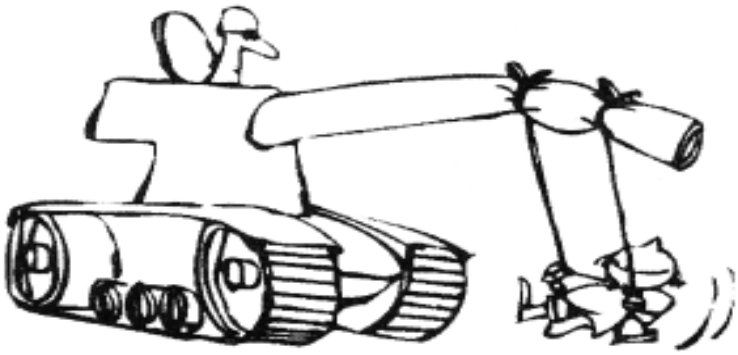
Are Islamic religious principles fundamentally racist/supremacist?

All religions have their dogmatic and apocalyptic spin-offs. Not too long ago, the US saw David Koresh's apocalyptic interpretation of Christianity bring the might of Washington's internal security apparatus down upon his group's compound in Waco, Texas. The Taliban and bin Laden, while divergent in their beliefs, have apparently shared a belief that non-believers in their version of Islam are the enemy. The majority of Muslims share a belief held by most of humanity – that the slaughter of innocents is absolutely wrong and a sin against 'God'.

What can we do if we oppose war?

As DA goes to press, there are anti-war groups active up and down Britain and across the world. Generally under-reported in the west, the actions have been building in strength, with two London demo's attracting tens of thousands of protesters.

War, whether it is waged with kamikaze planes, fleets of missiles and bombers, or starvation food policies, is a horrendous crime against humanity. It benefits no one other than the Masters of War. Ultimately, our opposition must transcend current events. Alienation, poverty, disease, starvation, death squads, and terror - these and other atrocities stem from the state. Alongside capitalism, the idea of the state must become our lasting target.



Simple truths about the war:

Smart bombs aren't smart.

According to the Pentagon, most US bombs used in the Gulf war missed their targets. According to the BBC, in Kosova, 40% were accurate enough. In Afghanistan, the US 'carpet bombing' has hit everything from UN workers to Red Cross depots filled with much-needed food and aid.

We'll never know.

September and October justifiably saw countless hours and columns of news coverage on the suffering following the September 11th attacks. November and December saw scant coverage on the suffering in Afghanistan. Media self-censorship is alive and well.

They played with fire.

As recently as May 2001, the US gave the Taliban $43 million, and they had been setting up and supporting this archaic and brutal regime for 20 years. They train and fund terrorists, and then they are 'surprised' at the obvious results. Two possibilities; the US elite are lying about being surprised, or they are completely stupid.

They set fires all over.

The US and Britain have created and trained terrorists all over the world.

They also feed them weapons. After the attacks, comedy and sports events were cancelled as a mark of respect, but the huge London arms fair went ahead, drumming up business to fuel future terrorism.

We'll get nothing but misery.

The war in Afghanistan is blatant US imperialist opportunism; a fact which is now even becoming accepted in parts of the mainstream media. What is not, is the obvious associated fact: States make wars to expand their influence. The rich get richer, the rest of us witness and experience the dire consequences.

Unless we stand up for humanity.

Politicians – Marxist, capitalist, fascists or whatever – all strive for state power. States cause terrorism. The only answer is to create politics without politicians or parties, and democracy without parties:
Where the state begins, freedom ends!

Obviously, being quarterly, DA is not a fast-moving, jet-fuelled news media machine - more of a sedate (but we like to think thoughtful) bicycle-powered alternative. Whatever, there are loads of netplaces to catch up on the latest news and views on the war (plus latest and forthcoming actions) without having to digest the mass media. Good places to start include:
www.indymedia.org
www.uk.indymedia.org
www.zmag.org
www.rawa.org
www.schnews.org
www.corporatewatch.org.uk

BEYOND THE A

LAUGH AT OR LOATHE THEM, AGONY COLUMNS ARE STILL GOING STRONG. THIS CAN ONLY MEAN ONE THING; WESTERN CULTURE IS COLLECTIVELY SAD AND WE HAVE SOME THINKING TO DO ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS AND POWER.

HERE, CLEARFUTURES BRINGS YOU BITE-SIZE ANSWERS TO YOUR

Getting rid of hierarchical power relationships is top priority for all true lovers of liberty.
Basically, you shouldn't boss anyone about and no-one should boss you about.
Relationships need to be built on genuine consent and co-operation.
Power over others inevitably leads to abuse. It is not just the enforced will of leaders and bosses, but also the covert, the socially normalised and acceptable manipulation of others which needs to be addressed and recognised as not acceptable.

RIGHTS OR RESPONSIBILITIES?

Minimising coercion in relationships applies as a goal and a means. As such, it is bedrock to anarchosyndicalism, and feeds all aspects of politics and ideas. It means opposing politicians, police, bosses and what have you deciding what should and should not be done and when it should or should not be done. It is about the democratising of power so people take control and responsibility for their own lives and how they interact with others. It is about how people relate to their partners, friends, colleagues, family, neighbours and strangers.

The wish to minimise hierarchical power relationships underlies anarchosyndicalist criticisms of patriarchy, racism, homophobia, the class system, and institutionalised religion; in fact, all things which rely on the exercise of one group's or individual's power over others. The minimising of power relationships means some thinking about the way many things are viewed, about what is right and wrong in society at all levels and scales - and how we respond to it.

We live in a world where everything is expressed in terms of 'rights', from the explicable - human rights - to the bizarre - the 'right to manage'! The problem with rights is that, whilst highlighting some horrible things that go on, they are usually directed as appeals for someone to save someone else from having their 'rights' abused by yet another someone. Or they are an appeal to someone to respect the rights of another. In other words, though perhaps well-meaning, there is a tacit (or explicit) acceptance of the need for a hierarchical system, where someone can give or remove 'rights'. The result is a fixed notion of the placid inaction of the victim, rather than the active, unacceptable behaviour of the aggressor. Thus, attention is turned away from the perpetrators.

Minimising hierarchical power relations means everyone has the responsibility not to impose their will on people and the equal responsibility not to let people impose their will upon them or others. In a vastly unequal society, different sections have vastly unequal ability to defend themselves from the imposition of aggressors. Only through getting together in non-hierarchical organisations, and then through co-operation, solidarity and mutual aid, can we start to really undermine these differentials and allow people to control their/our own lives.

The blame for abuses is the responsibility of the perpetrators. Someone makes others suffer, whether it is directly or indirectly, through the acceptance of a biased and unbalanced society. A better society will not come about by asking others to make it better for us, neither will it come about by asking those responsible for the worst aspects of this society to respect our 'rights'.

THE PERSONAL IS POLITICAL

And the political is personal. Politics is not something to save for the demonstration; it is integral to our lives at home in our relationship to our family, partners, friends and neighbours. There is a responsibility not to impose what is wanted on others, whether through direct control or manipulation. It is the spreading of power, the diffusion of power based around a democratisation of our everyday lives; seeking informed consent and understanding. Without full and informed consent, agreements are always problematic.

GONY COLUMNS

Democratising work

Personal power occurs everywhere - including home and work. But at work, hierarchy is invariably written in to your contract. The moral responsibility not to impose on others means that taking a job where you hire and fire people puts you on collision course with your beliefs. Taking part in exercising executive power over fellow workers is being a boss and this is clearly incompatible with fighting against abusive, hierarchical relationships. The democratic organisation of the workplace is the solution and, meantime, constant resistance to the efforts of management to use their excessive power in the workplace is necessary. The need for co-operation and solidarity to make this resistance effective, and for this resistance to be democratic too, means that a collectivist approach to organisation is central to anarchosyndicalist ideas.

Democratising society

People should not take away others' responsibility to run their own lives. Thus, anarchosyndicalism seeks an end to politicians, the military, corporations and other hierarchical institutions imposing their will. To do this, people must organise in a democratic collectivist manner. Marxists, Leninists and Trotskyists may think it is acceptable to call on their cadre/leadership to defend workers' rights; anarchosyndicalists definitely do not. Instead, people must take on the responsibility to defend ourselves and others from the impositions of those who would control our lives for us. Not an easy prospect in a downtrodden world. Only by empowering each other can we expect others to gain the confidence to join in. You cannot do this with individualism or small, isolated, autonomous, loose groupings. Only the already-confident will survive and join in. For real social change, such groups must come together, co-operate, offer solidarity; organise.

Minimising not abolishing

Minimising not abolishing power relationships is a reflection of the libertarian nature of anarchosyndicalism. It is not about a *laissez-faire* anything goes society, nor is it an attempt to return to some primordial primitive idyll. If it is accepted that society is not to go back to grubbing in the woods for roots and berries, then the reality is not all people will be equal in all things. In a complex and diverse society, everyone cannot have equal knowledge and understanding in all areas.

What an open and democratic society can eliminate is the imposition of the will of the expert over others. If a community wants clean drinkable water available to all, then the opinion of those that know about such things (plumbers, chemists, microbiologists, geologists, etc.) will clearly need to be given more weight than an electrician's, but if it was the safe and effective wiring of a building, then the society would be better off listening more closely to the advice of the electrician.

Learning to live

The touchy area of learning and education comes down to dealing with the differential of knowledge. Someone who is helping someone else to learn is in a position of power, but it remains their responsibility not to use that power to impose their will, or to get their own way. Education is, like healthcare, a major human need - we simply need to democratise it to make it non-hierarchical. Self-education co-operatives are a good start. After all, we all need skills such as language, socialisation, numeracy, literacy to allow everyone to be able to function fully in the open and genuinely democratic society…

…And come to think of it, even in a society where food is gathered from the wild, there are needs for socialisation and learning - otherwise, how you gonna know which berries are not gonna kill you stone dead?

We live in a world where everything is expressed in terms of 'rights', from the explicable - human rights - to the bizarre - the 'right to manage'!

Going Places:

Czecking In

How do we go about building a new movement? There are plenty of groups, organisations, ideas and tactics to choose from. But then, there is the ever-present danger of getting sucked into working with government or capitalism, or being visited by the decaying authoritarian left. Whether Trotskyist, Maoist or whatever – the flavours vary across the world, but the effect is just as unpalatable. Sticking to political principles is never easy. Here's how the Federation of Social Anarchists (FSA), Czech section of the International Workers' Association, got from nowhere to now in 10 years.

The Czech anarchist movement at the beginning of the 1990s was almost entirely lifestylist; a combination of young people, hippies, and intellectuals. What we can call the class struggle or social anarchists were a tiny minority.

DA: What is the recent history of the Czech anarchist/syndicalist movement?

The Czech anarchist movement at the beginning of the 1990s was almost entirely lifestylist; a combination of young people, hippies, and intellectuals. What we can call the class struggle or social anarchists were a tiny minority. There were ten comrades scattered all over the Czech Republic, and these comrades in 1992 created a group which was called the Anarcho-syndicalist Initiative. So in 1992 the very first social anarchist group on Czechoslovakian territory since, let's say the 1930s, was founded . At this point, we were only a tiny fraction of a movement that was concentrated on subculture, squatting, animal rights, and not on social and political issues.

This group was enlarged in 1994 with the influx of some new activists, and it created the Anarcho-syndicalist Federation. It started to publish a magazine called 'The Syndicalist', which covered the history of the anarchist and workers' movement since the beginning of the century, when there were some 10,000 anarcho-syndicalists in the region. Now, I think we made a mistake in not confronting the lifestyle and anti-class struggle anarchists right then in 1992. Many people from the wider movement started to become employed in democratic, human rights and whatever else structures, and started to fight for these and not for the anarchist, free communist society. In the summer of 1995, a small community of class struggle anarchists finally decided to create the Czech Anarchist Federation, which was a mixture of anarcho-syndicalists and others who understood that lifestylism is not the alternative.

We began publishing an openly social anarchist paper called 'The Free Mind', and the consciousness that anarchism is based on the class struggle started to develop within the CAF. Slowly and painfully we were translating the basic anarchist texts - the first pamphlet translated was Malatesta's 'Anarchy'. It was very slow, and we were not experienced. Most of us had been in the movement for only three or four years, and we were very positive.

We orientated the magazine not towards lifestyle anarchism but to the working class. However, most of the Federation wanted to be on friendly terms with the lifestylists. In fact, a rather primitivist faction developed within the CAF in 1996. In 1997, after long discussion, a definite distinction emerged between the class struggle anarchists and the lifestyle anarchists; and such an antagonistic atmosphere developed within the CAF that it was necessary to make a real, definite open political split with the lifestylists and the green primitivists.

The 5th Congress of the CAF in the autumn of 1997 was full of conflict, and ended with a rupture in the organisation. On the same evening the FSA (the Federation of Social Anarchists) was formed, out of some 50% of CAF members, including at that time the CSAF (Czechoslovakian Anarchist Federation), a few members from Slovakia, and the Anarcho-syndicalist Federation, which at that time we considered to be our model organisation.

The ASF had joined the IWA in December 1996, and this was the occasion when we established contacts and links with other anarchist organisations around the world. We started to receive more magazines and more information. We started to develop much more intensively than ever before. So the split had two sides, first very positive, the second very negative. The positive side was that finally, after 7 years, an openly political anarchist class struggle organisation was created, which didn't hide behind terms like 'unified anarchism', or 'human rights', or 'animal rights' conceived in a bourgeois way. The negative side was that, for the first year, we were almost isolated in the movement. Many lifestylists began to accuse us of being Bolsheviks, you know, commisars, etc. They labelled us as aggressive Marxists, and all sorts of shit, saying that class struggle is equal to fascism, and that we are

This article is based on extracts from an interview with a group of FSA members in June 2000 on a working class estate in the suburbs of Prague.
Some of the terminology used in this article may not be precisely equivalent to that used more commonly in Britain. However, the interview was conducted in English and the terms have been left as they were said in order to maintain the integrity of the interview.
Present were Michal Patera, Vladimir Patera and Petr Wohlmuth, and all contributed to the answers and discussion extracted here. The FSA can be contacted at:
PO Box 5, 15006 Praha 56, Czech Republic.
Email: fsapraha@quick.cz or fsa.intersec@atlas.cz

TO CHANGE

deviating from 'correct' anarchism by talking of class struggle, expropriation and the necessity of social revolution. So this was the image of the FSA in 1997/98.

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DA: What are the FSA's main areas of work now?

We are a propaganda group and we publish two papers. The first is 'The Voice of Direct Action' for trade unionists and workers. We normally issue about one or two thousand copies according to our funds, although we have published up to five or six thousand copies. The other is a magazine called 'Free Labour', which has longer articles, analyses and translations, and is a quarterly intended not as a propaganda piece, but for the self-education of the anarchist movement. We publish and distribute leaflets which we hand out at factory gates, in job centres, etc. And we also publish translations of anarchist literature; we've done seven up to now, including 'Lessons of the Spanish Revolution' by Vernon Richards, 'Struggle Against the State' by Makhno, books about the Kronstadt Rising and the Friends of Durruti, and so on. The latest is Bookchin's collected essays.

The Anarchist Black Cross group is one of the most active in our federation. We work hard to provide good, sypathetic lawyers for fellow anarchists, which is a problem, you know, because basically there aren't any in Czechoslovakia! One hour of legal work costs, let's say, one third of our monthly salary. So we are providing money for lawyers, and not only for our own members but other class struggle anarchists as well, and revolutionary anti-fascists in Czechoslovakia and Poland. We exchange letters with Mark Barnsley in England. We believe the support of political prisoners is very important. There is a twofold problem: communication, sending parcels and literature and so on, and collecting the money for lawyers. Since November 1998, we have paid almost US$10,000 in legal fees. Without international solidarity and help, for which we are deeply grateful, this would have been impossible. Within the Czech Republic itself, we collected a tiny amount, say some three or five hundred dollars. We have been supporting 12 prosecuted and imprisoned anarchists in Czechoslovakia; these cases are mainly connected with active and militant anti-fascism. Our comrades are often physically attacked by fascists and have to adopt radical means of self-defence, as happened in the cases of Michal Patera and Vaclav Ez (see DA11 for info on Michal's case).

The Black Cross initiative has resulted in the support of two demonstrations in support of Mumia Abu Jamal, here in Prague. On the second, Michal was arrested by the political police for destroying the American state flag.

The third field of our activity is the international work. We think that all sections of the international and responsible anarchists should be aware of the problem that all kinds of reformists and political parties are high-profile on the Internet, and the anarchist presence is relatively disorganised and sparse. We are trying to be active in international matters and discussion. Most of the anarchist movement in the world is very disorganised, and a very great percentage of the movement is lifestylist and reformist.

We think that the international community is not communicating enough. It's not sufficient just to meet every four years and to shake hands and see if we are still alive, or to go to Spain and eat Spanish food and meet Spanish comrades. The international movement must communicate more intensively. It must deal with those matters important to our futures, in other words, to anarcho-syndicalism.

DA: So how much of a problem is reformism?

The plain form of syndicalism, fighting on day-to-day issues, like conditions and salaries, is prone to be taken over by political parties and reformists. Some people seem to think anarchism is like some kind of perfume which can make all kinds of organisations radical! Anarchism is a philosophy which must be respected. To be an anarchist you must be a principled person. We must avoid reformist practices, for instance, entering the cooperative enterprise parliament, or not paying attention if some members of political parties are in anarcho-syndicalist organisations. We are not just fighting for higher salaries; we are not fighting for money; we are fighting for anarchist communism. The economic struggle must be combined with the political struggle. As Bakunin said in 1870, at the founding congress of the international alliance of socialist democracy, "our organisation must bear in itself the seeds of our future free communist society". This goal should be the measure of our daily practice.

SYNDICALISM, FIGHTING ON DAY-TO-DAY ISSUES, LIKE CONDITIONS AND SALARIES, IS PRONE TO BE TAKEN OVER BY POLITICAL PARTIES AND REFORMISTS. SOME PEOPLE SEEM TO THINK ANARCHISM IS LIKE SOME KIND OF PERFUME WHICH CAN MAKE ALL KINDS OF ORGANISATIONS RADICAL!

Spirit of Anarcho-syndicalism

Life today and what we can do about it

In Britain today oppression is a part of daily life, be it alienation, poverty, or any of a myriad of other sources suffering. Society is failing and our individual needs are not being met. Anarcho-syndicalism is a response to oppression and its task is to find a means of understanding what the source of our oppression is, what would overcome it, and how we can best steer our way towards this goal.

We already have the spirit; every day we practise solidarity and mutual aid. We help people across the road, do odd jobs for each other as favours, and give gifts to each other. Sixty percent of work is unwaged; we do it voluntarily. Child rearing, housework, caring for and supporting family and friends, not to mention a wide range of voluntary work falls into this category. The point is, we do these things despite capitalism and the state, which constantly fuel the myths that we are not like this, that we are selfish, that we need a system to regulate us and satisfy our 'natural' profit motive.

Our real motivations as social humans are demonstrated by our decision to live together in groups in the first place. Society is the result of the grouping together of humans for their mutual benefit. It is society that allows us the space, support, resources and freedom to develop as 'individuals'. The sense of individual self is therefore a result of society. Through society, we have developed communication, pooling of resources, free time, culture, in short, individuality. Our social behaviour is not unique; many animals have social networks too. Society is the vehicle through which we have long realised that we can develop ourselves, obtain collective security, free time (and therefore, potentially, freedom) and become, above all, distinct individuals.

Sadly, society is not only a potential source of human individuality; it can also be oppressive, depending upon how it is organised and structured. Modern society may not appear to be very structured or regimented, but it is. This is apparent to anyone who has ever stepped outside the rules/law/social norms; they see, no matter how easy-going it seems on the surface, how regimented it is in reality. There is no such thing as free trade, free votes, or free expression in today's society; it depends on money and power.

Freedom, when used by the state and capitalism, is empty rhetoric; the word is used because it sounds good. Real freedom can only happen by removing the authority, oppression and inequality that these agencies stand for. Social freedom and individual freedom are directly related, and anarcho-syndicalism seeks ever-greater freedom in society, since this will lead to more individual freedom.

A world of rich and poor, far from encouraging 'healthy competition', inevitably results in oppression, exploitation and discrimination. This in turn creates a deep sense of injustice, guilt, insecurity, and inadequacy. To seek and drive for more inequality, as capitalism does, is to intensify these unhealthy, oppressive forces within society. The very opposite of this is to seek to intensify freedom instead. In a mutually free society, with equal and free access to our productive efforts, by definition, there can be no more 'rich and poor'. This is a basis, a starting point, from which we can seek more freedom. Anarcho-syndicalism is on this quest and, as such, it is the antithesis of capitalism and the state.

We already have the spirit; every day we practise solidarity and mutual aid. We help people across the road, do odd jobs for each other as favours, and give gifts to each other. Sixty percent of work is unwaged; we do it voluntarily.

Alternatives

Once we accept that we are being conned by the capitalists, politicians, lawyers and clerics into accepting a raw deal, what can be done about it? Basically, there are three options.

Firstly, there is social democracy. Social democracy was dominant in Western Europe after WW2. It began to fail around the mid 1970s, when economic recession caused the first cracks to appear. As it became clear that labour was no longer in short supply, capitalism went back on the offensive. In Britain, Margaret Thatcher's politically motivated policies, though economically weak, were pursued vigorously, leaving millions out of work and rampant free-trade capitalism. Unregulated capitalism is now once more established, and we are told there is 'no alternative' and 'the market must decide'. The idea that the beasts of capitalism and the state can be tamed so that they are less harsh on us or made 'human' is now decisively discredited. No-one knows this more than the social democrat politicians themselves; the centre-left parties across Europe

have quickly and quietly dropped any idea of the socialist state, and have almost crushed each other in the stampede to embrace the free market.

The second option is the creation of a socialist state. This has been called state capitalism or state communism. The Marxist idea that the state can take over from capitalism and run the economy through state control for the benefit of everyone is nothing more than a very, very nasty joke, or it would be, if millions of people across the world had not been killed in the process of trying it out. All it did was prove beyond any doubt that any and every 'communist' leader is a potential, and actual, tyrant. To libertarians, anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists, the failure of Marxism is no surprise, since it is based on exactly the same pretext as the systems which existed before it appeared - that the state as an outside force could act in our best interests. With Marxism, the state acquires so much direct and pervasive control that it draws even more of the creativity and life out of people, which leads to inevitable economic collapse as incompetent bosses dish out the incorrect orders to a demoralised workforce. With China joining the rush for the market, only Cuba and North Korea remain as the last vestiges of the disastrous failure that is Marxism.

The third option is to oppose both capitalism and the state, along with their values. This means standing against the principles of a centralised, hierarchical authoritarian society based on greed and inequality and working towards a decentralised, non-hierarchical, libertarian movement. Instead of replacing the state and capitalism with other power centres, other states, or attempting to temper their worst effects, anarcho-syndicalism is about devolving power to the individual, then *collectively* striving for freedom. Power is only with the state and capitalism by a combination of force and persuasion through manipulation. Nevertheless, when a critical mass of people are no longer persuaded and are capable of opposing the force used against them, change can happen. Capitalism and the state will yield when they can no longer sustain their authority and power. The aims and means of anarcho-syndicalism are the same; anti-state, pro-solidarity, anti-capitalist, pro-equality, anti-authority, pro-direct democracy; a self-made, bottom-up society based on individual and collective freedom.

21st Century anarcho-syndicalism

Anarcho-syndicalists recognise that by coming together in society, we have greater potential for freedom. We also recognise that if we come together to fight back against exploitation, we will be more effective than if we operate as individuals, alone. This is the basis of the libertarian organisation, the revolutionary union, the local activist group - it is more effective than the sum of its individuals.

We live in a society which assumes we are nasty, brutish and selfish, so inevitably, to a greater or lesser extent, we are. The only way we will change this arrangement is by building our own social system, with new social codes, within the old society. By coming together and collectively fighting against oppression, we develop a new way of living with the emphasis on freedom. The details of how best to fight at any one time, or in any given situation, are down to those involved in the immediate action. However, we can draw on our history, to help us rule out some options as non-starters. The reform model, seeking concessions from capitalism through a form of parliamentary-based action is futile - all we do by this is create a new leadership for us to be exploited by. The revolutionary party, seizing the state in the name of the people, will create a totalitarian nightmare similar to those seen in the last century.

The Marxist notion that we can concoct (or 'scientifically' determine) a theory, from which a single strategy or formula for revolution can be determined, is inherently flawed. Every situation is unique and demands a unique response, which must come from the people involved. This is not to say that many situations are not similar, or that the same tried and tested forms of struggle cannot be used over and over again. It is simply that these things do not necessarily follow or apply. How we respond to our oppression must not be pre-determined, but this does not mean we must start from zero every time, erase the past, and so make the same mistakes over and over. It also does not mean we should not have a theory or theories at various stages of development and testing, nor that we should not try out new or different ideas and tactics in different situations in order to develop

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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.

Spanglish anarchO-syndicalists!

Dear DA,

I have a number of tapes that were recorded in interviews with Spanish anarchists who were members of the CNT-IWA. The comrades were held in a concentration camp near Chorley, Lancashire, after the Second World War. The interviews are in English, but the interviewees have strong Spanish accents, which have presented problems for transcribers who have worked with the material in the past.

I would be interested to hear from anyone who wishes to help with further attempts at transcription, in particular, anyone with experience of such a challenging task.

I can be contacted at Manchester Solidarity Federation, PO Box 29, SW PDO, Manchester M15 5HW.

RM

The time's right for playing strikes

Dear DA,

Seeing all the expensive but quite refreshingly directly worded footballers' strike advertising up on buses and billboards recently got me thinking. I am not a football fan and the strike, of course, never happened, but the style of the adverts and the language they used were, well, striking.

The phrases used in the ad campaign were reminiscent of the days when it was acceptable and popular to appeal to the greater good, and to stand up for workers' rights. This ties in with a general groundswell of political awareness in England which, although still comparatively low, is definitely and perceptibly rising.

The war in Afghanistan has put rating of news programmes up, and, just maybe, more people are more interested in each other and in humanity than they have been for a while. Popular consciousness is fickle. People are even contemplating paying more tax for funding national health - a crackpot idea in the super-selfish '90s.

Could it be that the "me" generation of Thatcher has mellowed? Maybe even the "I" society of new Labour has passed its peak? It is definitely time for the "we" society. And time to move on them - the bosses, Blair and Bush et al.

Good luck with the project. TL

NOT FUNNY

...cont'd from last page...

experience and be more effective in the future. All these things are necessary if we are to move forward as rapidly as possible. The basis of every action and every idea is not an over-arching, all-defining theory; it is simply our basic aim of 'freedom by free means' and our inherent culture of resistance. This culture always exists in all of us - it is an automatic response within us to our exploitation. Most of the time, it is kept at bay by our need to seek a basic minimum level of quality of life. Nevertheless, at some point, just as slaves come together to resist their slavery, we will come together to move towards our collective vision of a better future.

One of the most disturbing things about our present capitalist, state-centred reality is how much we are all suffering. Many of us are, directly or indirectly, oppressors at some point, as well as also being exploited. We indirectly damage the environment, others' livelihoods, and maintain and tolerate oppression within our society and at a global level. If we are all to experience a better quality of life, we need to act collectively to change things. Putting our faith in representatives and politicians to lead the struggle on our behalf automatically dooms it to failure. Benevolent, impartial leaders do not exist, by definition, so reform, which means using some alternative 'better' form of authority, cannot work. The structures of the state and capitalism cannot lead us towards freedom - they are designed to stifle real change.

Logically then, not only are we aiming for a society free of oppression, but we are also committed to using tactics in the struggle that are themselves free of authority and oppression. What we are about now is building ourselves toolkits for change, which includes non-oppressive forms of organisation, individual and collective struggle and mutually beneficial social relationships. Through constant use and experimentation, these can be improved, until we have a formidable knowledge of free organisational forms, and a massive array of tactics and methods. All of this means constant application - putting ideas about how we want to live into practice, now. In other words, we operate by building our new society in the shell of the old. In doing so, we demonstrate what works, and defend our new embryonic society against the inevitable onslaught from capitalism and the state, whose interests are directly opposed to the nucleus of freedom we are beginning to develop.

Part II next issue - to be sure of your copy, order/subscribe, etc., details p.34. This 2-part article was developed by a member of the SelfEd Collective, from discussions and materials involved with its "History of Anarcho-syndicalism" course. For free downloads, to get in touch, etc., see box on p.35.

Mumia Must Live

The video confession by Arnold Beverley to the killing of Officer Faulkner is now widely available, for example, online via the KNTV News Channel 11's web site (your computer must have Macromedia's Flash, Microsoft Window's Media Player or RealNetworks' RealPlayer installed to watch the video).

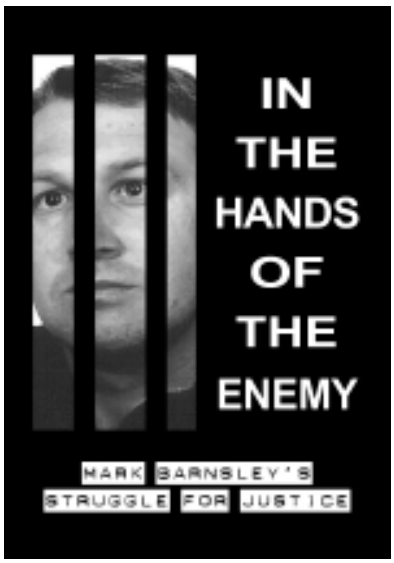
The video evidence effectively proves Mumia Abu-Jamal's innocence. The UK Mumia Must Live campaign also has available the most important affidavits from other people involved in the 1981 events leading to Faulkner's death and the irregularities that have occurred in the legal process since that time.

The US courts have outrageously denied the use of these affidavits in Mumia's defence, and it is this legal atrocity that helps pave the way for Mumia's "legal" murder.

That the US justice system is anything but 'just' is widely known. However, even in the face of a long history of murdering its civilians in cold blood, the current slow, deliberate and blatantly corrupt preparations to kill Mumia Abu-Jamal are breathtaking. Is there anything you can do? Yes – talk and tell people. If you are able to use a copy of the Beverley confession in any way to help with the task of exposing the US preparations to kill the innocent Mumia to new groups of people - perhaps even organising a public meeting, feel free to drop the MML campaign a line for support.

The new MML web site (http://uk.geocities.com/mumiauk) has copies of the affidavits and legal petitions filed with the courts by Mumia's new lawyers for download - they can also supply hardcopy versions if you so require.

Email mumiauk@yahoo.co.uk
The KNTV site has the video at:
http://kntv.feedroom.com/



Mark Barnsley has been transferred to Whitemoor. You can write to him at; Mark Barnsley WA2897-HMP Whitemoor, Longhill Road, March, Cambs, PE15 OPR. This new book (see review in DA20) contains writings by Mark and his supporters. "In the Hands of the Enemy" is available from: Justice for Mark Barnsley, PO Box 381, Huddersfield HD1 3XX, England. Price - £6 (inc p&p). Cheques/Postal Orders payable to "Justice for Mark Barnsley". Email: barnsleycampaign@hotmail.com Website: www.freemarkbarnsley.com

Support Trash

"Trash" seems set for a prison sentence after being allegedly caught "trashing" quarrying equipment at the Nine Ladies quarry site. His supporters are asking that everyone sends him letters of support straight away to help keep his spirits strong. Please send letters of support to: Trash c/o Nine Ladies Anti-Quarry Camp, Lees Cross, Lees Road, Stanton Lees, Nr Matlock, Derbyshire.

Abolish Prisons

A Prison Abolition Conference is being organised for Saturday 26th January, 2002 at Conway Hall. For more info or to help out, send SAE to Prison Abolition Conference, c/o BM Hurricane, London WC1N 3XX.

Chattanooga 3

The Chatanooga 3, Lorenzo Komboa Ervin, Damon McGee and Mikail Musa Mohammad need funds for their appeal to: Account #7515108434, Old Kent Bank, 4705 W Main St, Kalamazoo, MI, USA. If paying in sterling, to; Haringey Solidarity Group, PO Box 2474, London N8. Updates/messages direct to/from Lorenzo: komboa@hotmail.com

Brighton ABC

Brighton ABC have moved website to; www.brightonabc.org.uk Also, a new postal address; Brighton ABC, PO Box 74, Brighton BN1 4ZQ. For prisoners who cannot send mail to PO Box addresses, the old address will be kept as backup; Brighton ABC, 6 Tilbury Place, Brighton BN2 2GY.

Antiprison

Anarchist info-service with news and information on political prisoners and state repression E-Mail : antiprison@lycos.com Website: www.geocities.com/antiknast (Another interesting site: www.anarchistblackcross.org) News: www.groups.geocities.com/group/antiprison

Karen Horning

Karen has been denied her request for compassionate release. Case info., updates, addresses to appeal for her, etc., are at www.drugwarprisoners.org "The Tallahassee Project", a collection of stories and photos of women drug war prisoners by Karen, exposes the effects of the US 'war' on people (try amazon.com or bookshops). Write to her; Karen Horning, #00644-049 CC5, FMC Carswell, PO Box 27137, Fort Worth, TX 76127, USA.

SHAC Solidarity

In November, three organisers of Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty (SHAC) were forced to enter guilty pleas to charges of "Incite and Cause a Public Nuisance".

As reported in the Earth Liberation Prisoners' (ELP) Bulletin, the charges related to the publication of the SHAC newsletter, which allegedly encouraged readers to call, send unsolicited stuff to, and otherwise harass HLS employees and investors. Following their guilty pleas, the three SHAC organisers were sentenced to 12 months imprisonment each. The censorship of the Animal/Earth Liberation movement is nothing new in Britain. Ever since the mid-80s, animal/earth liberation activists have found themselves hauled up before the courts on dodgy charges of conspiracy and incitement. We must never allow police oppression to censor our minds and stop us from disseminating our own literature.

Show your solidarity with the SHAC 3 by sending urgent letters of support to:
Heather Avery, HMP and YOI Highpoint, Stradis Hall, Newmarket, Suffolk CB8 9YG.
Natasha Dellamaigne, HMP and YOI Highpoint, Stradis Hall, Newmarket, Suffolk CB8 9YG.
Greg Avery, HMP Belmarsh, Weston Way, Thamesmead, London SE28 0EB.

Texas resistance

CAPTIVE VOICES seeks to build solidarity amongst ALL prisoners globally, and to act as an internationally-focused forum addressing all manner of prison-related issues (including, but not limited to, prisoner rights, prison conditions, abusive/inhuman conditions, and the like). Make contact with prisoners and prison activists or abolitionists globally – plus send articles, news updates, photos/drawings/comics, etc.: Carl Horne, #418860, M.W. Stiles Unit, 3060, FM 3514, Beaumon, Texas, 77705-7635, USA.

Also in Texas, Chris Plummer is released on parole in January 2002, after 8 years of a 15 year sentence for anti-fascist action, of which 4 years was spent in solitary. He has sustained life-long injuries while inside, at the hands of the State and nazi gangs. He has made it clear he will be getting straight back into anti-fascist action with the Houston ABC chapter. He needs funds and support to adjust to the outside. Contact him; Chris Plummer, TDCJ# 677345, PO Box 4500, TN Colony TX 75886, USA or; Rebecca Plummer, PO Box 101, Austin, TX 78767, USA.

Brand show-trial

The 103 year-old Swedish anarchist magazine Brand went on trial on charges of incitement to riot in December. One identified member of Brand's editorial collective will be standing trial as the "responsible publisher". This is a blatantly political procedure, so your solidarity and support is requested. Please picket or demonstrate outside Swedish embassies and consulates in your country. Contacts, embassy addresses info., etc., are in the piece in international news, see page 13.

No to Bush's War

A Socialist Worker's Party pamphlet.

A pamphlet which is concise and yet manages to cover issues from "oil, poverty and war" to "the modern imperialism", while providing broader context through "the military face of globalisation" and "the anti-capitalist movement". In short, it has all the ingredients of a quality pamphlet.

Right from the start, the introduction comments on Bush's proclaimed "crusade against terrorism", by pointing out that "crusade" is a translation of the Arabic word "jihad", and refers to the onslaught directed by ragbag European armies, which plundered the Middle East in the 12th and 13th centuries under the guise of religion. Thus, Bush's statement indicates that he has embarked on an act of terrorism, yet his meaning of "crusade" is miraculously transformed and has positive connotations. The authors have performed an important task, as intellectual workers, in exposing the ideological distortion of the word "crusade".

However, there are serious problems as one reads on – starting around the section on "Marxism and terrorism". Apparently, "Marxism rejects terrorism", not for the "hypocritical reasons of Bush and Blair", but because individual terrorism (in Trotsky's words) "belittles the role of the masses in their own consciousness". Trotsky asked, "If it is enough to arm oneself with a pistol in order to achieve one's goals, why the effort of the class struggle?"

Hence, it is argued that terrorism is not just a different method of struggle against oppression, but runs counter to the fight for socialism. Here, I would point out that I am not in disagreement with Trotsky over individual acts of aggression vs. mass organisation as a means of class struggle. The point I am interested in here is the meaning of "terrorism" to Marxism as expressed by Trotsky and the authors of the pamphlet in question. Just as the authors expose the historical origins of the "crusade", and therefore Bush's ideological distortions, I would point out that the Marxist conception of "terrorism" as expressed in this pamphlet ignores *its* historical origins. Furthermore, the word "terrorism" is being distorted by Marxist intellectuals in a similar fashion, as the word "crusade" is being distorted by liberal intellectuals to serve ideological concerns and needs instead of truth and justice.

The authors of the pamphlet talk of "terrorism [as a] method of struggle against oppression" (although misguided). According to Trotsky, the Marxist conception of terrorism is one where individuals or perhaps small groups from within the oppressed classes attack the ruling elite.

Now, following the form of the "crusade" example, the Oxford English Dictionary first mentions the word [terrorism] in 1795, after the post-revolutionary terror in France had accounted for the death of thousands in a short period of deliberate horror between 1792 and 1794. Thus, the word "terrorism" also has very specific historical connotations. As Conor Gearty has shown in his work "The Future of Terrorism", in stark contrast to Trotsky's conception of terrorism, the events that actually gave birth to the word in its modern sense involved terror orchestrated not by rebels acting in defiance of governmental authority, but by the forces of the state itself. Indeed, it was precisely because the state was involved that it proved so easy to kill so many. As Gearty concludes, the original meaning of terrorism as 'government by intimidation as directed and carried out by the party in power' is the more real one, and according to this, Lenin and Trotsky were most definitely terrorists. Indeed, they rank quite high on a list of major terrorists of the 20th century.

The meaning of the word "terror" was shifted during the 19th century, so that, by the early 20th century, it no longer described the tactic of causing terror, but had taken on a technical meaning. It was precisely during this period that both Lenin and Trotsky developed their ideas. The "terrorism" discussed in this pamphlet ignores the original definition and historical connotations and adopts the technical meaning. It is only by ignoring the origins of terrorism and by adopting this technical and ideologically distorted meaning that such outlandish claims such as "Marxism rejects terrorism" can be expressed.

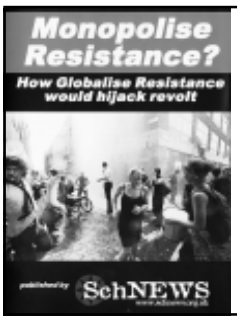
The fact of the matter is that virtually all political movements have engaged in terrorism of one sort or another. But it is the three state ideologies of Liberalism, Marxism and Fascism that have by far been responsible for the greatest terror campaigns in recent history, technicalities and ideological distortions aside!

I agree wholeheartedly with the exposure of the hypocrisy of Bush and Blair when they condemn piloting an airliner into the World Trade Centre as terrorism, but say their actions in blowing up buildings and people with cruise missiles are part of "defending civilisation". However, the authors of the pamphlet seem blind to their own hypocrisy. They ignore the terror campaigns orchestrated by their heroes Lenin and Trotsky. They no doubt were/are justified on ideological grounds – such as "defending the revolution". The underlying logic is the same.

Whilst the authors claim that "over the last 100 years the tradition that has influenced most revolts against oppression and exploitation is Marxism" is dubious, it can certainly be claimed in reply that over the last 100 years the tradition that has influenced a large percentage of oppression and exploitation is definitely 'Marxism'.

Once the mind is cleansed from the pollution of ideology, and instead responds to the world with natural common sense and basic decency, it becomes disturbingly obvious that for a Leninist organisation to claim that "it rejects terrorism" can only be the expression of a mind polluted by ideology. A person who seriously rejects terrorism also rejects state ideology.

In short, apart from the blatant hypocrisy, a by-product (it seems) of ideology, and the disgraceful attempt at organised forgetting via language manipulation - both a crime against history as well as human dignity - the pamphlet is a fine read.



More essential reading on SWP tactics here - just send two 1st class stamps and an A5 SAE to Schnews, PO Box 2600, Brighton BN2 0EF.

Democracy or carbocracy?

Intellectual Corruption and the Future of the Climate Debate

Corner House Briefing 24. Larry Lohmann.
Available in PDF (291KB), RTF (355KB), Word (584KB), Text (269KB) and printed paper versions:
THE CORNER HOUSE, PO Box 3137, Station Road, Sturminster Newton, Dorset DT10 1YJ, Britain. Tel: +44 (0)1258 473795
Fax: +44 (0)1258 473748 Email cornerhouse@gn.apc.org
Website: http://cornerhouse.icaap.org/

Many environmentalists cheered last July when an international agreement on how to tackle climate change was reached in Bonn. Following Bush's decision to withdraw the US from the Kyoto process as far as possible, anything by way of agreement seemed better than nothing.

Lohmann's starting point is pragmatic in accepting that nothing was going to be perfect. However, through some astute assessment, he arrives at the conclusion that the "carbon market" approach which the Bonn agreement champions is largely incoherent. No one knows how to value the goods on display in this market, or even who they belong to. As a result, the market is set to subsidise further climate change, and ultimately is likely to collapse.

Lohmann's main argument against those who ask, "well, how would you have negotiated it better then?" would probably be; "I wouldn't have started from here in the first place". The Kyoto Protocol is technically driven, something he traces back to the Montreal protocol which has been largely successful in ending the global scourge pollutant of the '80s - CFCs. It worked then because CFCs were substitutable and the industries involved manipulable. With carbon, the situation is far more complex, interests are bigger, and fundamental economic foundations (like fossil fuel use, oil companies, etc.) are at stake.

However, it is the so-called 'flexible mechanisms' now built into global climate change agreements which provide the biggest problem, since they provide the main means through which the rich nations/corporations can escape controls, and even profit from/increase their emissions. They are not so much going to provide loopholes, as massive stable doors, through which the horse has already long gone.

These mechanisms, established at Kyoto, are; emissions trading (the rich can buy the right to pollute using the poor's quotas); the CDM or clean development mechanism (the rich can pretend to spend money on climate control measures in poor countries, and in exchange get to continue polluting at home); and 'Joint Implementation' (similar to CDM, but the recipient countries can be less poor, i.e. in the north, usually Eastern Europe).

This may sound rather obvious, but it has to be stated; bringing the market to climate change control can only do what the market does everywhere else; let the rich piss on the poor even more than before. Currently, the US emits 13 times any sort of agreed stabilisation target of carbon per person, with Japan and Western Europe emitting 5-12 times. India and over 50 other developing countries emit less than half – in other words, a tiny fraction of the US.

Perhaps the most disgusting aspect of the pro-market negotiators is their unwillingness to take their own stated beliefs to their logical conclusion. If we are to value pollution, how is the west going to repay the south for all the polluting it has already done? What about carbon debts? Also, why are the carbon banks and their income (in trading credits) going to be set up in such a way that the vast majority of 'income' and 'capital' will be granted to the west from the start? Faced with such arguments, these apparently logical economists turn all political, and start going on about how we cannot simply switch off our emissions, not least because this will involve switching off our economies in the north (although the idea that carbon emissions is linked to economic growth is a myth – look no further than China). Lohmann does a competent job of exposing this crass and simplistic gerrymandering by the (particularly US) pro-market negotiators. He also points out the way in which the big oil-backed lobby groups act duplicitly in the process. On the inside (negotiating), they take one view, while on the outside, they take another altogether.

One of the most scandalous aspects of the agreement is sequestration, where polluters are allowed to plant trees to offset their pollution. Without getting into detail, this is scientifically stupid. Basically, when calculating carbon emission, you look only at fossil fuels, not at 'terrestrial' or recently-living organic material in the biosphere. This is because the latter is in constant circulation. As soon as the trees are chopped down, the carbon it has fixed is re-released back into the atmosphere. It is only fossil fuel use (coal, oil and natural gas) which releases carbon from natural underground storage and screws up the atmospheric circulation process by over-supplying atmospheric carbon.

So trees cannot be substituted for fossil emissions. But worse still, following this flawed idea is already creating crazy results. Norwegian forestry firms have already leased vast tracts of Uganda to plant trees and soak up carbon, threatening the livelihoods of 8,000 Ugandans who use it currently (many consider they own it). In Tanzania, they aim to make US$27 million from selling carbon credits from pine and eucalyptus plantations, having rented land from the government there for $565,000. In other words, carbon trading presents another opportunity for the north to rape the south. Meanwhile, here in Britain, "Future Forests" require you to send money for 5 trees to offload guilt for 1 year's driving; 2 trees for tea for 6 years; 40 trees for all your home's carbon emissions for 5 years, and 7 trees for 5 London-New York air tickets. Scientifically, this is not spurious; it is pure bollocks.

Unfortunately, as with many excellent critiques, Lohmann is a bit short on alternatives and action. However, he does support the activities of people working to stop oil exploitation around the world using direct action, and he does basically reject the idea of negotiating with huge capitalist interests as they will always undermine the process. Other than that, tangible outcomes seem limited to calling for academics to act collectively in refusing to participate in being bought off by the corporates/US, and instead acting collectively in conducting proper, impartial work, which will inevitably point us away from the flawed Kyoto and Bonn machinery. Essential reading, as are most CornerHouse briefings.

MOVING FORWARD

PROGRAM FOR A PARTICIPATORY ECONOMY

Michael Albert. £8. ISBN 1902593413. Available from AK Distribution, PO Box 12766, Edinburgh EH8 9YE, Scotland. Phone; 0131 555 5165 Email; ak@akedin.demon.co.uk.

Moving Forward grew out of a series of commentaries written for the Net-based Znet Sustainer Program, and is reviewed here by a non-Net user.

In the introduction, Albert points out that ".. at present, we don't even have a generally shared workable outline of what we desire. When we are asked what we want to replace capitalism, we have nothing constructive, worthy and viable to offer." Chapter One argues the case for what Albert calls 'just rewards', " ..which is payment according to effort and sacrifice or according to need when effort cannot be expended or when need is excessive due to disease or other calamity."

The book then wends its way through the tricky paths of Remuneration, and how can that fit with 'just rewards', giving numerous examples to illustrate things along the way. Basically, taking on the idea of self-management begins with "Who decides?". How much say should each actor in any economy have over decisions in that economy? Albert believes the answer ought to be that each actor should have decision-making input proportionate to the degree he or she is affected by outcomes, or what we call 'self-management'.

Seeking self-management involves workplace, consumer and information decision making. Albert argues that "..structuring itself to incorporate steadily more self-management in its own operations should be a very critical programmatic component of a participatory economic movement."

Having obtained 'just rewards' through self-management, we seek out 'dignified work' or a fair share of good and bad work through individual options. This is discussed through examples. The desire is to achieve 'Balanced Job Complexes', which is really making our jobs our own, by developing what we do more in line with us rather than viceversa. So now we have only one big choice - to participate by working at some available balanced job we like or not.

Participatory planning is the best alternative to either markets or central planning to coordinate different workers' activities, concludes Michael, and adds that workers and consumers negotiate outcomes based on full knowledge of effects. Participatory planning is the allocation component of the participatory economics model.

Black markets and re-emerging capitalism are dismissed by example and argument together with any need for a police function, as the book ventures out to examine the rest of the economy. Gender, education, race and ecology lead us onto the State. Here, Albert argues, "..I suspect that a serious political vision won't dispense with adjudication or policing but will, instead, define these functions more sensibly.."

As we get to the nub, participatory economics melds into a new word, "Parecon". This then leads into the Parecon Program, which initially is a set of demands for less work for everyone; a quarter less income for the rich; stability for the others; and a quarter more pay for the poor; overtime at double rate; a demand that the government invest in social programs; and a reduction in workload.

This work reduction and income-altering scenario, Albert argues, immediately improves the conditions of this society's worst off, while "..it diminishes and perhaps even eliminates unemployment". While accepting goals are easier to state than process, he concludes that "..pursuing the road to Parecon is probably the fastest way to win the kinds of innovations that a seriously concerned, pro-worker activist should want to win."

Albert's style is to liberally litter with quotes, though the product is easy to read with an engaging air. Notwithstanding the problems within, Michael Albert has put down a strong marker for moving forward.

Find out more; Z Magazine and Znet - www.zmag.org

ALTERNATIVE AUSTRALIA

Celebrating cultural diversity

Alan Dearing with Brendan Hanley (Mook Bahloo)
ISBN 0-9523316-4-0 Published by Enabler Publications of Lyme Regis. Dorset.

250 pages tells the story of Alan's personal quest, travelling around Australia both for real and on the Internet. This is no normal history or travel book - enter in. The show is about to begin!

For those of us striving to live the ideal communal life, this book is full of wonderful examples of well-intentioned fellow travellers on their utopian quest, from the Communards' first attempt in 1839 near Hahndorf, South Australia, to the many thousands of new settlers with a broad spectrum of counter-hegemonic ideas settling in a band of mostly fertile, climatically appealing land between Elands, near Taree, and the towns of the 'Rainbow Region' - the far northern NSW towns like Mullumbimby, Murwillumbah and Lismore. This book presents a dazzling tapestry of life and energy; of people living at the margins of Australian society. Some work in universities, some are fulltime artists, some have 'gone wild' and taken on the tribal mantle in their search to establish sustainable communities and lifestyles. And all with over 200 photos and line drawings plus many contributions from fellow travellers.

STANLEY'S EXPLOITS, OR, CIVILISING AFRICA

D. J. Nicoll
ISBN 1-873605-97-8 institutions £5 individuals £1.50
Kate Sharpley Library BM Hurricane London, WC1N 3XX
http://flag.blackened.net/ksl/Sharpley.htm

David Nicoll was an anarchist militant, active in Sheffield and London, who was never afraid to give the powerful the sharp side of his tongue. Here he berates Stanley (you know: 'Dr. Livingstone, I presume') and his cheerleaders in the press who thought that massacring Africans in the cause of 'civilising' them was a price worth paying. The fact that the pamphlet is over 100 years old is testimony that, as long as there has been colonialism, there have been anti-colonialists. European and African workers - then as now - fight under different circumstances, but they fight the same enemy. Nicoll points out that civilising Africa means getting people used to labouring for twelve or fourteen hours a day amid "the roar of manufactories and foundries", and that though there may be "waving fields of grain" in the valleys, and the land is "smiling with affluence and plenty", it is reserved for a few hard taskmasters, those newly-imported pests, the European landlords and capitalists.

Reasons to be cheerful

Mark Steel

Scibner UK, 2001, ISBN 0-7432-0803-X

A very easy and enjoyable read, Mark Steel has a cool style and is witty enough to keep it going for nearly 300 pages. Subtitled 'From punk to New Labour through the eyes of a dedicated troublemaker', this is an autobiographical account of Mark Steel's experience of political activism, from his initial interests at school through to his ongoing activity as a member of the SWP.

This book is at its best when describing the personal experiences and reactions to them, what it's like to be on a demo with hardly anyone else, getting across ideas to people who are not that interested, the importance of standing up, of there being opposition to the crap that goes on. Where it falls down is when it seeks a place in a wider movement. If you were to believe Mark Steel, activism from the miners' strike onwards has been carried out by trade unionists, the SWP and an old rump of Stalinists who couldn't or wouldn't break with the Soviet Union to embrace the caring, sharing socialism of the SWP. Greenham Common gets a mention, and he seems completely nonplussed by the women's reaction to the arrival of the Swoppers. Everything is referenced to the SWP and its heroic role.

According to Mark Steel, the SWP operates more or less in a left/militant vacuum, and having read his book, I now understand why they operate as they do. Maybe they genuinely don't realise that there are other activists out there, and everyone inside is either wilfully or not ignorant of politics or reactionary forces to be opposed? Read it for the laughs, not the analysis.

Holy War, Inc.

Inside the secret world of Osama bin Laden

Peter Bergen
Free Press; Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 304pp.
£18.99

From 1991, bin Laden waged war against the US. Much of what has appeared in the mainstream western press in this time has been either conjecture or simply rubbish. Bergen is a CNN producer who interviewed bin Laden in 1997, and who has been very quick off the mark in getting his bin Laden bestseller on the High Streets.

This is essentially a file on bin Laden made accessible and coherent. Given the paucity of information on bin Laden and Al-Qaeda, it is difficult to quibble with much of it, so let us concentrate more on what rings of sense. Perhaps one of the most striking points here is that bin Laden's original jihad came about due to his political stance, primarily resulting from US policy towards Israel and the Middle East. Hence, very little time has been spent denouncing western culture (contrary to what the tabloids would have us believe).

Bergen shows just how difficult a successful war against Islamic terror is. However, there is a note of optimism, since he sees Al-Qaeda as a movement, not against western civilisation as a whole, but merely against the 'Great Satan'. He is also insightful in describing the delicate mix of modern technology which Al Qaeda have come to utilise, alongside the medieval theocratic minds which have controlled the organisation.

Where I would disagree with Bergen is in the difficulty of the war against Islamic terrorism – I would describe it more as unwinnable, at least in any peacemaking sense. Faced with western-backed genocide, the tap root will always put down new shoots.

Germs

Judith Miller, Stephen Engelberg and William Broad

Simon and Schuster.
£18.30 ISBN 0684 871580

This book, a recent history of biological weapons and warfare, has for some reason done rather well recently. An originally planned 15,000 print run was hastily upped to 100,000 after September 11th and the subsequent anthrax attacks. The September 11th attacks provided the perfect precurser for bioterrorism. The 100,000 copies sold out rapidly.

With, as I write, 5 Americans dead from anthrax, it is clear this particular episode will end, but not clear when. And it is certainly not clear how preventable such 'amateurish' terrorism is.

Smallpox, unlike anthrax, is highly contagious, especially in the first days of infection, before most people can detect they have it. Apparently, as the one disease that has been officially eliminated, the last two stores of it (in the US and Russia) are well-guarded.

The authors conclude that germ weapons are not difficult to make. Delivery systems are an issue. The inquiries by people allegedly behind the World Trade Centre attacks into crop dusters would apparently have proved fruitless if they had been tried as a means of germ delivery. Delivered in liquid form, the germ agent would likely clog in the nozzles. Nevertheless, back in 1955, US scientists sprayed Q-fever in slurry form from a jet aircraft. It infected both strategically placed guinea pigs and the soldiers guarding them (well, OK, they were manning the roadblocks around the spray area).

While the book makes frightening reading, not least because it confirms the scant regard governments have had for over 50 years in conducting experiments on people, animals and the environment, it also underlines in thick ink how people with sick determination but no special expertise can acquire materials and produce lethal germ weapons.

While the targets of the anthrax attacks have all been politicians or establishment institutions, all the victims have been working class people. Whether it is war, terrorism, or capitalism, those who pay the price are always the same - us not the bosses or politicians. The main anthrax attack might well turn out to be the work of a sort of biological Unabomber. The only way out of this is a humane society where people don't acquire such sick intentions in the first place.

Breaking free

The Adventures of Tin Tin

J Daniels ATTACK INTERNATIONAL - FIRST PUBLISHED 1989 - Now republished ISBN 0951426109

He's back... and he's bad!

All the usual suspects are in this Tin Tin adventure as he battles against capitalism and its system. Here we see the boss, with his trade union side-kick being shown the score by a motivated and determined working class community. The cops as usual take the side of the bosses.

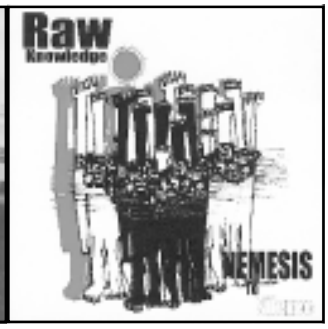
170 pages of cartoon fun as our hero takes to the streets encouraging class struggle. Bad language, bad attitude and bad friends delight as they rampage through the pages of this fun reworking of the classic Tin Tin character.

Anyone involved in the class struggle will enjoy this easy to read fun book. My teenagers read it and passed it around friends; good enough for me to recommend this as that nifty little book to keep for the unsuspecting reader expecting the usual toadying diatribe. Fun, different, an accessible read and cheap at just £3.

Entartete Kunst Feast

Various Artists *'Live at the Complex 3, no field electronica'* CD Entartete Kunst
Raw Knowledge *'Nemesis to Silence'* CD Entartete Kunst
DJ Slo-Mo/DJ381-813 *'1984/451'* 7" red vinyl Entartete Kunst

Contact: Entartete Kunst, PO Box 411194, San Fransisco, CA 94141-1194. USA.
Entartetekunst@excite.com www.notyourbitch.homestead.com/ek.html



Three releases from San Francisco's Entartete Kunst label. Live at the Complex 3 is, as it says, the third of a series of 'no field electronica'. No easy listening, no mellow Ibiza chill out moments, but not much in the way of thrash out guitar attacks either.

Sixteen tracks from the likes of Raw Knowledge, Phantom Patient, DJ Slo-Mo, Drowning Dog etc. with titles such as 'Body of Christ', 'I ovulate in Mode', 'Thanks, but I'll Walk' and the classic 'Neo Liberalism is a Hate Crime'. This is the stuff dance mags invented the term 'illbient' for (or at least it should be) - electronica, industrial (old style), hip hop, drum and bass mixed with found sounds, spoken words, screams, shouts and maybe even some singing. Beat driven, lugubrious, angry, sharp, bleeping, crunching, scary up front and in your face, whilst slipping round the back to lull you down. Love this, as much as they hate the system, but just don't leave it alone with your pets.

That goes doubly for Raw Knowledge's 'Nemesis to Silence', a raw nerve of anger, passion and hopefulness. Not quite poetry, not spoken word nor singing - spoken performance featuring samples, plus noises from Phantom Patient, DJ Slo-Mo and others. The words alone are powerful enough to make reviewing this really hard. Mixed with samples from Public Enemy, Malcolm X, Radio Freedom - ANC, Gil Scott-Heron, Mumia Abu Jamal, etc., this is life in the face of sexism, racism, police brutality, violence, hatred, abuse, poverty and the response of solidarity, fight back, hope, not turning your head, standing up and shouting to be counted. This is recommended, just don't expect to relax with it or to be able to hum along. The sleeve includes the "First they came for the Communists..." quote from Martin Neimoller; it's been used all over the place, but with this material at this time when wrapping in a flag is the only political action tolerated and where all opposition is branded as terrorism, we need voices like Raw Knowledge.

The third piece, DJs Slo-Mo and 381-813 (apparently known as Montag Makin in London) is two slabs of slowed down beats on lovely red vinyl. They sound great at both 45 and 33, which is always a bonus.

Rugby's Class War

David Hinchliffe M.P.

£9.75 ISBN 1-903659-00-0

Rugby League is very much a working class game and, therefore, it seems strange these days to find a Labour M.P. championing its cause.

The book charts some of the battles League has had to fight down the years since it broke away from the Rugby Football Union over payment of players in 1895, the prevailing attitude at that time being that only those well [redacted]ave to sell their labour to [redacted]. Hence, Rugby Union [redacted] 'the gentry' and their [redacted] offspring, whilst the [redacted] their Association and [redacted]ball, which thrived side by [redacted] as late Victorian times, often [redacted]rounds.

[redacted]t find the niceties of the [redacted]m described in the book [redacted] rugby enthusiasts, it is worth [redacted]mateurism, which was part [redacted] Union hypocrisy, is nothing [redacted]e twisting and turning of [redacted]r-Commodore) Blimps down [redacted]hey threw any obstacle in the [redacted]ue development leaves your [redacted]nd-off half in the shade.

When even the northern edition of The Guardian can give three pages to Union and only one to League, it is little wonder thirty thousand people will sign a petition (in just a couple of weeks) deploring the lack of media attention for a team sport which comes second only to soccer in attendance figures.

The banning of Rugby League by the collaborationist Vichy government in France at the request of the French RU gets a mention. Mike Rylance tells of this shameful episode in his book 'The Forbidden Game'.

Then, as if things aren't bad enough already, along comes Rupert Murdoch, wallet open, to nearly topple a century of rugby history. With Maurice Lindsey of the Rugby League apparently willing to ditch established clubs to get Sky Sports, it became clear that, while 'old farts' run the Rugby Union, green eyed grabbers infest the League. Meanwhile, since Thatcher shut down the pits and factories of northern England, Rugby League became a rare source of pride in places like Featherstone, Wakefield, Widnes and Leigh; more than just a game.

Rugby has always been political. It wasn't until the late 1980s that the "rah, rah, kick and clap brigade" of Rugby Union selected its first black international player. It was the Union sides who toured apartheid South Africa, not the League. The book's real value is in exploding the myths which the establishment has fostered about Rugby League, its players and supporters for so long.

The workers at JJ Fast Foods in North London were sacked in 1995 for organising against their low pay and atrocious working conditions.

What followed - 4 months of grassroots struggle - is ably captured in this rare retrospective of a recent battle with the bosses. The problems were many; ranging from unions, through police harassment to interference by the organised Left. The accounts of such multiple difficulties and creative responses from a battling immigrant community make for essential reading: All the more so for the clear lessons we can learn from it for future struggles.

Apocalypse soon

The idea that globalisation will replace state power is deluded.

Wars are made by states for economic interests.

The market is constantly nurtured by governments – otherwise, capitalism would crumple.

Now, there's an idea.

Over a decade on, the shock-waves from the collapse of the Soviet Union are still reverberating around the world. Gone are the relative certainties of the post-Second World War era, regulated by the rivalry between the Soviet block and western capitalism. The dominance of US military and economic muscle now dictates international affairs – and this monolithic powermonger now presents a clear and present danger to global peace and wealth in the future.

It is not just because the US is the world's sole superpower. It is the military, economic and political imperatives that are driving this superpower that are the key to why these days are so dangerous. A year after the coup (or rigged elections, if you prefer), it is becoming increasingly clear what the extreme right Bush administration is prepared to do to maintain and spread US influence.

Free of the Soviet military threat, and of any rival to capitalism, the US has embarked with relish upon its task of building and maintaining a US empire for world domination. The concept is, of course, not new. Since the establishment of the nation state, armies have been sent forth to slaughter and to be slaughtered in the 'game' of building empires. The US is simply embarking on an imperialist dream that has driven the powerful for centuries. The same imperialist dream that in the past has resulted in the slaughter and destruction of ways of life of billions of people.

Current US imperialism is a particularly nasty form, as imperialism goes. The US is driven by a free market ideology and culture whose principal purpose is to justify, promote and protect gross inequality. The profit motive lies at the core of the free market – in fact, it drives the entire ideology. Thus, everything must be explained in terms of the solutions that the profit motive can allegedly supply. The idea that the lust for profit can drive the world forward, solving all the problems we face, from environmental disaster to poverty, is the central message. The real results are stark. Poverty is increasing, and global and domestic inequality is going through the roof – especially in those countries who are operating, adopting or have had imposed on them the US free market fundamentalist ideology. We need look no further than our own communities.

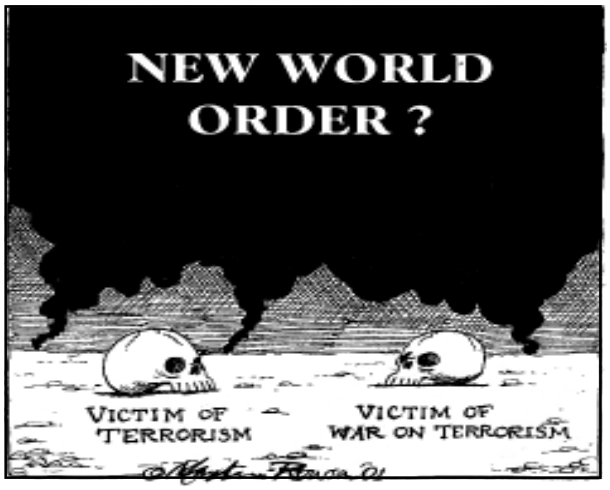
As the US pursues its imperialist dream and seeks to defend and extend its influence, we are being subject to state of ever-increasing, endemic war. This is an inevitable result of the US, with Britain in tow as a very junior partner, using military force as means to extend its economic power and free market culture in order to exploit ever-greater regions of the world. When a bully is operating in full terror, any sign of resistance is taken as an excuse to redouble the brutality. The cycle is one which creates desperados and despots in the rubble of daily terror.

Nor is the inevitability of ongoing wars limited to the conventional or relatively small-scale. Although the US is the world's current superpower, history tells us its dominance will not last forever. Empires are at some point challenged, inevitably leading to a crescendo of war, mass destruction and mass slaughter. It is long-established by critical theorists, Marx included, that as capitalist economies develop, they nurture within them the seeds of their own decline. This was certainly the case with Britain at the turn of the last century, as the empire it had developed through economic dominance became increasingly challenged by the growing US and German economies. The result was an arms race and the horror of the First World War. Directly from this, the seeds were sown of the Second World War.

A century on, the US is following Britain, and is in relative decline. The economies of both Japan and Europe have been outperforming the US for much of the last five decades. Once over the problems caused by German unification and the establishment of the Euro, there is every

As it increasingly challenges US dominance, the European superstate can but lead to conflict ...

Europe vs. US is not the only game in town. China's potential threat to the US has already set in train a potentially deadly arms race.



chance that the European economy will once again begin to outstrip the US. This time, the Euro block will be big enough to challenge US dominance. Growing tension between the two economic blocks is inevitable. There are already a number of simmering disputes within and referred to the World Trade Organisation. However, these are simply about drawing battle-lines, and act as a signal of the much greater struggle to come between the US and European trading blocks.

Nor should we be fooled by pro-Euro social democratic left talk of Europe remaining a loose federation of independent states. Political union can but follow economic union. Barring unforeseen massive world recession or the collapse of the Euro, a new European superstate is set to emerge, with or without Britain. Blair and his fellow conspirators within Britain's elite still harbour the hope that it will be based on the US free market model, playing a secondary role to US dominance. However, the EU powers have a very different future planned for the new European superstate.

Thus, for Blair, the dilemmas are stacking up. Entering the Euro as early as politically possible to facilitate British influence in Europe will strengthen the currency. However, the Pound is more allied to the Dollar, which may weaken further in the face of a strengthening Euro. The long-held policy of hanging on Uncle Sam's coat tails has left the British economy devoid of investment and vulnerable to global financial market perturbations. The city has become even more critical to political and economic survival than ever. The growth of EU power presents not just a problem of timing, nor is the solution one of changing horses. For Britain, living with the European superstate will be like fitting square pegs into round holes.

The rest of the EU leadership, most notably France and Germany, are seeking to build a new European superstate capable of challenging the US, and of setting its own political, economic and social agenda. The agenda will be aimed at defending and expanding European power and interest. Achieving such an agenda will inevitably depend on the creation of increasingly integrated European political, economic and military capacity.

As it increasingly challenges US dominance, the European superstate can but lead to conflict. The extent to which the US fears the inevitable military challenge this presents is indicated by its reaction to the European initiative to create the European Rapid Reaction Force. This rather tame proposal to create a tiny European independent military force was greeted with outright horror by all sections of US opinion, which (rightly) recognised it as the first step towards creating a European army independent of US-controlled institutions, such as NATO. Though now delayed, the European Rapid Reaction Force will inevitably re-emerge. Statist logic dictates that, just as a new European superpower cannot expand without a military force, US dominance cannot be overcome without intensifying the challenge to it economically and militarily. If past history is anything to go by, the Third World War portents are truly terrifying to contemplate.

However, Europe vs. US is not the only game in town. China's potential threat to the US has already set in train a potentially deadly arms race. Though we have heard much talk in the media about the US intention to build a missile defence system, 'son of Star Wars', little attention has been focused on its key objective – to use it against China. All the media talk has been focused on its potential (or otherwise) for defending the US from nuclear attack by 'rogue states' such as North Korea. The propaganda shrouds the reality - that the US views China's growing economic power as a medium-term threat, and part of its response is the son of Star Wars.

Critics of the planned system have argued that it would be all but useless in a full-scale nuclear attack by Russia. This misses the point, since it is only designed to protect the US from limited attack by a country possessing a small number of ballistic missiles. Hence, all the talk of the threat of rogue states developing a limited nuclear threat. However, away from the propaganda war, US planners see the son of Star Wars as the means of defeating China in a limited nuclear war. China currently only has 20 crude Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles capable of hitting the US, each armed with a single warhead. This is just the sort of threat the son of Star Wars is aimed at knocking out.

The US's plans for war with China are not some left-wing fantasy. Henry Kissenger, in his latest book, comes out against those in the US political elite who talk of winning a limited nuclear war against China. Instead, he argues that the US should actively engage with China as a means of encouraging US-led (and no doubt, US-owned) capitalism. The fact that this particular war criminal from the Vietnam era now finds himself on the left of the current US elite demonstrates just how far to the right free market ideology has shifted since the collapse of the Soviet empire.

Not surprisingly, China has viewed the son of Star Wars proposals with outright hostility. Part of the plan includes building the so-called Theatre Missile Defence, which includes a short-range anti-missile system based around the world, capable of knocking out nuclear missiles. The US has already

In recent years, China has put as little as 1% of GDP into military spending. However, since the US proposals to go ahead with the National Missile Defence System and Theatre Missile Defence, China has increased military spending to 28% of GDP.

earmarked Taiwan as one of the locations for the Theatre Missile Defence system. For the last twenty years the US has been building up a concentrated military presence in the far east. Taiwan has been the beneficiary of the latest US hardware, including fighter planes and the second generation Patriot anti-missile defence system. Taiwan has started to look a bit like a far eastern version of Israel. Inevitably, China recognises it as a staging post for a US attack. In response, it already has 500 of its most modern mobile missiles, armed with both nuclear and conventional war-heads, targeted on Taiwan.

In contrast to the Taiwanese situation, China's Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles aimed at the US are all stationary, and are kept both unfueled and unarmed, in order to demonstrate to the US that it is incapable of attacking it by mistake or surprise. China has learned the lesson of Russia, which attempted to build superpower status out of military might rather than economic strength. China's current model is to copy a key element of the capitalist one; it seeks to develop economic strength through protectionism, allowing it to develop its massive internal potential. Thus, it has made military spending a low priority, instead focusing all of its resources on economic development. In recent years, China has put as little as 1% of GDP into military spending - far less than most countries, developing or advanced. However, since the US proposals to go ahead with the National Missile Defence System and Theatre Missile Defence, China has increased military spending to 28% of GDP.

While China has kept its arsenal of Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles deliberately limited to 20 in an attempt to check US aggression, it has the capabilities to produce around 1,000 more within five years. It now appears that China has decided to develop much more sophisticated mobile multi-warhead ballistic missiles, known as D31 & D41.

The new wave of military expansion by China will both increase the threat of US retaliation, and destabilise the whole region. India is unlikely to limit its nuclear ambition, given China's military expansion. Even Japan will be encouraged by this to embark on its own military expansion. Nuclear weapons proliferation treaties are being ripped up. The risks of mistakes, knee-jerk reactions, rogue nuclear states and use of nuclear material/weapons by groups acquiring it from states all multiply tenfold with each ratcheting up of the ante. A nuclear war is in the making.

The Soviet Union, for all its horrors and its corruption of the idea of a socialist alternative, held capitalism in check. Now, unchecked, capitalism is reverting to type, and creating ever-greater inequalities within countries and between developed and undeveloped countries. Faced with the internal threat of a socialist revolt by its own working class, and a Soviet-backed uprising by the working class in the developing nations, capitalist states had to exercise some control over gross inequality. Since the demise of both the socialist idea and the Soviet Union, capitalist states have been able to allow capitalism a much freer reign to deepen gross inequality.

Faced with the Soviet Union as a common enemy, Europe and Japan were willing to play a supportive role to the US. With this basis for co-operation now gone, a number of economic blocks are recognising that they are capable of transforming themselves into superstates. These will face an increasingly ruthless and desperate US imperial power, determined to hang on to its dominant position. Their tactics for doing this include expanding into areas formerly closed to them by Soviet military might and spheres of influence.

A hundred years on, we find ourselves with double *deja vu*. First, several competing economic powers are looking to exploit more resources. Economic competition is increasingly sustained and backed by military power. Last time, it culminated in two world wars. Second, as states focus on each other and capitalism is allowed a free reign, inequality and poverty are exploding. Last time, it led to mass-movements against capitalism, with millions joining unions based on anarcho-syndicalist principles, struggling to throw off the oppression of the state and capital. They were eventually crushed by war, state murder, fascism and Marxism. This time it will be different.

Forget the idea of the nation state withering away through the process of globalisation. Welcome to a world of emerging competing superstates armed to the teeth and ready to do battle. This time, we must make the outcome different – the alternative is too terrible to contemplate.

If you want further information about the issues raised in closer look artciles in DA, drop us a line - DA, PO Box 1095, Sheffield S2 4YR.
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www.solfed.org.uk

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Locals - get involved locally in regular meetings and action-

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Red & Black Club, PO Box 17773, London SE8 4WX. Tel. 0207 3581854.
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South Herts SF, PO Box 493, St Albans AL1 5TW. Tel. 01727 862814.
West Midlands SF, PO Box 6705, Redditch, Worcs. B97 6SQ.
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West Yorks Solidarity Federation, PO Box 5, Hebden Bridge, W. Yorks HX7 8YN.
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- ○ Make me a Friend of DA. I realise DA is non-profit, keeps open books, is always strapped, etc. and I'd like to help. I will get future publications of the DA Collective and a choice of back-issues, plus the knowledge that I am contributing to its long-term development (fill in SO form, we suggest £2, £5, £10 or £25 per month depending on income and circumstances - & THANKS FOR YOUR SUPPORT!)

Name.....

Address.....

.....

STANDING ORDER (SO) FORM:

To the manager, ...Bank, ...Branch,
Address of your Bank:
.....
Please debit my/our account no. ....., sort code ... ..-... ..-.....
Please pay Solidarity Federation - Direct Action, account no.: 98963732; NatWest, Leeds City, 8 Park Row, Leeds LS1 1QS; sort code 60-60-05. First payment of £..... to be made on ....., 2001, and subsequent payments of £..... on the same day each month until further notice.

Name(s) .....Signature(s).....

All Cheques to 'Direct Action'. Add £3 for overseas subscriptions to cover postage.
Return this form to: DA-SF, PO Box 29, SW PDO, Manchester M15 5HW, England.

About Solidarity Federation...

Solidarity Federation was formed in March 1994. It is a federation of groups and individuals across England, Scotland and 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. 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 last IWA Congress in Granada, Spain, three new groups were welcomed into the IWA, to add to the seven new sections welcomed at the previous Congress.

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

Manchester SolFed
Support, Advice and Discussion Meetings, first Wednesday of the month, 8.30pm. All sessions open & free at: The Brow House, 1 Mabfield Road, Fallowfield, Manchester. Or contact Manchester SF (address in contacts, p.34).

Catalyst

Freesheet of the Solidarity Federation - IWA

If you like DA, you'll like Catalyst. December issue exposes a *Capitalist Crime against Humanity*, plus loads of news and comment. 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. 07984 675281.
Email; manchesterSF@scandrac.demon.co.uk

North & East London SolFed
Socials: Last Thursday of the month, 8pm, near Camden Tube. Also advice surgeries and regular discussions. For details of times & places, make contact (see p.34).

Education Workers
December Bulletin out now – low pay, sexist wagepackets and the fees fiasco, etc. in Higher Education. Free copies from EWN (address in contacts, p.34). www.ewn.org.uk

South Herts SolFed
Discussion Meetings 8pm, 2nd Wednesday of the month in St Albans (near main railway station). Contact address p.34.
Tel. 01727 862814.

SelfEd Collective
Self-education - developing and sharing ideas and skills. Download pamphlets FREE in FULL VERSIONS from the SelfEd website. SelfEd, PO Box 1095, Sheffield S2 4YR. www.selfed.org.uk

Aberystwyth Anti-war
SF and others have formed an active Aberystwyth anti-war group. Contact Peace, Box 103, Aberystwyth, Wales.

ORGANISING IN THE WORKPLACE:

STANDING UP TO THE BOSSES

Following the Manchester event, Solidarity Federation are holding a series of Discussion Days in the new year, including in Bradford and Sheffield.

Sessions will include:
- Where to start - tips and discussion for unionised or un-unionised workplaces.
- Health and Safety, and the Law: using it to our advantage.
- Direct action at work; case studies and practical experience sharing.

All welcome, open discussions, no dogma, no charge.

Further information - Manchester SF, PO Box 29, SW PDO, Manchester M15 5HW. Tel. 07964 675281.
www.manchestersf.org.uk or www.solfed.org.uk

MANPOWER: THEIR LOGO SHOWS THEM CRUCIFYING WORKERS

The International Workers' Association - the anarcho-syndicalist international - is organising actions against employment agencies, especially Manpower and Adecco, across the globe in 2002.

All anti-authoritarians are more than welcome. Let's make them realise we are on to them - and we intend to stop them.
Offers, messages, info - solfed@solfed.org.uk or secretariado@iwa-ait.org
Contact SF (details opposite) for updates

3 THINGS YOUR BOSS WON'T WANT YOU TO KNOW:

1. You have rights to holiday, rest breaks and sick pay;
2. Your workplace must have adequate heating, ventilation, lighting, sanitary facilities, cleaning, water and a place to have meals;
3. Sacking on grounds of pregnancy, race, sex, union membership or without written notice is illegal.

For totally free, friendly support, more info, help fighting your bosses, etc., contact:

Solidarity Federation, PO Box 1681, London N8 7LE 07984 675281. www.solfed.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]

MayDay 2002
Join the Mayday-2002 discussion group on Yahoo. Details at www.mayday2002.org.uk or maydayonline.org.uk (now re-designed). Also support needed for last year's MayDay prisoners - LDMG, c/o BM Haven, London WC1N 3XX. Tel. 0208 2452930

GM crop locations
www.gm-info.org.uk lists locations of UK winter oilseed rape GM trials.

Haringey Solidarity Group
For direct action, and direct control of communities and workplaces. http://home.clara.net/hsg/

Kate Sharpley Library
KSL - the long running source and publisher of lesser known gems of history. Send SAE for new detailed catalogue, with classics like 'Bash The Fash' and new stuff like 'The Couriers Are Revolting'. Also; donate anarchist books or newspapers, theoretical, organisational and agitational material, trial documentation, reports, etc. If we don't look after our history, who will? KSL, BM Hurricane, London WC1 N 3XX. http://flag.blackened.net/ksl/Sharpley.htm

Loombreaker
Send a stamp for a copy- c/o Manchester EF!, Dept 29, 22a Beswick St, Manchester M4 7HS. Now online - www.earthfirst.org.uk/loombreaker. Also, join Riotous Assembly - 1st Tuesday of the month, 7.30pm, Yard Theatre, 41 Old Birley St, Hulme, Manchester.

Squatters Handbook
The rules have changed, but it doesn't really make much difference to what will happen; it's just that the forms are different. Get your updated Squatter's Handbook for £1.57 (in stamps, cheque or postal order) from; Advisory Service for Squatters, 2 St Paul's Road, London N1 2QN. Tel. 0207 3598814.

Asylum Support
NCADC fighting deportation. 110 Hampstead Road, Birmingham, B20 2QS. Tel. 0121 5546947. Email ncadc@ncadc.demon.co.uk Website www.ncadc.demon.co.uk

The Sheffield Digger
Relaunched after a two year break. Packed with local news, forthcoming actions, etc. Get copies, volunteer, make donations (cheques to "The Sheffield Digger"): Sheffield Digger, c/o Brambles Resource Centre, 82 Andover St, Sheffield S3 9EH.

Global Women's Strike 2002
3rd Global Women's Strike 8 March 2002 - International Women's Day. Info: Crossroads Women's Centre, 230a Kentish Town Rd, London NW5 2AB. Tel 0207 4822496. http://womenstrike8m.server101.com

Desist
Essential, free reading - plus other publications from Anarchist Federation, c/o 84b, Whitechapel High St, London E1 7QX. www.afed.org.uk. 07946 214590

Networking Newsletter Project
Actions and more. Free hard copy for A5 SAE: NETWORKING NEWSLETTER PROJECT 6 Mount Street, Manchester M2 5NS. Tel: 0161 2269321 www.networkingnewsletter.org.uk

ONWARD
Anarchist News, Opinion, Theory and Strategy of Today. A 20-page, US-based quarterly anarchist newspaper with news from around the world and opinion and theory to build and strengthen the anarchist movement. To order: Single issues: $3 (outside US): Subscriptions: $7-10 in US ($10-13 outside US) PO Box 2671, Gainesville, FL 32602-2671, USA. info@onwardnewspaper.org www.onwardnewspaper.org

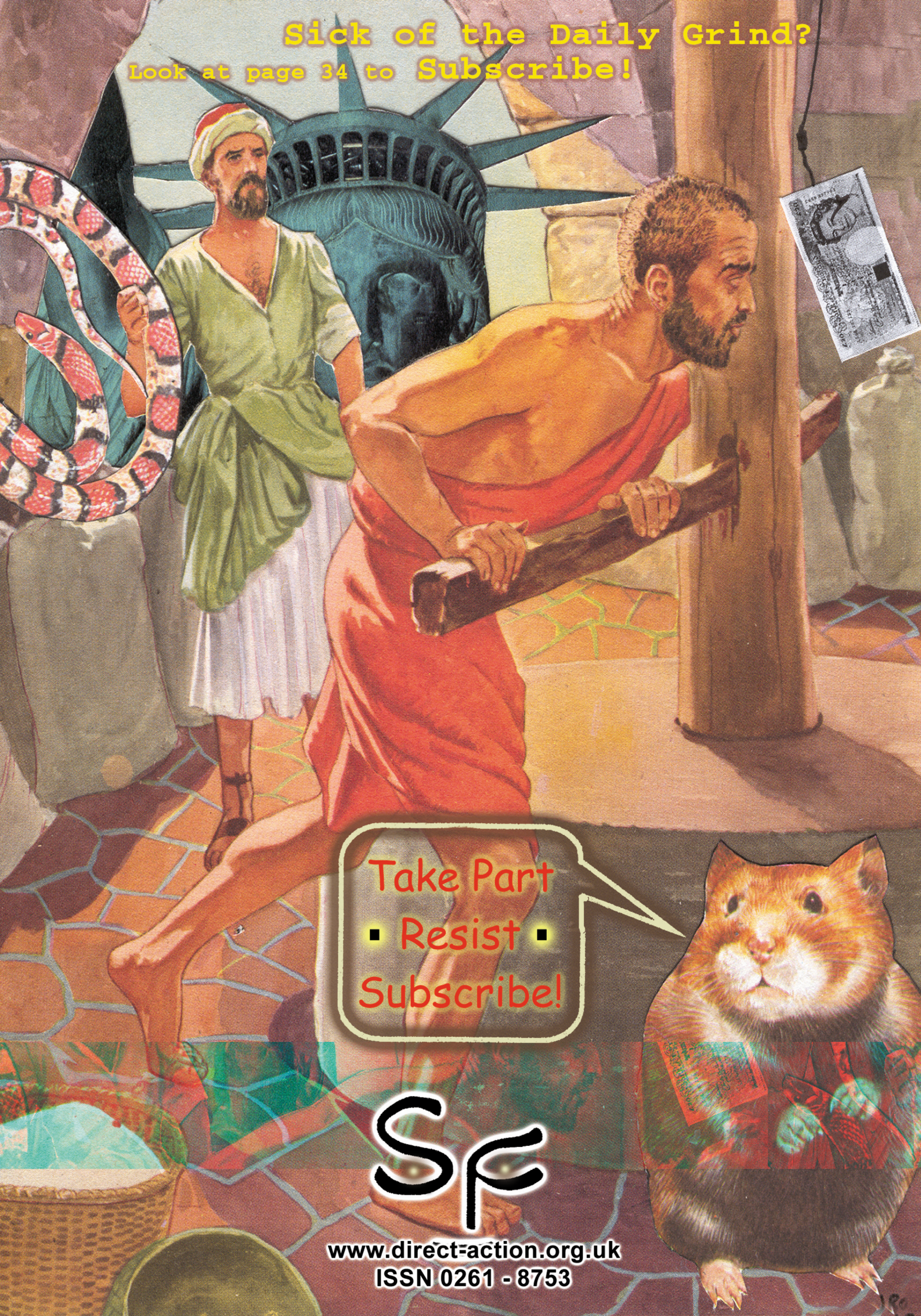
Corner House Briefings
Briefings available for free from cornerhouse@gn.apc.org. Website: http://cornerhouse.icaap.org/ Or write to: The Corner House, PO Box 3137, Station Road, Sturminster, Newton, Dorset DT10 1YJ. Tel: +44 (0)1258 473795

Edinburgh CitY
CitY (Change it Yourselves) is a new forum for people seeking non-party political social change. It provides space for the exchange of information and ideas. Meet every 2nd Wednesday of the month at 7.30pm at the CWU, 15 Brunswick St (off London Road), Edinburgh. www.edinburghcity.org.uk

Toxcat
Essential exposures of polluters, polllution and cover-ups. £2 or sub £12 from ToxCat, PO Box 29, Ellesmere Port, Cheshire CH66 3TX.

International Animal Rights
Gathering 8-11 February 2002. Targets: Biomedical Primate Research Centre (BPRC) and fur place: Filmacademie; Overtoom 301, Amsterdam. More info on the website; http://fly.to/adl.nl

A6 Bypass site, Derby
New protest camp near Alvaston, in Elvaston Park Coronation Plantation. Support welcome - site phone 07769534725 dot@theadora.screaming.net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