Direct Action

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NHS

PRIVATE
HEALTH CARE INC.

Is your Health and Safety safe and healthy ?

GATS - Profiting from Pain
NHS - Railtrack Style
FUN - and living dangerously

Global Capitalism vs. People in Argentina

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Direct Action

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Give war a chance

It seems only yesterday we were saved from the 'evil empire' (USSR). Now, there's suddenly a whole list of other evil-doers. How on earth are we supposed to feel safe and secure? Crimewatchers and the world's police forces are just sticking-plasters. The new 'anti-terror' measures in the USA and Europe are just bandages. The real cure, we are told, is to just give war a chance.

As capitalism's hegemony has advanced over the last 200 years, the frequency, violence and number of deaths from capitalist wars have also increased. Forcing will on people means making wars. Spreading the message that division (i.e. patriotism, competition, income, nationalism, racism, sexism, etc.) is good, is right at the heart of the machine.

Bush knows getting people to kill each other won't really solve anything. We all know what clothes this particular emperor is (not) wearing. But by controlling the basics of human needs, as someone said, people can become tired of sleep, love, singing and dancing sooner than of war. In the 'free' world, ironically, we are forced to slave for money to survive, since every basic thing we need is privatised. Survival is about money control. What would happen if the US Government suddenly decided to spend an extra $50 billion on global public health? We'd get rid of tuberculosis (*Ebola with wings,* p.25). What if they spent it on war instead? Lots of deprived people (in the widest sense) would join the newly flushed military as a means of survival (sic). Oh dear, it just happened.

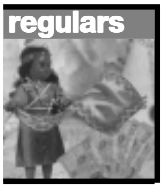
Of course, the key to leadership is to lie continuously (now known as 'spin') - hence, it has an inherently corrupting influence on human nature. As Hitler said in 1933, "I am insulted by the persistent assertion that I want war. Am I a fool? War! It would settle nothing!" Now, the war against terrorism is fought by terrorists against people. In this particular 'free' world - where sidewalks can no longer be walked on without permission from the police (see p.17), food and water come – at a price – and safety, security and health? - they are simply mirages. How can we be healthy while we are screwing our planet's lungs, not to mention playing 'god' with the global ecosystem?

Alan Dalton was employed by the Labour Government to review the work of the Environment Agency, which has an excellent record for letting companies off, and a disastrous record for doing anything serious to protect the environment. His report basically says this (write to DA for a copy), so he was promptly sacked, thus guaranteeing that Labour can continue helping capitalism its own health and safety. Meanwhile, the courts are busy getting business pals off the hook for poisoning people with asbestos (*Free to kill,* p.6). And the Government is planning to privatise genetics services, helped by the large scale sale of NHS patient data and tissue to members of the Bioindustry Association, the trade association of biotech companies (see next issue). Now that the UK officially has the worst health service in living memory, we are asked to consider, "who are the real wreckers?" We need look no further than *NHS, Railtrack-style* (p.20).

OK, let's look further anyway - at global-level wrecking tactics (*Private profit from pain,* p.31). The World Trade Organisation's position at present amounts to asking poor nations to trust them as safe, honest brokers. Given their record, this is a bit like the big bad wolf telling Little Red Riding Hood, "Sorry about your granny. Why don't you pop over for lunch?"

Meanwhile, Enron and Argentina (p.17) are portrayed as the result of a few corrupt 'bad' people, in a desperate attempt to shine the light away from the real culprits – the entire management structure itself. It is time for a vote of no confidence in the board of directors. Let's put them in a pit, armed with only basic weapons that cannot cause widespread damage to the rest of us, and let them get on with it. See how safe and healthy they feel.

It seems these days revolution is increasingly not a luxury, but a necessity - matter of (global) health and safety survival. For some starting tips on a new, safe and healthy hobby, just along these lines, check out; *"Is your Health and Safety safe and healthy?"* (p.18). DA



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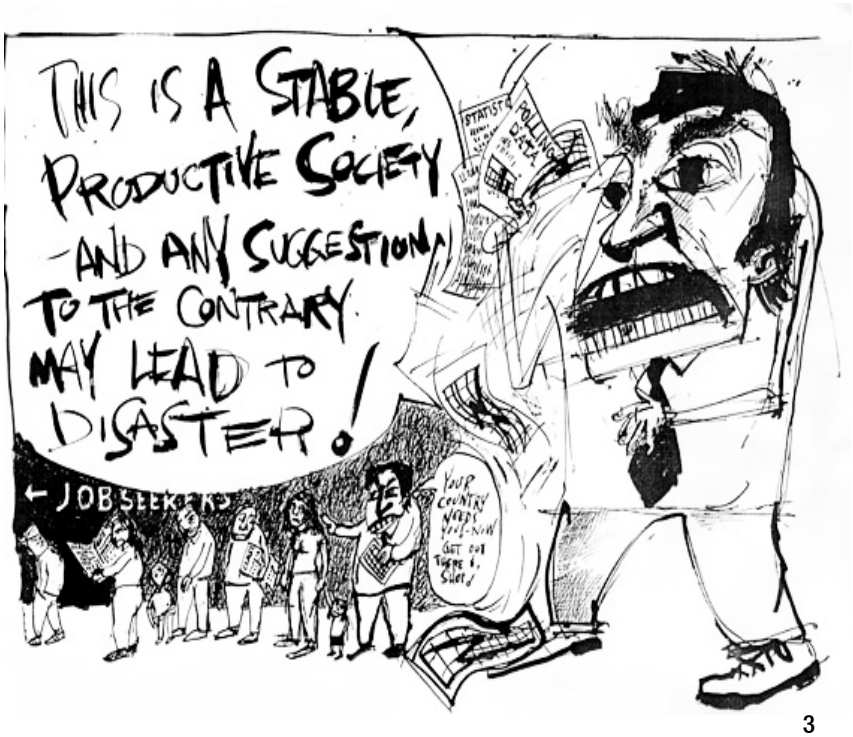


NOTES, MUSING & MORALISING ON:

FUN – & LIVING DANGEROUSLY

We live with a culture fascinated by risk, but one that constantly tries to avoid responsibility for the down side. Capitalist culture is happy to identify with the cool cars, celeb thrills and edgy recreations side. But it skulks around the dangers of flying, going by rail, of eating this, of doing that, of taking this drug, of not taking another drug.

The media is full of scare stories and scare realities - but rarely is there any discussion of what these risks mean, of why these things are risky, of why people do risky things, or of who is responsible for them going on around us. We are expected to believe that there are simply things that are dangerous and people get killed and maimed in ways which make good headlines. So, Foot and Mouth can be reduced to a cute little white calf, and the dangers of railway privatisation can be reduced to the horror of the multiple deaths and a solitary red light. Any idea of greed before safety is either ignored or, at best, provides a fix for the satire junkies.

Dangerous sports

In a world where the media is owned by a super-rich few, and has surpassed '1984' in its sophistication, reach and pervasiveness, dangerous sports are a particular area where it gets particularly schizophrenic. Amidst the fast, dangerous adverts, the tragedy of a sports injury or death(s) predictably creates instant global coverage about how things should be banned. That the people concerned were all undertaking the activity voluntarily seems to be irrelevant to the moral outcry of a bored and salacious hackset. Some people like to undertake risky activities - it's their thing.

There is a certain attraction to cave diving and rock climbing, the pushing the boundaries and the chance of ending up stone dead. Then there's leaping off a tall building, feeling the wind rush past very fast, the last second releasing of the parachute and the glide to safety and an equally real chance of ending up splattered all over the pavement. Morally, there is only the third party risk that participants should avoid – if you might land on someone, don't jump.

Playing Sunday league football presents a good chance of a bruising, and a less likely chance of more serious injury, but people will play. Getting knocked over is accepted as one of the risks. However, if some nut case jumps on your head studs first, we go outside the sort of risk everyone consented to when deciding to play. It comes down to responsibility for your actions.

Every year, a few climbers get killed in snow and ice on the mountains (well, before climate change, when it used to snow more…). Even in summer, a few walkers usually get lost, fall off crags or keel over in the heat (okay, very rare so far that one). Now, if these people had to cross the fells as part of everyday life, I could understand the predictable media outcry. Yet strangely, shepherds, some of whom do indeed spend much time up there, rarely fall off.

Accidents happen, and you can't blame people for the vagaries of negative serendipity. Anyone who walks on hills should know the dangers. If they insist on staying wilfully ignorant, they have to take the responsibility for their own stupidity. That is not to say society should abandon people to their own recklessness. Helping those in trouble is human nature (contrary to what capitalists would have us believe), and even if people get in a mess of their own making, the rest of us in society should help them out.

Cars, bikes, walks, trains

Clearly, risks are not all the same size or sort, and how people relate to them varies. A pedestrian nipping across when the red man shines is mainly putting only themselves at risk of serious harm. A cyclist riding at night without lights could hurt a pedestrian or another cyclist, but more likely they will be hit by a car, bus, or, worse still, white van/truck. On the other hand, it's pretty obvious that any driver's error of judgement is going to potentially do a lot of damage to the biker/walker. Train crashes can kill and injure a lot in one go, since they are a mass transit system. Fortunately, even in the face of years of neglect and greedy profit-taking, train crashes may be writ large, but they are rare, and trains remain much safer than roads thanks to skilled, experienced and trained workers.

We live in a society where it is socially acceptable to risk the death of someone else in order to save a few seconds on the way to the next red light. Bad consequence, stupid system. People have to rush; time is money; "I need to be at work or else". Not many people would blindly shoot a gun into a street in order to save a few seconds, yet they will still dash through red lights, scattering pedestrians, phone on ear, or worse still, one of those dangly wires. They don't care if you die. They are rapidly losing their humanity and being taken over by market god.

Working to rules

At work it may initially seem that some health and safety principles contradict the idea that we should exercise personal responsibility. If someone is stupid enough to stand on a wobbly chair to reach a heavy file off a high shelf and falls and breaks something, surely it's their own fault? However, since they are at work, it's all different. We have to ask all sorts of other questions. Why did they have to stand on the chair? Was there not a kick stool or a stepladder or similar? Why had someone had to put heavy files on high shelves? Were the people involved appropriately trained to undertake these actions?

NO MATTER HOW CONVINCING THE EVIDENCE IS THAT MMR IS SAFE, ONCE TONY AND HIS MINIONS START SWEARING IT IS, IT'S JUST SO HARD TO BELIEVE.

At home, falling off wobbly chairs means living with the consequences of your actions. But when someone is employed, it is the employer's responsibility to ensure they are as safe as possible. Managers trying to shirk their responsibility often try to make the person's actions look stupid. In reality, the cause is being forced into a stupid-like action due to the nature of their employment - close deadlines, boss on their back, no or poor training, lack of suitable equipment, etc. Since you are 'owned' at work and someone else is trying to make a fast buck out of your labour, they must also take the downside. If they claim responsibility for you as your boss, then they are responsible for your health and safety too (shame the courts don't agree).

The upside is that, despite years of undermining of our rights, there is still protection of basic health and safety at work. And beyond and better still, we can choose to fight for our own safety by forcing the employer to acknowledge and act on their responsibility not to maim and kill us. As always, the most effect way to do this is through collective, direct action (see p.20 for more on H+S at work).

Responsible profits?

People were poisoned for years in asbestos plants by bastards who were quite happy to kill thousands upon thousands rather than lose a few crumbs of profit (see p.6). Employers claim lack of funds and condemn office workers to bad backs, ruined eyesight and Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI), which can be so bad they can no longer work. Just to save the boss a few pounds. And he (sic) will say he has to because the market demands it – other bosses are egging each other on to make their places even more cheap and dangerous than the next one.

The system drives the logic; those who cut the most corners end up with the most cloth left over. Against this, the only checks and balances are human nature and common sense, both of which seem to have drained away from most bosses ("must save seconds, kill pedestrians, get to the next red light first"). Oh, and those health and safety regulations... they never bother fining you anyway, and if they do, the courts will see you right.

Grey areas: MMR

If work risk is black and white (at least morally), MMR is not. MMR may lead, in a small number of cases, to autism and other health problems (though it is unproven and nothing to do with whether baby Blair has had the jab). Without the triple vaccination, epidemics of measles, mumps and/or rubella could happen and hundreds of children could be killed or disabled. Even the single vaccine option would increase epidemic risks. The clear conflict here is between individual risk to the parents' child and collective risk to numbers of unknown children. In modern 'free rider' culture, understandably, everyone wants to avoid the individual risks and benefit from the collective protection of high MMR rates. Given that governments and capitalism have increasingly built up the cult of the individual, it's not surprising they are having so much trouble convincing people to act for a collective good. That's the free lunch society for you ('fuck you' society, if you prefer). And no matter how convincing the evidence is that MMR is safe, once Tony and his minions start swearing it is, it's just so hard to believe.

Still somewhat grey is the whole recreational drugs thing – alcohol, ecstacy, etc. have potentially serious health issues (the legal one more so), not to mention benefits. Everyone has to judge whether the risk to their own health is worth the pleasure. Smoking gets even more hazy, since 'passive' smoking is harmful to others, meaning respect is due to others who don't smoke. On the other hand, tolerance to each other's foibles is a virtue too.

Consent and consequence

Once the grey haze takes hold, statistics are often peddled as useful in 'proving' risks and links. They can clarify, and they can be used to mislead. Nuclear power looks safe compared to smoking, until you realise that we are not comparing like with like. The consequences of nuclear meltdown are of a very different order, not no mention the fact that they are beyond our control. With risk, like most things, size is important. Many people, offered the chance of having a pound or a 1/1000 odds of £1000, might take on the flutter. But offered £10,000 or 1/1000 chance of a million, the 10K starts sounding more sensible. Consequences are part and parcel of risk decisions.

Day-to-day, it is not feasible to make judgements based on carefully collected and processed and considered statistical data. For a nuclear plant or the MMR jab, it might be worthwhile looking into as much information as is accessible, including a variety of statistical data, but in deciding whether to cross the road, getting out the calculator is not a sensible option. In fact, for most daily personal risk decisions, a load of statistics would likely get in the way.

Clearly, at the heart of the issue is the fact that we all take risks and we must all take the appropriate responsibility for them, and that this simple motto would work in a world without bosses and inequality. Unfortunately, since people are exploited, we are 'persuaded' to take risks against our better judgement - having to live in the mad market means we often lose sight of it.

A society based on people taking responsibility for the impact of their actions is a society based on mutual respect. The problem right now is that this basic, simple moral good is constantly undermined by the society we find ourselves in, where greed is good. Compensation culture is not good, but is inevitable in a world where people can own each other, at least for 8 hours a day, and likely for more. So, we arrive back at one of the fundamentals of anarchosyndicalism; consent, genuine, free from coercion. As long as they avoid risking others, people should be free to be as unsafe as they want.

Free to Kill

Judges are robbing thousands of asbestos victims and their widows of compensation.

Everyone now accepts that asbestos causes lung diseases such as mesothelioma. It is also common knowledge that this fact was known but covered up for several decades by the big companies involved in profiting from continued asbestos manufacture and use. So it follows that the victims should at least be compensated (or their families, where they have already died).

In reality, while compensation payments have been made, it looks as though the English Courts have decided that the corporate and government coffers have paid out enough. Thousands of people are set to go uncompensated, as the legal arguments turn to ways of letting the guilty off the hook.

In December 2001, the Court of Appeal upheld a previous High Court judgement that compensation could not be paid in a case where a worker was exposed to the deadly dust by more than one employer - the case for many workers, particularly in the high-risk construction trades. The appeal was lodged by the widow of Arthur Fairchild, a member of UCATT, who died in 1996. The case was against Leeds City Council and Waddingtons, who exposed him to roughly the same amount of asbestos, so neither could be held mainly responsible.

As a result of this ruling, there will be no compensation for victims of mesothelioma where the individual was exposed to the deadly dust by more than one employer. By 2010, 10,000 people a year will be dying from mesothelioma, twice the number killed annually on the roads, yet because of the Fairchild ruling, employers can now admit that they knowingly exposed their workers to asbestos and walk away without having to pay a penny in compensation. All they have to do is persuade the Court that they weren't the only ones doing it.

If you get poisoned by one employer, you get compensated; if you get poisoned by two, they both get off and you get nothing. Just where is the justice or the logic in this?

Clearly, the judgement is a devastating blow to the widows and families of men who have died or are dying. It is estimated that by 2010, 10,000 people a year will be dying of mesothelioma, twice the number who are killed annually on the roads. Dozens of mesothelioma compensation claims were awaiting the Court of Appeal's decision.

The original judge who heard the lead case of Fairchild commented that, in his view, it was "difficult to imagine a more drawn out or painful way in which to die". And yet, because just one fibre can kill and Arthur Fairchild had worked with at least two companies who had exposed him to asbestos, his widow has got nothing.

As asbestos has long been recognised as a lethal material, the logical conclusion that any sane person would draw is that both employers had contributed to Mr Fairchild's death, and so they should share the cost of compensation to his widow. Instead, in a shining example of the quite extraordinary leniency shown to big business in Blair's Britain, both were allowed to wriggle off the hook, and now, around 80% of all mesothelioma claims will be void.

So from now on, companies can admit that they have negligently exposed workers to asbestos. Even when the workers develop mesothelioma, the bosses can potentially walk away without having to pay a penny. Of course, the other winners will be the insurance companies, who stand to save tens of millions of pounds in payouts - whilst victims are left penniless.

Sally Henson's husband Peter, who recently died of mesothelioma, had worked in at least two workplaces where he was exposed to asbestos. Her comment on the ruling summed it up:

"I don't want to hear about legal technicalities. Where is the compassion for the human victims of the asbestos tragedy? If this is what you get from judges, then people's lives should no more be in their hands than in those of the companies who used asbestos. Clearly neither of them care. Companies are going to get away scot free and the judges are allowing it."

All premature deaths are sad, but there is something especially vile about deaths that happen because someone simply set out to do an honest day's work and trusted their employer would not knowingly expose them to a slow and painful death from lung cancer.

Whether it is a privatised train system endangering its customers, or a company endangering its employees, the Blair fact is this: New Labour and their Courts will let them get away with it. If you're an employer who has killed a worker through negligence or malpractice, you've got less actual chance of ever tasting prison food than some skint single mother who has lifted a packet of Pampers from Boots. Compare the snatching away of compensation from asbestos victims and their families with the glut of golden handshakes given to wealthy businessmen, and wonder just why this government hates the working class so much.

Fire-proof Facts:

- **Biggest UK asbestos firm Turner and Newall had insurance but was bought out by a US firm, and is now cynically trying to avoid paying victims, at least until significant numbers of claimants die uncompensated.**
- **A Belgian study recently found that, based on 160 random post mortem examinations, 14% of the general population already bear the scars of asbestos in their lungs.**
- **1% of all 55 year-olds are currently dying of asbestos related disease, and every 8 minutes someone dies of the same.**
- **For free advice and refrrals on the risks, contact solfed@solfed.org.uk SF, PO Box 29, SW PDO, Manchester M15 5HW.**

There are public meetings being held to protest against the Fairchild ruling and launch a campaign, Contact the Greater Manchester Asbestos Victims Support Group, 23 New Mount Street, Manchester M4 4DE, Tel. 0161-953 4037; email: asbestos.gmavsg@virgin.net

Rail-spinning

Con-men with really bad briefs.

Labour has made a complete mess of transport – and nowhere more so than on the railways. They are at a loss as to what to do with a rail network brought to the point of collapse by the same free market which so mesmerises them.

Assailed by passengers and under the cosh for a string of horrific rail accidents and poor safety in general, they now face mounting industrial action from the RMT rail union. The action stems directly from the chaos of privatisation, and its accompanying mass redundancies and worsening conditions. The capitalist media has been quick to focus on drivers using the chronic driver shortage to drive up their pay (sorry folks, they didn't come up with the crazy market idea). However, copywriters are not interested in the rest of the rail industry, where workers have to survive on as little as £160 take home pay, constantly having to switch jobs with each round of takeovers/redundancies.

Neither are the media interested in the constant bullying and intimidation tactics used by managers to force through constant change in the name of 'productivity' (i.e. cuts in safety and conditions). When workers naturally go to their unions for help, and union activists naturally do their best for them, management predictably sling them on the dole queue. Greg Tucker, the victimised union activist at the centre of the South West train dispute, is just the latest in a long line of workers who have been sacked or disciplined for their trade union activities. I was sacked from the railways for the same thing. In fact, the sacking of trade unionists has become a standard means to intimidate workers and try to drive home the message that resistance is futile.

Rail workers are fed up to their back teeth and just cannot take any more. Given the daily fear they endure, and the shocking mess that the private bosses have made, one might expect sympathy from Labour. Instead, they criticise rail workers as "wreckers", and fall back on the old tactic of trying to blame the strikes on a few 'hard left' union activists. So what explains the massive ballot results in favour of strike action?

Labour has long ago slipped into right-wing fantasy land, where workers are passive and happy with any lot they get. Successful strike ballots only happen because nasty activists brainwash the "naturally" deferential workers. Tony Blair thinks the workers are just too thick to think for themselves.

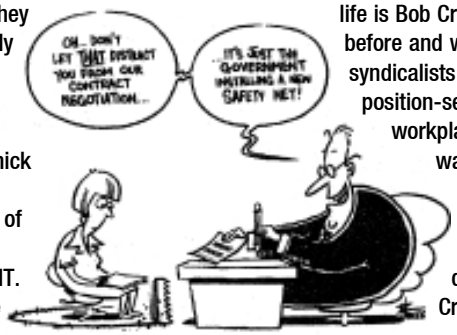
Following this ridiculous line of thinking, Labour's 'solution' is to target the activists within the RMT. So, they recently called upon the TUC who, anxious as ever to please, drew up briefing notes called "Leadership Election in the RMT". These were distributed by acting General Secretary and long-standing Labour Exec member Vernon Hince, to potential right-wing candidates in union elections.

If it was not bad enough that the TUC has been interfering in the internal elections of a union on behalf of their Labour masters, the briefing notes themselves are scandalous. After noting that the "there is a real prospect that the left-wing fundamentalists could hold the top four jobs by the middle of the year", they go on to 'threaten' that the new General Secretary could be the "extreme left wing" candidate Bob Crow. He is linked with the Communist Party, The Socialist Labour Party, The Socialist Alliance and the SWP, all in one paragraph.

The briefing also names other potential 'left-wing' candidates for union positions as Greg Tucker, Pat Sikorski, Alex Gordon and Phil Boston. All have fought against the effects of privatisation, and all four have been sacked for representing workers' interests, and reinstated after action by members. It then spells out exactly what lines right-wing candidates should use to beat the left in the election, even including a full election address for Phil Bialyk to use (the right-wing's main hope against Crow for General Secretary). This was clearly necessary since Phil is just too thick to write his own.

At one point, it suggests that candidates should ask workers to "declare that we share a commitment to the success of the companies we work for. We want to understand the business goals of the firm". Given that the main business goals are to drive a coach and horses through pay and conditions of members, I think they already 'understand'. It also gets mean and nasty; left wingers are "fanatics" and candidates are told to call them "fundamentalist", because the word currently has a high prominence and negative (i.e. terrorist) undertones.

The TUC bosses think that spin can make workers forget their everyday working lives. The fact that they are completely out of touch was proved when Bob Crow romped home as General Secretary. The irony is that anyone who has dealt with Crow knows that he has had only one ambition in life - to become RMT General Secretary. His only interest in life is Bob Crow; he has sold out workers before and will again. Anarcho-syndicalists have long argued against position-seeking in unions; grassroots workplace organisation is the real way forward. Even if 'genuine' militants get elected, they inevitably get corrupted once cut off from the day-to-day of the workplace. Bob Crow comes pre-corrupted.



on the edge

Street Disney

When campaigners in Manchester set up their own DISNEY™ sweatshop in St Anne's, kids got to meet a new side of their favourite characters. Passers by saw Minnie Mouse™, Pocahontas™ and Mulan™ slaving away at their cartoon sewing machines, while being bullied by an evil factory boss, all to the intensely ironic sounds of real Disney film songs, including "Whistle While You Work", "Bare Necessities" and "Hi Ho". Lots of the lyrics took on a painful new meaning.

The action was to raise awareness about conditions in South China factories, where Disney merchandise is produced. Despite the props basically consisting of four cardboard cereal packet masks, three cardboard cut out sewing machines, a trestle table and a ghettos blaster, it attracted an amazing amount of attention. A constant ring of watchers and readers surrounded the display, many commenting on the similarities between overseas sweatshops and UK call centres.

Strangely, there was a complete absence of the usual store managers spoiling the fun. Perhaps they feared becoming panto villain and being booed off the stage. The two police who turned up seemed to feel the same, and decided to go and talk to the nearest Big Issue seller instead. Other actions took place around the country, and there maybe an encore soon.

Contact: Labour behind the Label, 07816 234545
www.labourbehindthelabel.org

Press keypads now

Onyx, the company behind the plans for a new incinerator in Sheffield have a new survey on the let's recycle website asking if energy from waste is the best option for plastics waste. Go to: www.letsrecycle.com/index.jhtml to say no.

on the edge

No more barbed wire bras

In the face of Burma Campaign images of models in barbed wire bras, lingerie giant Triumph International has decided to pull out of Burma (see DA21). Burma's ruling military dictatorship has now lost one more customer, to add to the list, now including Arcadia Group, British Home Stores, C&A, Phillips, Levi Strauss, Apple, Pepsi Cola and Reebok. Over the last 14 years, foreign capital has served simply to strengthen - financially and politically - the very dictatorship that oppresses and impoverishes the people of Burma. Yvette Mahon, Director of the Burma Campaign, said: "Triumph have obviously been taken by surprise by the strength of feeling against doing business in Burma - having been inundated by customers pledging to boycott their products. This should serve as a warning to other companies operating in Burma - get out now or you could be next."

Meanwhile, as the largest UK investor in Burma, Premier Oil must be next in the firing line. Premier Oil's investment in the Yetagun gasfield not only provides the regime with millions of dollars to spend on arms, but also provides it with a veneer of respectability. So, add your voice to those calling on Premier Oil to get out of Burma. Premier Oil have a feedback page on their website, and pledge to display comments left there:

www.premier-oil.com/default.asp?sID=21&documentID=144
Burma Campaign UK, Bickerton House 25/27 Bickerton Rd, London N19 5JT
www.burmacampaign.org.uk

Anti-war coalitioning was written by a member of Lancs SolFed. If you want to join, raise questions or find out more about the work of this group or about Solfed, contact: SolFed, PO Box 469, Preston PR1 8XF solfed@solfed.org.uk

Anti-War Coalitioning

After the shock of 9/11, the immediate worry for a lot of people was how the Americans would react, especially with simple nutter George Dubyer in control. It didn't take long to realise that it was worst case scenario. Across the country, people came together in local anti-war coalitions to say; "NOT IN MY NAME".

The bottom line for the coalitions was opposing the killing of more innocent people to revenge 9/11. They included liberals, pacifists, various Marxists, and Muslims, as well as libertarians and anarchists. All had different reasons for opposing the 'war on terrorism'; anti-war, anti-American, pro-Afghanistan, even pro-Taliban.

While George Bush infantily claimed; "you are with us or you are a terrorist", some on the Left assumed a mirror image, which took them to a pro-Taliban stand on the basis that anyone opposing US imperialism should be supported no matter how vile.

Anarcho-syndicalists and anarchists have worked within the anti-war groups on a democratic basis, while reserving the right to put the view forward that it is the very existence of authority and people's acceptance of it that is the root cause of all war. Unfortunately, others saw the anti-war groups as a way of simply peddling their papers and party line, and boosting recruitment. The CND and Socialist Workers' Party leadership initiated a national Stop The War Coalition. It then tried to get the local groups to affiliate. This 'top down' approach is typical, and many local groups did not affiliate despite dubious tactics employed by SWP members to assure groups that they had affiliated when they had not.

Lancashire provides two very different experiences of local stop the war coalitions. These are fairly typical and were repeated around the country. In Preston, the group began after a large, mainly spontaneous gathering in the town centre. The first public meeting was well attended, and a wide cross section of the community was represented. However, instead of using the meeting to plan action, it was taken over by those wishing to make speeches and push their own party line. There was also an unwillingness to challenge the anti-Jewish and anti-women views expressed by some of the Muslim, self-styled, "community leaders".

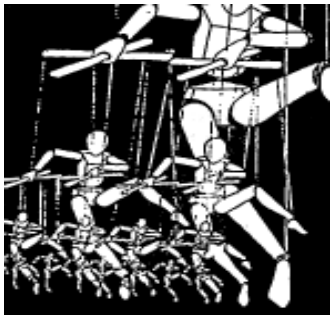
It was obvious that this was a coalition in name only. There were demonstrations, but many people soon became disillusioned. The national Stop The War coalition affiliation was fudged as the SWP tried to get it through without any debate or vote. The SWP and the Socialist Party produced their own leaflets and petitions and set up stalls, which only served to confuse and bore people. The SolFed members and others expressed their disappointment and frustration at the turn of events, which the self-imposed leadership ignored, and Preston coalition soon became moribund.

In Lancaster, things were different. The coalition had an active anarchist/anarcho-syndicalist presence along with various Greens, feminists and pacifists. The Trot element was very small and consequently was unable to exert damaging influence. Their back-door attempt to get the group to join the SWP-sponsored national coalition was laughed out.

The anti-war stall at the public demonstrations had leaflets from all viewpoints, while the petitions were drawn up by the Stop the War group, as agreed at their weekly meetings. The coalition soon represented a wide cross-section of the community. There were clearly differences within it, but these were talked through at the weekly meetings. Unlike the Preston experience, the meetings were not dominated by Trots and 'leaders', so instead of dwindling away, people kept coming, and the sessions expanded into 'activist meetings', discussing wider issues like threats to civil liberties, etc. Different approaches were accepted as long as they did not detract from the campaign. As time went on, separate workshop sessions were organised for people to discuss different aspects and viewpoints on the war, leaving the weekly meetings to discuss the practical aspects of the campaign.

Lancashire Solidarity Federation had members in both the Preston and Lancaster groups, who helped to write and distribute leaflets, as well as publishing anarcho-syndicalist views on the conflict and the causes of war in general. Hence,

Socialist Non-Alliance



Last December, the Socialist Alliance held its first major conference to discuss a new constitution. As predicted last year (DA18), it resulted in a split with the Socialist Party (ex Militant Tendency) staging a highly choreographed walk-out. This has left the Socialist Workers' Party in total control.

The issue was over how the Socialist Alliance should be run. Both sides accused the other of being 'undemocratic', a favourite ploy in the Left's infighting, as they struggled to gain an advantage for their own party's brand of Marxism. The SWP, being the largest group, argued for one member one vote, which would ensure that they would be able to dominate the Alliance. The Socialist Party demanded a federal approach with the various parties in the Alliance having a more equal say.

Immediately after the conference, the Socialist Party called for the creation of a 'United Left' electoral pact to prevent left wing candidates standing against each other. This is also doomed to failure and exposes the fact that the SA was no more than a flag of convenience for the Marxist left.

The Socialist Alliance is now a toy of the SWP. Just as Globalise Resistance is their anti-capitalist wing, and the Anti-Nazi League their anti-racist wing, so the SA has become the electoral arm of the party. It is simply another tool for recruiting people – one for those who prefer reform to revolution. When it has outgrown its usefulness, it will be dropped and left to rot. This would be no great worry if it were confined to the Marxist zealots arguing between themselves in committee rooms. Unfortunately, they pull people in, use them and then spit them out the other end totally disillusioned with radical politics.

The plain fact is that the Socialist Alliance was, and is, a continuation of the old, discredited politics of the Marxist left. It has nothing to offer in the way of genuine alternatives to the authoritarian capitalist society we live in. It simply offers a mirror image with different leaders.

In the May local elections, the lucky voters may have the choice of voting for the Socialist Alliance, the Socialist Party or even the Socialist Labour Party (Arthur Scargill's Red Army). Even within the Socialist Alliance, some want a "vote Socialist Alliance where you can, but Labour if you must" message, others a "vote for any socialist, or sometimes a Green" one.

Another worrying aspect is that the SA is turning its attention to Trade Union political funds. For years, the Solidarity Federation has argued that the political fund should be used solely for trade union activity, and not given to an outside political party or group. Due to their strange historical correlation to the Labour Party, the rest of the Left has resisted this. Now, given the increasing hostility of trade union members to New Labour, they are trying to get unions to affiliate to the SA so it will receive the money. This cynical move should be resisted by all trade unionists who want to be free of any outside political domination. Any money would be used to further the goal of gaining domination over working class politics for their own political ends.

British working class history is littered with wrong turnings. Too often we have put our faith in leaders who promise to lead us to a better future by their superior intellect and analysis. Let's not let this happen again. The only people who can bring about fundamental change in this country, and the rest of the world, are the people themselves, all we need is the self-confidence to do it. Come May, I'll be opting for the increasingly popular option of ignoring whole voting booth farce and doing something useful for change instead.

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the group members saw two different ways of organising a campaign. There are clear lessons for anyone contemplating getting involved in such campaigns in the future.

Firstly, it is important to establish from the outset the basic objectives of any group and the principles it will operate from. Adherence to real democratic processes are important. To those who are new to political activity, it often seems like time-consuming nit-picking when sly undemocratic activities are challenged, so it is important to prevent this by establishing basic principles right at the beginning.

Real democracy means no leadership - all decisions should be made at meetings of the whole group. In many local groups, the SWP and others wanted to set up 'steering groups' to make decisions on how the campaign should be conducted. This clearly contravenes basic democratic principles.

Secondly, clear agendas are needed, which must be adhered to. Separate forums for analysis and practical action would stop certain political activists from continually hijacking meetings with the regurgitation of their party line. It also gives people the choice of hearing different ideas and be able to put their own views across.

Of course these experiences were nothing new. The same things happened in the anti-Poll Tax and numerous other campaigns in the past, and often, no matter what we do, the Marxist-Leninists will attempt to gain control; it is in their nature. We can only be vigilant and act in a principled way. Move forward, and watch your back.

on the edge

Right Royal flop

While the corporate media interpreted the Queen's decision to not visit Bristol during her Jubilee tour as 'a snub', anarchists in Bristol recognised it as 'a result'. The so-called 'Jubilee Tour' in May, celebrating the Queen's 50 years as monarch, misses the city. The last time the Queen visited Bristol was in 1999, when she was subjected to a hail of abuse. So vicious and apparently unexpected was the verbal assault that her entourage were caught off-guard and unable to usher her away in time. Clearly, the Queen heard every jibe and insult thrown at her, and presumably she was not amused. Consequently (we reckon), the Queen has chosen to bypass the city this summer.

It is 10 years since the annus horribilis, which is not some weird condition you develop from sitting on the throne too long, but was the Queen's own phrase to describe the year the royal family fell apart. So, let's celebrate 10 years since anyone cared about them.

BNP fraud - 'official'!

Steve Smith, the BNP organiser for Burnley, was sentenced to six months in prison in January after he forged nomination documents for the local council elections. Smith was the BNP candidate for Burnley at the General Election in June 2001 when he polled 11%; the BNP's second highest result in the election. He claimed; "If it is for the betterment of society, then breaking the rules is justified". So much for this "party of law and order". Smith was sentenced to six months and will spend the run-up to the elections inside. He is believed to be the first person to be prosecuted under the updated Representation of the People Act, which came into force in February 2001.

on the edge

Campsfield to close

The good news is that, following tireless campaigning, the government has announced Campsfield is to close by around the end of the year. The bad news is that new, bigger detention centres are being opened and more innocent refugees and other migrants are being detained - Yarl's Wood (900) and Harmondsworth (550) opened last year, and next will be Dover (400), being converted from a young offenders institution this spring. These places are no better, and already there has been a major disturbance and fire at Yarl's Wood which has destroyed half of the complex.

Logically, since Campsfield is now accepted as "outdated" (the reason being given for its closure), then all but two of the current detention centres should be closed for the same reason. "No One Is Illegal" and all detention centres need closing, full-stop. It is more than likely that the real reason Campsfield is closing is the continuous protest, both from inside and out. It can be done!

The next issue of DA will look at Blunkett's proposals in more depth, starting with the clumsy title ("Secure Borders, Safe Haven: Integration with diversity in modern Britain"), working through the dire implications for all of our humanity, and drawing up an action plan to tackle the scourge of Labour's anti-foreigner racism.

Poor foreigners meet big brother

The government's latest immigration White Paper sets out a comprehensive set of measures to deliver an improperly managed, racist and intimidating system of immigration, nationality and asylum for Britain in the 21st Century. The measures will enable the UK to mismanage migration, shut its borders, and further erode trust and credibility in the system amongst the wider community.

You thought Michael Howard was bad, then there was Jack Straw. Now David Blunkett, and not a single thing in his White Paper that can be welcomed by anyone. It is meaner and more dangerous than its predecessors. Even Straw promised an automatic right to bail hearings for interned asylum seekers in his last overhaul - this has now been withdrawn. Just one example of how where immigration is concerned, things are going from bad to worse.

At the launch, Blunkett said: "We are not a "fortress Britain". We are an open, trading economy, and we need to ensure that we can recruit the people we need to compete and prosper in the new global economy." He went on to outline specific Citizenship & Nationality proposals, including a new Citizenship Pledge (Oath of Allegiance) to be sworn by those taking British nationality; making language skills and knowledge about British society a requirement of citizenship; and new "citizenship ceremonies". However, the real teeth in the proposal look, as you might expect, a lot like more "fortress Britain" measures to you and me. Border controls will see increased deployment of Immigration Officers overseas to check and help prevent passengers travelling to the UK, and Visa regimes for nationals of countries where the government suspects systematic abuse of existing controls.

Along with the proposals comes that old police state chestnut, ID Cards. Refugee support groups have branded the proposal that asylum seekers must carry 'smart' cards as a breach of civil liberties. In fact, they are worse than simply "hi-tech" vouchers, singling out asylum seekers for even more attack wherever they use them. They will criminalise and stigmatise asylum seekers, with the use of fingerprints and photographs. Furthermore, these 'proposals' are already being tested on asylum seekers, and it's only a matter of time before the rest of us see similar breaches of our civil liberties.

To add to the insult, economic racism is now legal, as rich immigrants now have freedom to move to the UK, under the Highly Skilled Migrant Programme (HSMP). High earners will be able to come to the UK to seek work, after being assessed on a 'Money' - based system of qualifications and experience, such as past earnings, qualifications, and work experience. Those who earn less than £25,000 a year from Poland, Brazil, South Africa, Libya, Hungary, Chile, Mexico, Estonia and Turkey, will not be eligible, neither will those who earn less than £20,000 a year from, Jamaica, Russia, Iran, Morocco, Peru, Tunisia, Thailand, Algeria and Romania, nor those who earn less than £15,000 a year from China, India, Pakistan, Nigeria, Sudan, Ukraine, Zimbabwe, Kenya and Bangladesh. HMSP not only discriminates against the poor, but also depletes the host countries of badly needed skilled workers.

While the rich are welcome, the rest are still being booted out and sent back for torture. But never doubt that dedicated people can defeat an attempt to deport someone. An Anti-Deportation Campaign means organising resistance to restrictive immigration legislation, campaigning through collective action and making the government change their minds regarding an individual case. You do have the power to stop deportations - you will need courage, persistence and solidarity. Many people would not be in this country today but for campaigning. Remember, "No one is deported 'tll the plane takes off".

For example, at 7.00 pm on Monday 24th December, an hour and forty five minutes before the plane was to take Gabriel out of the UK, his lawyers obtained an injunction stopping his deportation to allow time for an application for a judicial review of his case to be lodged. Campaigning had been going on from early that morning and throughout the day. One person managed to get through to Downing Street (no joy, Tony wasn't in). Undaunted, he complained to Airport Police at Heathrow about Gabriel's imminent removal, who contacted immigration and logged the complaint. Barbed Wire Britain organised a cyber action throughout the day, and by 6.00pm, a group of supporters were at Heathrow Airport handing out leaflets to passengers booked on the same flight. Dialogue between Gabriel's solicitors and the Home Office was also ongoing, until the solicitor's applied for the injunction, which was granted. This followed five days' frantic activity, after Gabriel attended his asylum appeal result, which was negative and he was arrested immediately.

After his injunction was granted, Gabriel, a fearless, meticulous and devastating critic of the government's detention policy said, "I left my country for a safe country because of persecution. The death sentence has been abolished by the Cameroon constitution, but I think I will have several years in prison there because of my political activity. It is obvious I will be ill-treated if returned there."

More on Gabriel's case from: Barbed Wire Britain www.barbedwirebritain.org.uk/; tel. 01865 558145/726804 01223 700644. For more campaign information, or to contact local and national anti-deportation campaigns, contact the National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns: *www.ncadc.org.uk*. NCADC, 110 Hamstead Road, Handsworth, Birmingham B20 2QS; tel. 0121-554-6947. NCDAC and others are organising a conference to defend asylum seekers, with workshops on Detention, Deportation, Dispersal, Fortress Europe, Challenging the media, and Organising in the trade unions (see piece on p.35).

Post-con

Privatisation is once again in the forefront, with the announcement by the government-appointed head of Postcomm (the postal services regulatory body) that postal competition is to be widened.

Coming on top of the announcement by Consignia (Post Office) that £1.2 billion of cuts are to be made, which in their view equates to 30,000 jobs, things don't look good. Add the financial chaos - a loss of £284 million in 6 months from April to October compared to a profit of over £600 million only 2 years ago, and you might expect the Government to intervene to ensure the postal service remains intact.

Nothing could be further from the truth. On three separate occasions, Tony Blair has stated that the finances and job losses are a matter for Consignia and the unions to resolve. On top of this, the Government are refusing to agree to suspend their requirement for a dividend this year. As the only 'shareholder', the Government should be seeking to ensure that the business can thrive – this is one way they could do it.

The only conclusion that can be drawn from the Government's lack of intervention is their intent on the Post Office being privatised. Tony Blair is using Postcomm to do his dirty work. All governments within the European Union agreed a process for partial postal liberalisation, but Graham Corbett (Head of Postcomm) has produced proposals which are contrary to this agreement. Corbett's plans include full liberalisation by March 2006, in a way which can only have damaging effects on the postal service and lead to mass job losses. More significantly, it will undermine the Universal Service Obligation which only Consignia has to adhere to, this being to deliver to all addresses in the UK at a uniform tariff.

The Postcomm proposals put restrictions on Consignia being able to respond to any competition. Amongst other things, they will not be able to change prices until competitors are 'established and self-sustaining'. As the proposals put forward are contrary to the position already agreed by the government, it clearly should intervene – indeed, it could rightfully get rid of Corbett. The lack of intervention points clearly to the fact that the government is actually driving post office privatisation, and using Postcomm to do it. At the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), the story is the same. John Keggie (Communication Workers' Union - CWU - Deputy General Secretary) has called on them to hold a full inquiry into financial mis-management at Consignia. They have the power to remove the clearly incompetent Consignia Board, but instead choose to leave them to their blunders, again indicating they are intent on helping the postal service into a crisis, hence setting it up nicely for privatisation.

At the same time, the CWU are preparing to take industrial action in pursuit of a 5% pay increase. There is more to it than just pay. Widespread unrest stems from mis-management within the Post Office, and massive resistance to Post Office privatisation. Ironically, the CWU defeated the previous Conservative government on the issue of privatisation with the full support from Labour. Now the Labour government is clearly more intent on privatisation than the Tories ever were. Suffice to say, privatisation is in no-one's interest but the private investors'. Thousands of job losses, declining service, plunging pay and conditions, millions squandered on admin... all are well-documented results of privatisation, as investors seek maximum profits. Though there are plenty of examples, we need look no further than the rail industry. If the post office is privatised, it will be another Railtrack in the making.

Consignia is already gearing itself up, with a policy of joint ventures for its support services - in other words, selling off parts of the business or running them alongside private operators. It has already sold off 49% of Quadrant, the catering side of the business. Pawning of other bits of Consignia has been put on hold pending talks with the CWU, but management are clearly determined to go much further.

In the face of such clear betrayal by Labour, the question must be asked as to why the Unions are still paying vast sums of money to them through the political levy. The CWU paid them £1.5 million last year, which could have been far better utilised in defending jobs, rather than paying Tony Blair to cut them. It is clear New Labour have no interest in the working class, so the working class should have no interest in New Labour. Fortunately, this is an issue which could soon be resolved, as CWU branches are beginning to take the obvious necessary action and stop paying the levy.

Privatisation of any form must be resisted by all means necessary. Post office aside, the Labour government is also intent on further privatising the London Underground, education, hospitals and numerous other public services. The only way to meet this threat is with direct, grass roots, collective resistance.

on the edge

Life Before Profit

Casual workers, building workers, rail passengers - people are being killed all the time by profit hungry capitalists who know the government, its agencies and its courts will let them get away with murder when it comes to cutting safety. Not news? Well, the hard bit is co-ordinating our efforts to fight back. A rally to stop the corporate killers was held in Brighton in January, with speakers from Simon Jones Memorial Campaign, Simon's family, Construction Safety Campaign, London Hazards Centre, New Cleveland Street Fighting Fund from Hull, Hazards Campaign and others.

www.schnews.org.uk
www.simonjones.org.uk

SICK OF PAYING TONY TO TAKE AWAY YOUR JOB? LOSE THE LEVY:

Political Fund Exemption Notice

I hereby give notice that I object to contributing to the Political Fund of the union and am in consequence exempt, in the manner provided by Chapter 6 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (consolidation) Act 1992, from contributing to that fund.

Signature.....

Name.....

Membership no.....

Address.....

.....

.....

Date.....

C.W.U. branch:.....

Send this form to: CWU/HQ, Organising Sec, 150, The Broadway, Wimbledon, London SW19 1RX.

EXPOSÉ: THE NAKED TRUTH

In France in February, news production at the media photographic agency Corbis (owned by Bill Gates of Microsoft) abruptly stopped. Workers went on strike at the Paris headquarters of Corbis-Sygma, the agency's main news gathering operation, in response to Corbis' sacking of Sygma's entire complement of 42 staff photographers and a large number of support and production staff. Corbis' other two French agency acquisitions, Kipa and Tempsport were also involved, bringing the jobs at stake up to well over 100 and around half of the total employees.

As they struck, the photographers accused the company of making a "deliberate attempt to overstep French law relating to photographers' rights". Corbis had agreed that sacked photographers could have their photo archives returned - but without slide mounts and protective sleeves. Because of Sygma's archival system, unmounted slides are virtually worthless as the identification number that links the caption is lost. This followed a long running confrontation over the company transferring some 800,000 digital files from Paris to company headquarters in Seattle without photographers' consent, or even prior knowledge. One Sygma photographer called it "the first digital hold-up of the century".

French photographers posted photographs of the situation to staff world-wide on the company's internal e-mail system and within minutes, a company systems' administrator deleted the mail from the server and posted instructions that staff should not open the photographers' message because it contained a virus. By then, however, it was too late. The news was out, and as Corbis began to receive enquiries from staff about what was really going on in Paris, they were forced to begin issuing special internal bulletins. Dragged into the limelight, Corbis management claimed that the Paris strikers were "not part of the workers' committee - the official committee which represents workers' interests". By this they mean the Committee d'Entreprise, which is the state regulated, boss controlled, 'official' joint body. But, with 93% of the Paris staff on strike, it is pretty immaterial what official committees might think - the only "worker's committee" which counts is the photographers' strike committee organising the action.

The strikers' site has pics and reports: http://happythanksgiving.free.fr/english/index.htm.

France II

A three-month long strike is still going on as DA goes to press at a MacDonald's restaurant in Paris. The strike started after five syndicalists were fired in a targeted repressive move by the company. So far, three out of the five have been offered their jobs back, but the actions are continuing for the remaining and over the wider issues of job insecurity and working conditions. There are regular demonstrations in support of the strike. Groups like CNT, No Pasaran, Alternative Libertaire are involved in the actions.

Meanwhile, anti-globalisation activist Jose Bove has been given a three-month jail sentence over his ransacking of a McDonald's restaurant to protest against US trade barriers. The ruling announced by the court means the sheep farmer and left-wing campaigner has exhausted all means of appeal against his conviction for the 1999 assault on the site of a planned new fast-food outlet in the southern French town of Millau.

Bove's appeal rested on the political argument that the attack was "legal and necessary" in response to US taxes on Roquefort cheese and other European farm goods. He is also fighting against a separate six-month jail term handed down last December for hacking down genetically modified rice plants in a 1999 raid on a research centre.

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/ and www.aseed.net
Earth First – Action Update; http://host.envirolink.org/ef/
Indymedia; http://indymedia.org
Corporate Watch; www.corpwatch.org
Thr@ll; thrallnet@yahoo.com
Corporate Watch UK; www.corporatewatch.org.uk
Anarchyaction; www.anarchyaction.co.uk
Juventudes Libertarias in Bolivia; www.nodo50.org/jjll.bolivia/jjll/jjll.index
For updates & future events, visit antenna.nl/aseed/, www.anarchyaction.co.uk, www.schnews.com/guide.htm

Greece

Nearly 200 toll booth workers who have been working for between five and ten years in the job have been sacked. They were on temporary contracts, and this time around, the contracts have not been renewed. In February, state law advisers stated that the workers couldn't be employed on permanent contracts because of a legal constitutional issue – despite the fact that EU employment measures state that once in post for 2 years, workers are deemed to have permanent rights.

The workers' support campaign got underway as people occupied the building of the company. Four of the workers went on hunger strike. Messages of solidarity from workers in other countries will greatly boost their morale.

Campaign group; ekf@otenet.gr. Also, contact the Prime Minister's office (mail@priminister.gr), and the Ministry of Public Works (service@dorg.minenr.gr).

Italy

In February, the Unione Sindicale Italiana (USI – Italian section of the International Workers' Association) called upon workers' unions to participate in a one-day General Strike against the war hysteria of President Bush, and against the economic war on working people in Italy (i.e. privatisation). On the day (Feb. 15th), over 50,000 people joined a mass-demonstration in Rome, as most industry sectors stopped operating, millions of people stayed away from work, and people from all walks of life came together to oppose the war and the free market. It was the biggest General Strike in Italy in living memory.

Italy's right-wing and dangerous government (witness the treatment of protesters at the G8 in Genoa last year) labels all activists in Italy as dangerous extremists. In the face of this, the USI's response is to call and act all the louder for getting rid of the neo-fascist Prime Minister Berlusconi and instead seek workers' freedom through direct democracy and self-run communities.

Contact/support: USI - AIT, Segreteria Relazioni Internazionale, Via Dei Cunicoli 11, 34126 Trieste, ITALY.

Brazil

Three companies have total control over 45,000 small-scale tobacco farmers, and they use their power to force those farmers to use highly-toxic and dangerous pesticides. Acute sickness, chronic illness, and suicide are common among Brazil's tobacco farmers, and episodes coincide with key points in the tobacco-growing calendar, when they suffer greater exposure to pesticides, especially organophosphates, the use of which are prescribed in their contracts.

The evidence echoes that of Gulf War veterans and British sheep-dippers who have also been exposed to organophosphates. Suicide rates as high as seven times the national average have been recorded in tobacco-growing regions. One farmer instead decided to launch a lawsuit to get compensation. If he wins his case, thousands of Brazilian tobacco farmers could stand to benefit.

Meanwhile, the big three tobacco companies, BAT, Philip Morris, and Japan Tobacco, are still going ahead with billions of dollars of new investments in leaf cultivation and factories in developing countries, especially Brazil, as well as China, India, Malawi, Zimbabwe and Vietnam. With the decline in smoking in the west, they need new customers in the east and south.

Belgium

The day before the Brussels EU summit opened in December, around 50 mainly Dutch and Flemish activists occupied the office of CEFIC, the powerful European chemical industry lobby organisation. CEFIC has a major influence on European decision making, while its members (BP, Aventis, Unilever, etc.) are responsible for 30% of the world's chemical production and accompanying pollution. It routinely uses the threat of jobs (its members have hundreds of thousands of workers) and tax revenues (its members have hundreds of billions of Euros/USD turnover) to have its way with European politicians.

The office was evicted by police by means of 'pain-stimuli' after four hours. Arrests were made, some were deported, and everyone else was released at the end of the day without charges.

Italy II

On 26th January, over a hundred members of the Movimento delle/dei Disobbedienti occupied and dismantled an area of the detention centre for 'Sans Papiers' (migrants without the right paperwork) in Bologna. While the activists rendered the detention centre unusable, hundreds of others demonstrated outside the centre.

The action followed the demonstration of 150,000 people in Rome earlier in the month in solidarity with migrants and against anti-migrant detention centres. As DA goes to press, further events are planned to follow the example set in Bologna.

Poland

The Polish anarcho-feminist group Emancypunx and people from the German autonomist movement visited a Mercedes dealer in Warsaw in January. Fake "tax collectors" started the action by marking the cars on the forecourt with stickers saying "this is being seized for the unpaid money". Apparently, it took a while before the sales people worked out it was bogus. The action was a protest against the pathetically low and late compensation money recently agreed for former East European ex-slave workers, which the Mercedes company used during the Hitler period.

Ecuador

In January, local residents, university students and environmental activists set up a protest camp at the entrance to the Mindo Nambillo cloud forest reserve to block construction of the Heavy Crude Pipeline (OCP) project. Some chained themselves to trees, while others built platforms for tree-sitting. Almost immediately, OCP announced it will abandon construction works in the Mindo cloud forest until at least April. The OCP Ecuador consortium, led by the Spanish oil company Repsol-YPF, is especially worried about the impact of the protests on its financing for the project. German courts have been reviewing evidence that Westdeutsche Landesbank (WestLB) violated its lending policies with a $900 million loan to the OCP project. Various groups have pointed out that the project violates minimum environmental guidelines set by the World Bank.

In the village of Nomo, another area where the OCP is scheduled to pass through, local residents are also planning protests, including against the treatment of pipeline construction workers, who work 14 hours a day, 7 days a week, for only $200 a month.

USA

More than 400 workers at Accuride were locked out in March 1998 after going on strike to defend basic union rights. All such long-running disputes are particularly hard for the workers, fighting to stay solid for principles and for livelihoods of their colleagues and workers everywhere. Now, the Accuride workers are facing withdrawal of benefits and revocation of their (Local 2036's) union charter by the union, the UAW, after a majority voted to reject a head office proposal. To support the locked-out Accuride workers, send donations to:

Henderson Workers Solidarity Fund, c/o Billy Robinson, P.O. Box 248 Seebree, KY 42455. Contact Billy Robinson at wrobi27316@aol.com.

A message from Juventudes Libertarias in Bolivia

February 6th, 2002 - JJ-LL, Bolivia. jjll_bolivia@nodo50.org www.nodo50.org/jjll.bolivia/jjll/jjll.index

A death a week, daily wounded, dozens of reports of tortures, persecuted unionists, a hundred political prisoners, and the closing of radio stations related to social and union movements. In under six months, the regime has become more atrocious than any since the fall of the military dictatorship 20 years ago.

The tone these days is set by the media attacks, which criminalise all social protest, orchestrating the state's imposition of an economic and political system of society. Everything is under the rule of capitalist imperialism, which exerts a rapacious incursion of geopolitical domination, which clashes with the mobilised wrath of the Bolivian proletariat.

The working-class, on the ascent since 2000, is progressively fortifying its unity and clarifying its objectives. Although the ineffable bureaucracy has at no moment varied its chauvinist and conciliatory positions, the push of the working masses have forced union leaders to join the ever more radicalised fight of the class which is freeing itself in Bolivia.

Facing the violence of the State/Capital, the proletariat is defending itself. In the last month, three soldiers and a policeman have been finished off in Chapare; while in Sucre a group of small debtors, defending themselves from foreclosure, threw gasoline at a squad of police and set them on fire. In the locality of Pocitos, thousands of border workers made a group of elite police flee and burned the border post with Argentina; on 2nd February, a march of thousands of workers, cocaine farmers, college students, small debtors, teachers, health-workers, water-workers and workers without retirement, ended up throwing stones, firecrackers and paint at the police station in the city of Cochabamba, in protest at the ferocious repression exerted by the elite forces - the "dálmatas" - accused of torturing political prisoners with electrical charges applied to the gums; finally, a group of young people dressed in black threw a home-made bomb, which injured five policemen, including a senior officer.

Over the last two weeks, Cochabamba has become the epicentre of the protests, with thousands taking to the streets, raising barricades, making bonfires, setting vehicles on fire in some cases and attacking shops selling luxury goods as well as the court building, laying barbed wire and glass to stop the passage of the brutal body of police, that finally arrived, capturing even children of 11 years of age and using heavy arms, a fact that was cynically accepted by the government minister, who explained it by saying that they had finished their supplies of gas.

The social movement in Cochabamba, which includes coca growers, demands the abolition of parliament and the formation of a popular assembly. The disturbances exploded after the expulsion of a member of parliament, the farmer Evo Morales, who is the union leader of the coca producers; the so-called cocaleros, who are spread over the whole Chapare region and engage in the growing of coca leaf, the buying and selling of which the government recently decreed illegal in the zone, thereby condemning over 35,000 families to hunger. All this under the orders of Washington and in the frame of the phoney war on drugs.

The true intention of capitalist imperialism, the financier of this campaign, is the control of the Amazon and Andes regions, and is one part in the strategy of eliminating any social resistance in the region. The iron resistance of the cocaleros movement is partly explained by the flexible organisation it practises, being based on horizontal communitarian structures of the *ayllu* and *ayni*, which have a self-managing tradition.

A similar organisation has also been developed by the natives of the plateau, who this week have added to the mobilisations by cutting the routes, together with farmers of other regions, demanding, among other things, the expulsion of ENRON from the country. Transport routes of almost all regions of Bolivia appear to be blocked to different degrees. Nevertheless, the great majority of routes are cleared until noon by soldiers, only to become quickly re-obstructed. The significance of the interruption is not in the permanence of the barricades, but in the distrust that it generates for travelling by road. Several peasant organisations and those of indigenous people have warned that the battle for land will be more serious than that for coca, because it will favour the large landowners of the east as a result of the reforms of the Political Constitution of the State.

The government of President Quiroga is a corpse that continues to govern thanks to the support of the American embassy. The bureaucracies must be overcome, otherwise we will become victims of the capitalist crisis that lies on the horizon and whose consequences we have already felt. Only a social revolution and the construction of a new society can offer a future, not only to solve immediate problems, but also to construct an alternative, self-managed, libertarian aletrnative.

The social struggle that is developing in Bolivia, is part of the same war of classes that the proletariat historically faces against the capital state; for that reason, this must be recognised in the fights that will free the Bolivian workers and promote internationalist actions worthy of the circumstances.

THE FIGHT AGAINST THE STATE/CAPITAL WILL BE COMMUNALIST, SELF-MANAGED, INTERNATIONALIST AND ANTI-AUTHORITARIAN - OR IT WILL BE NOTHING.

Juventudes Libertarias is an anarcho-syndicalist youth organisation - for more info, videos and related material, visit: http://www.bolivia.com/Especiales2002/dias_de_furia/

Turkey

Fatih Tas, editor of the Istanbul-based Aram Publishing Company, has been indicted by a Turkish prosecutor for publishing a collection of essays by Noam Chomsky. The indictment alleges that the book is "propaganda against the indivisible unity of the country, nation, and State of the Republic of Turkey." Noam Chomsky himself arrived in Istanbul as the trial was scheduled to begin, to demand that the authorities prosecute him alongside Tas. Meanwhile, Turkish boycotts and demands for the right to free speech flooded in.

Stop censorship has a protest campaign: www.stopcensorship.org

Colombia

Workers from the SINTRAEMCALI union in Colombia's second-largest city, Cali, struck a massive blow against neo-liberalism and privatisation in Colombia after a month-long occupation succeeded in keeping the utility company EMCALI in public hands. 800 workers from the union occupied water, electricity and telecoms company EMCALI's 17-storey Central Administration Building (CAM Tower), protesting against plans to privatise the company.

The central government used debts and financing problems for a new water treatment plant as an excuse to call for privatisation, as prescribed by the IMF. The occupation called for an end to privatisation plans, maintenance of low prices for energy, water and telecommunications for the poor families in the region, and for an investigation into corruption in the company. All the demands were met and the occupation ended peacefully.

The protest naturally included much more than the occupation of the building itself, since it also involved supporting 800 people for over a month in the face of police opposition. Thousands congregated, a makeshift open-air canteen produced food, and a stage was set up for speakers and entertainment. Marches drew tens of thousands, and on 24th January, blockades and strikes shut down large parts of the city and many of the roads out.

From the action comes proof of the effectiveness of grassroots solidarity. Mario Novelli, of the Colombia Solidarity Campaign, writes; "For the last eight months, [the unions] have been running 'Mingas' which, in one of the local indigenous languages, means something like 'to come together to carry out a specific task'. In SINTRAEMCALI, and in alliance with other unions and social organisations, every few weeks ,workers, doctors, nurses, lawyers and hairdressers, all give up their weekends and go to the poorest neighbourhoods and provide their services for free: fixing electricity lines, telephones, giving free medical treatment, legal advice, haircuts and a whole range of activities."

Despite this victory, the battle for social justice in Colombia goes on, as the IMF continues to push its neo-liberal agenda, implicitly supported by the bloodthirsty right-wing paramilitaries' suppression of dissent, and the huge proceeds of drug production (not to mention US military-backed death squads) continue to corrupt the political system.

Canada

In January, a group of eight students occupied the University of Guelph in Ontario, in the latest step in the students' struggle for free access to post-secondary education. Following over 15 years of education underfunding across Canada, the Harris Government in Ontario has begun slashing college funding on an unprecedented scale. As a result, tuition fees have become unaffordable for many potential students.

Despite raising the issue on numerous occasions, students' voices have not been heard. So, they entered the Administrative Offices armed with notes for the office staff, hauling gear to secure the office, and a large supply of food and water. Meanwhile, supporters put up posters, handed out leaflets, performed guerrilla theatre, and informed others about the occupation.

Updates: www.tao.ca/~gan/guelphocp Endorsements and letters of support to: guelphoccupation@yahoo.com and the U of G Administration: Mordechai Rozanski – President at s.blair@exec.uoguelph.ca

Serbia

250 workers from the 'Partizan' factory went on hunger strike in February after they were told their jobs were to go. Send messages and letters of protest to your nearest Yugoslavian embassy, to the Serbian government, or directly to the strikers at partizan@email.com

Greece

On February 4, there was an anarchist rally in Patissia, Athens, in solidarity with the revolt in Argentina, the anti-capitalist demonstrations in New York against the WEF, the anti-war demonstrations in Munich against NATO, and in solidarity with the immigrants and refugees who resist from inside the concentration camps of the Greek state, facing prosecutions and deportations.

The rally lasted all afternoon, with about 100 anarchists and anti-authoritarians participating. Leaflets were distributed to passers-by; there were posters, banners, music, messages from the PA system and slides from Argentina, Brussels and Genoa.

www.geocities.com/anar_gr

How are your holiday plans? Here's a couple of possible destinations...

Preview: Canada

The G8 leaders will be holding a particularly crucial annual meeting on June 26-27th in Kananaskis, a picturesque town in the Alberta mountains.

First, it follows three years of rising grassroots protests against these sorts of economic summits (the last G8 you may remember was in Genoa, Italy, which resulted in the death of a comrade last July). Second, using the pretext of the "war against terrorism", there is an even more devastating global expansion of all sorts of quasi-fascist laws, "forces of order", misinformation campaigns, etc. Third, the US is cranking up its 'free trade'/WTO rhetoric to further expand its economic imperialism worldwide.

The current plan is to organise two days of anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist actions on June 26-27th in the city of Ottawa, the national capital. Day one will encourage different forms of protest and revolt; for day two, the priority is on organising a large unifying demonstration.

For more info, contact Anti-Capitalist Convergence (CLAC) in Montreal. Tel. 514-409-2049; E-Mail: clac@tao.ca; Web: www.tao.ca/~clac

Preview: Netherlands

From 8th to 20th April 2002, the UN circus will be contemplating the state of the world's biodiversity resources under the auspices of COP6 of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Meanwhile, international corporations continue cutting down forests, emptying the sea, force-feeding us GMO crops and then suing farmers when those crops contaminate the countryside.

During these weeks, other possibilities will be realised through workshops, actions and festivities beside and beyond the UN biodiversity summit, around:

- *Challenging corporate control of the food chain*
- *Cultivating community based, biodiversity-rich food production*
- *Rejecting patents on life and stopping biopiracy*
- *Safeguarding the right to free exchange of seeds and knowledge*
- *Stopping genetic engineering in agriculture*
- *Respecting farmers' rights*
- *Reclaiming the genetic commons*
- *Solidarity with A17 international day of farmers' struggles.*

Email rif@gn.apc.org, or contact RiF, c/o ASEED Europe, postbus 92066, 1090AB, Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

Afghanistan/everywhere

The bombing of Afghanistan continues on a daily basis, but unreported, like the bombing of Iraq. We are told that the Taliban has been successfully destroyed; so presumably, there is no need for the bombing, they just enjoy it so much, they can't stop.

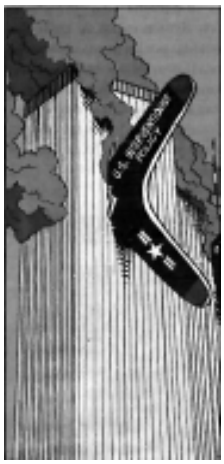
While estimates of innocent civilians murdered by the US bombing vary widely from 1,500-5,000, research has shown that the bombers aren't getting any better at aiming. In Afghanistan, the rate is 1 innocent death for every 12 bombs/missiles; in the Kosovo war, the ratio was 1 death for every 43 bombs/missiles.

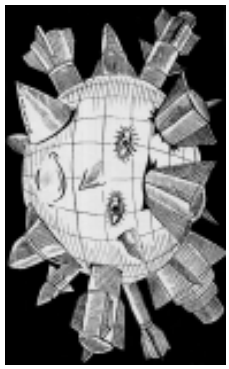
On the ground, in 'mopping up' the last of the Taliban and Al-Qaeda units, US and British Special Forces are clearly having a tough time (covering up their atrocities, that is). Despite the news blackouts, evidence is constantly trickling out of 'errors' in which innocent Afghans have been shot in "friendly fire". In one 'incident' (you would call it massacre if it was the 'terrorists' doing it), US troops raided the town of Oruzgan, murdering 15 people and seizing 27 others. Despite protesting their innocence, these men were taken to a US compound near Kandahar, where they were beaten and brutalised for 16 days before being set free, with hardly an apology.

Across the country, tuberculosis is spreading among people weakened by hunger and lack of access to basic health care. Now the last animals have been sold, some families have resorted to selling their own daughters for grain. The dowry system has always given girls a value, but it is the first time that seven-year-olds have been sold off for a few sacks of wheat to pay 'grain debts', villagers say. An Oxfam aid worker explained the system: "When we are distributing the food, a very big part of it is going back to pay the shopkeepers," he says. "Even if they are hungry, they have to pay their debts." Some have turned to eating a sort of clover which grows in the grass and barren fields - where wheat, barley and watermelons were once cultivated.

Meanwhile, the new puppet regime is installed in Afghanistan. The new Afghani Minister for Justice has published his plans for the post-Taliban legal system, which include; stoning of females guilty of adultery, public executions, 80 lashes for drinking alcohol, imprisonment for anyone attempting to make converts to Christianity, the amputation of hands and feet for theft, etc. It's good to see that the loss of life hasn't been in vain.

The Afghan interim leader, Mr Hamid Karzai, is busy cosying up to global capitalism. California-based Unocal Corp and Bridas S.A. of Argentina, have long toyed with the idea of constructing a 1,600-km pipeline from Turkmenistan through Afghanistan to growing natural gas markets in Pakistan and, potentially, India. The Taliban lusted after the $25 million a year in would-be pipeline royalties, though Unocal insists that the company never considered building the pipeline under an illegitimate regime and is no longer interested. Still, the potential bounty of delivering $700 million or so of gas each year is now open for offers.





Conspiracies and scandals

No news for ages on evidence about which terrorists organised what. In reality, Bin Laden may have been involved, but he was helped, probably by Sharon, whose intelligence services have a long record of success in this field (e.g. the creation of Hamas), and whose operatives were caught red handed in the Mexican Parliament with guns and explosives a few days after 9/11. They were released after an emissary from Sharon flew in, presumably with a lot of cash. The real smoking gun is the anthrax outbreak - the strain and preparation of the spores could only have been from about five laboratories, all within the US government. The anthrax story has now vanished and the Mexican story ignored outside Mexico.

Back in the US, the CIA-released Bin Laden video has also been further discredited, while the fire services and leading trade journal Fire Engineer have attacked the investigation into the collapse of the towers as a cover-up. Fire has never destroyed a building before in this way, and there are many more which must logically now be at risk. The clean up operation is rapidly destroying the evidence, as steel scrap - likely contaminated with asbestos, PCBs, cadmium, mercury and dioxins – is being dumped in Asia. In January, a shipload of scrap landed in the South Indian port city of Chennai, and was unloaded by port workers with absolutely no protection. WTC wreckage is being dumped elsewhere in India and in China, where Baosteel Group purchased 50,000 tons of the potentially toxic scrap. Malaysia and South Korea are also reported to have received shipments. Eventually, most of the 1.5 million tons of scrap will end up in Asian ports and threatening Asian workers.

US safety regulations were trampled in the chaos over Ground Zero, and hundreds of New York fire-fighters are now filing to go on permanent disability, while serious respiratory infections and other chronic health problems afflict area residents, especially children. Testing each consignment would be simple, but the US is clearly not interested in taking responsibility for poisoning people, particularly mere workers who aren't American.

The 'whodunnit' saga continues. Unsourced leaks are appearing from FBI officials, saying that around 100 Israelis in custody since the attacks should not be released, as they were certainly complicit. Other leaks from civil aviation controllers say the interception of the hijacked planes, which should have been automatic especially after the transponders were turned off, was stopped on explicit orders from above.

Pressure is mounting for the release of the black box recordings of the plane which crashed near Pensylvania. Authorities say the contents would be too painful to victims' relatives, others say it was shot down to stop the true story coming to light.

USA: WEF

For the first time in its 31-year old history, the WEF was meeting outside Switzerland, in Manhattan – their choice of venue a clear cynical exploitation of grief and fear post-9/11. They were all there - 2,700 delegates, from Bill Gates to Colin Powell. They spent $100 million (of other people's money) between them on posh food and entertainment in one weekend – that's over $30,000 per person. While the rest of the world pointed out that you don't need a forum to work out what's wrong with the world economy and why so many people are still so poor, so the world leaders and their hangers-on lived it up.

Outside, the main protest started off with a Reclaim the Streets (RTS), which wound its way through Central Park to the start of the main march, where about 12,000 protesters had gathered. Although there were some arrests, it was an entirely peaceful protest. The media, who had worked up a frenzy for the police beforehand, trying to scare demonstrators from coming by promising major violence by hooligans, therefore had egg on their faces and decided not to report the protests. Meanwhile, elsewhere in the university hosting the forum, a group of activists threw two pies at a French minister who was giving a talk on policies for young people.

The general theme of the WEF line seems to be capitalism can be caring and is definitely, anyway, the only option. The 'logic' seems to be that the USA, as the world's largest economy, is therefore the key to the solution to all the world's problems. However, the US standard of living is possible only because 5 or 6 percent of the world's population consumes about a quarter of the world's energy. How the developing world is supposed to develop while it only has access to a miniscule amount of resources is not really up for discussion. That would mean turning the argument the right way up, and seeing capitalism as the problem, not the solution.

The first arrest took place on the Saturday, as a group of people were arrested for looking hazardous and organised – a dozen or so people had yellow placards/shields. Most of the weekend's arrests took place the next day, at a free-form East Village march that began on St. Marks' Place, and ended with 91 arrests just four blocks north. Though the police claim they were blocking the street, around 50 protesters were arrested who were marching exclusively on the sidewalk, not even blocking pedestrians. One, a journalist, was in the middle of giving a live radio report by cell phone; another had just left a game of frisbee to check out the arrests in progress. If the protesters' charges were dubious, their detention was more so. Only about a dozen of the weekend's 201 arrested protesters were issued desk appearance tickets (DATs); all the rest were held for up to 60 hours.

Argentina Explodes

As 2001 ended, Argentina exploded into riotous scenes of mass demonstrations, banging cooking pots, burning barricades and pitched battles with the police. The events have left thirty people dead, government buildings torched, banks smashed and supermarkets looted, as the so-called middle class joined the hungry and dispossessed of Argentina's many slums to discover the power of mass action.

Popular assemblies started taking place across the country, as ordinary people began organising to gain a firm grip on their own destiny. Tensions are high, with the army positioned in the background and memories still intact about the 30,000 people who disappeared under the previous US-sponsored military government of the 1970s.

In January, Argentine police began a series of high-profile raids of several foreign banks in Buenos Aires, as court investigations into large-scale, illegal capital flight, possibly in the range of $30 billion, were conducted. The financial looting crimes alleged against the banks are enormous, like those of Enron but on a larger scale. The banks represent the dominant international financial interests which moved into Argentina during the 1990s to loot it, through usurious practices, involvement in shady privatisations, capital flight, and money-laundering. Some 90% of "Argentine" banking is now foreign-owned. As the disintegration of the global monetary system accelerated, the looting became more frantic.

Among those raided were the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation, Plc. (HSBC); Banco Francés, whose largest stockholder is Spain's Banco Bilbao-Vizcaya Argentaria (BBVA); Citibank; Bank of Boston; Banco Río, majority owned by Spain's Santander Banco Central Hispano (SBCH); and FleetBoston Financial. The offices of American Airlines were also raided, as was the Argentine Central Bank.

To provide just one example, HSBC, the fifth largest bank in the world, is the flagship bank of the global drug-trafficking enterprise, properly known as Dope, Inc., with branches all over the world. It was founded in the middle of the 19th Century to serve as the backbone of the financial network of the British East India Company. It financed London's Opium Wars against China in the 19th Century, in which the modern narcotics trade began. Since that time, HSBC has served as a kind of rediscount facility for laundering dirty money from the drug, gold, and diamonds trade. In the mid- to late-1990s, it moved aggressively into Ibero-America, taking special pride in buying out Brazil's Bamerindus, which it saw as a way to establish a beachhead in that country.

Apparently, it seems that not only did $20 billion flee the country prior to December 3rd - the date on which banking and capital controls were imposed - but another $10 billion left illegally afterwards, giving the total scam figure of $30 billion. Former President de la Rúa, his Harvard-trained Finance Minister Domingo Cavallo, and other former cabinet members are said to be facing charges of "economic subversion".

All this intrigue has, of course, been used as a smokescreen by the world's media to suggest that Argentina's problems are the result of a few corrupt banks and politicians (well, OK, a lot). In fact, the real culprits are staring us all in the face; the USA-backed IMF, who forced the corrupt banks and politicians on the Argentine people in the first place. The IMF is the face of global corruption and mis-management. The only differences between Argentina and elsewhere are that the corruption is particularly extreme, and the people have had more than enough and decided to take matters into their own hands.

In January, a group of anarchists occupied the Argentine Embassy in London, in a solidarity action with the Argentine peoples' rejection of their "leaders". Meanwhile, in the epicentre, as Argentina's "leadership" juggled presidents, and the press tried to make it look like it was just the Argentinian middle classes annoyed at being diddled, the mass-demonstrations continued across the country. Veterans of the military dictatorship, young students and workers, old anarcho-syndicalist militants,... are all demonstrating and participating in this spontaneous movement against the ruling powers.

The FORA, the anarcho-syndicalist organisation in Argentina, has released a detailed statement of the situation – contact DA for a copy. They are also appealing for funds. Send cheques payable to 'Solidarity Federation' in UK Sterling and mark the back with 'FORA Appeal' to: IntSec, SolFed, PO Box 29, Manchester SW PDO, M15 5HW. All monies will be exchanged and sent direct to the FORA. Or you can contact the FORA direct:
FORA, c/o Coronel Salvadores 1200, 1167 Buenos Aires, ARGENTINA.

Is your Health & Safety safe & healthy?

Tips on getting started on a new hobby idea. In terms of annoying your boss, satisfaction is guaranteed.

By taking up health and safety, you can challenge management's right to manage. Furthermore, you can begin to network with likeminded people

The state of health and safety at work across Britain is a scandal which routinely ruins thousands of lives. Time after time, bosses literally get away with murder and maiming, as government bodies, such as the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), live up to their reputation of being completely ineffective at bringing those responsible to justice. But this is not about exposing them; it is about fighting back.

Poor health and safety can be combated. Everyone who works for an employer can do something to improve health and safety in their workplaces. Literally no-one should be complacent. Often, seemingly low-risk jobs can prove disastrous for the long term health of workers. Stress kills, while repetitive strain injury (RSI) caused by IT workstations can be permanently disabling. It is not just building sites that are dangerous to health.

Health and safety is about power. Specifically, it is about the power of management to impose working practices on their workers that are dangerous to health. Proper health and safety costs, so providing a safe and healthy workplace eats into profits. It is in management's and profit-takers' interests to get workers to put up with unhealthy conditions.

So, taking up health and safety issues is important for two reasons; one, to protect yourself and colleagues; two, well, management's power has to be challenged somehow someday. This way, taking back control can start today. By taking up health and safety, you can challenge management's right to manage. Furthermore, by using health and safety as a starting point, you can begin to network with likeminded people and get collective resistance going in the workplace gradually - while minimising the risk to yourself.

How best to start? The easiest and safest way to begin if you are in a union is to volunteer as a union Health and Safety Representative. As Health and Safety Rep you should get a copy of the Safety Representative and Safety Committee Regulations, 1977. These can be obtained from your union, HMSO shops, or contact us at Solidarity Federation. These regulations give you fairly wide-ranging powers, perhaps the most important being the right to inspect the entire workplace every 3 months. This will not only give you the chance to carry out an in-depth safety inspection, it will give you the time and direct access to begin to put the word around to fellow workers.

The law states that Health and Safety Reps have the right to meet with workers in private. You could read this as the right to have workplace meetings/assemblies in work time! This is crucial, since challenging management power in general means getting collective action going. Good health and safety is about workers coming together and forcing management to let them use good working practices.

Avoid falling into the trap of seeing the Health and Safety Rep's job as simply to use the law on behalf of workers to improve health and safety. It cannot be done in isolation. Beginning to tackle health and safety is best seen as a means of helping workers to organise, so collective confidence is gained in order to challenge management, eventually in all areas of their working lives.

Also, health and safety is best viewed in the widest possible perspective. It includes welfare, which can bring in a whole range of issues. When you start to carry out workplace inspections, organise workers' meetings without bosses present. Make them regular – there are always health and safety issues, changes, etc. with potential new problems to consider. Once these meetings are established, they can begin to broaden out. Inevitably, people will start to discuss other, non-health and safety grievances. Starting points might include stress, staffing levels, the length of tea breaks, changing and shower facilities, crèche provision… the list is endless.

The power of meetings is serious; people break out of their isolation and begin to set their own

ACCIDENTS WILL HAPPEN...

collective agenda, rather than that of management. Rapidly, the management conditioning speak of 'team work', 'staff development', etc., all designed to get workers to identify with management rather than with each other, will be exposed in the group. The majority will agree that these schemes are simply a means of boosting productivity and increasing profits, and the losers are those who produce them - us.

If you are not a union member, then under the Health & Safety Consultation with Employees Regulations, 1996, employers must consult with employees individually or through an elected representative (again, contact Solidarity Federation for help/details). Elected representatives have many Safety Rep powers, though unfortunately they do not have the right to inspect workplaces. You could offer to help with health and safety or get elected as a representative. Start off simply - many employers will initially welcome your interest, given the amount and complexity of legislation to deal with. You could point out basic mistakes being made by employers and how they are leaving themselves open to claims, should an accident occur.

From then on, the key is as with the unionised workplace - to begin organising collectively. Start by discussing basic issues with people you know, ranging from the number of toilets to the need for first aid equipment. As confidence begins to grow, they may ask you to raise issues with management.

Once a group of people are interested, you can consider putting out safety bulletins as a group and, if something substantial comes up, maybe organising a meeting after work in a venue nearby. In all cases - keep records of conversations and correspondence with management – you may need them in defence one day.

By Law, every employer must regularly carry out a risk assessment of the workplace. Many haven't, so check yours first. In all workplaces employing more than five workers, the risk assessment should be written down and distributed to all workers. In it, all potential hazards should be identified, along with the resultant risk each poses to workers, and action taken to minimise risks.

Even if they have done this, do not take their risk assessment at face value – do your own, more comprehensive one. Also, check that working practices comply with the risk assessment. If they do not, management are failing – and you can point out to workers that their methods of working do not comply with official health and safety procedures, and if an accident occurs, they may not receive any compensation.

Knowing what to look for takes time and a bit of research in your particular workplace, but start with basic common sense things - take a tour to spot potential dangers, while considering all the people who pass through each area and what they may be doing. As you spot hazards, start discussing them with the people involved.

Remember, bosses cannot simply provide appropriate protective clothing, furniture, lighting, etc., and then forget about it. They must seek to eliminate hazards if possible, or at least minimise them. The amount of time spent by each worker in front of a VDU should be minimised. The job should be tailored to meet the needs of the workers, rather than the workers tailored to meet the needs of the job.

The key is to just get started, work at your own pace, and talk to build confidence as you go along. The world is your oyster - Health and Safety Legislation is vast, and there is plenty to take issue with, even in better-run workplaces. One of the key things which determine how easy-going your quest becomes will probably be the reaction and views of the people you work with. Either way, it is worth it. Either way, you are not alone - Solidarity Federation includes people with a wide range of experience and we will be more than happy to talk things through.

For free, no-obligation, no-dogma help or just for a chat, contact: solfed@solfed.org.uk or see contact address/phone on p.34).

By Law, every employer must regularly carry out a risk assessment of the workplace. Many haven't, so check yours first... Do not take their risk assessment at face value – do your own

Health care Railtrack-style

You thought leeches were part of medical history? They're back with a vengeance.

Privatisation in the NHS is never far from the headlines these days. As profit-hungry company execs rub their hands in anticipation, any lingering doubts that free, universal health provision might be safe in New Labour's hands have vanished like so many empty promises (come on, you never believed them really – you just wanted to).

Recent announcements like plans for private sector companies to run failing hospitals and for managers of top hospitals to set up non-profit companies to run their trusts are the latest moves in a privatisation process that has now been going on for over a decade. Such fragmentation won't improve patient care. We need look no further than other privatised industries to see that freedom for managers will mean them doubling their own salaries and driving down staff pay and conditions.

This time last year ***DA***19 warned of the dangerous pro-'free' trade rhetoric of the US private health care lobby. Their plan is simple enough. Through the World Trade Organisation, the world's health care markets will be 'freed' from state control, forced to introduce competition, and laid open to a free market onslaught. The prize for US companies is a slice of lucrative European health services, all currently state-run and supposedly in breach of 'free' trade agreements.

The US private health insurance industry is now saturated, with well over 70% of adults now covered (the rest offer no profit potential because they are poor). So, fixated by the desire for more profit, it has fixed its beady eyes on foreign health care services. For their part, the Europeans are now wising up and looking to catch up with the US in the rush for private profit from the opening up of public services across the globe (see p.31).

In Britain, there is little catching up to do. Government policy since the 1991 Tory introduction of the NHS internal market, has been to smooth the path for eventual full-scale privatisation. Additional steps already taken include the use of commercial accounting, the dreaded private finance initiative and an ever-increasing role for private hospitals. Privatisation junkies promise a more efficient and economically reliable service run in the patients' best interests. However, the US model shows clearly that what matters is profit at the expense of patients – and that privately run health care industry is grossly administratively inefficient (the US is the most wasteful system in the world in this regard).

Book-cooking leeches

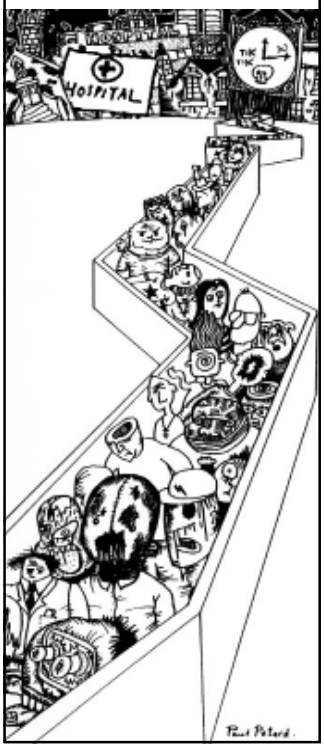
Take the introduction of commercial accounting procedures, for instance. NHS trusts have to pay the government a 'capital charge' for using buildings and equipment – despite the state already owning these assets outright. The charge itself is 6% per year of the estimated cost of replacing the assets as new – despite the state being able to borrow at around 3%. Funds robbed in this way by the government are available for channelling towards the private sector. Commercial accounting has resulted in a doubling of administration costs within the NHS. The end result is that, in attempting to reach financial targets, many trusts have to do commercial research, treat patients more quickly and get more private patients in.

In fact, there is already a *de facto* private health care system within the NHS. A recent *Observer* investigation found that thousands of NHS patients are denied treatment at top specialist hospitals because private patients are prioritised. More than ten thousand private patients were treated last year in preference to NHS patients, who were left on waiting lists or forced into second-rate hospials. Private patients are admitted immediately, placed at the top of the operating lists, with access to top consultants, and are less likely to have their operation cancelled. Although NHS waiting lists are already too long, the use of NHS doctors, beds and nurses allows private patients to jump queues, and so, make waiting lists even longer for NHS patients. Senior NHS consultants and surgeons can more than double their incomes by getting up to £3,000 per operation performed on private patients in NHS hospitals, while nurses and others provide care during NHS time for no extra pay.

The Private Finance Initiative (PFI) is another drain on NHS funds. Labour extended this to the NHS in 1997 as a means of financing hospital building. It allows private companies to build and own hospitals, which are then leased to NHS trusts, who have to pay the capital and running costs, thus subsidising the expansion of the private sector. PFI costs the NHS more than if it were allowed to build its own hospitals. A new hospital in Edinburgh, for example, would have cost £180 million to build, but in fact will cost the NHS £30 million a year for 30 years, totalling £900 million. The cost of this will be covered by selling three existing hospitals, cutting a third of beds, and reducing staff costs by 20%. So the largest hospital-rebuilding programme for over 30 years is being paid for by the largest service closure programme in NHS history.

Reed greed

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.



Sneeky leeches

The private sector already undermines the NHS and will continue to do so. Private hospitals have the unhappy knack of returning patients to the NHS with complications or in need of emergency treatment, thereby compounding beds and waiting list problems. Also, as NHS bed numbers continue to drop, waiting lists continue to rise, so in an attempt to meet targets, more and more patients are being sent out for private intermediate care. This is another obvious way in which expansion in the private sector is funded by the NHS. Moreover, it opens the way for charging patients. After the first six weeks, the NHS can now charge patients for 'personal' care (anything that can be termed 'non-medical'). It is very likely that this will follow the same path as long term nursing and residential care in the 1980s – i.e. the continued reduction of public funding and its eventual withdrawal.

Private hospitals carry out a limited number of 'standard' operations. There is the possibility that they could move in to corner the market for a particular procedure, with the result that the public sector would have to contract out. With profits and shareholders to think of, the private sector will naturally seek out such lucrative monopolies and name their price to the NHS. Thus, public money will be able to buy less and less health care.

Dodgy leeches

With the growth in contracting out, there are increasing opportunities for fraudulent claims in which patients are charged for treatment they haven't received. While this may appear rather shady, it is precisely the experience in the US. The FBI conservatively estimates that over $60 billion is defrauded every year by private health companies, such as the Hospital Corporation of America, which is currently involved in the largest public fraud investigation in US history.

There is just one fly in the ointment for Labour's plans. They need a huge expansion in private health insurance, and at present, we just aren't buying it. About one tenth of the British population has such cover, concentrated among the richest 25%, compared with well over 70% in the US. Even if there were full insurance coverage, the NHS would retain a large bulk of its business – i.e. children, the elderly and the chronically sick. However, it would lose most of the income-generating patients. Not surprisingly, that's what it all comes down to – the lucrative 'customers'. There is no doubt where New Labour stands. Privatisation is not about creating a quality health care system for all, but about ensuring that Blair and Co.'s friends in the City make even more profit. And if, along the way, we see an ever widening gap in both health and wealth between rich and poor, well tough, that's just the market.

Turning on the leeches

Like all struggles against privatisation, health brings into focus the three-way opposition between state control, private control and the anarchosyndicalist alternative; control by the workers and communities themselves. We oppose state control *per se*, but to let health care pass into private hands for fear of defending the state is irresponsible. While our long term aim remains a health service (and a wider economy) under workers' and community control, part of achieving this vision is the fight against privatisation.

There are some serious obstacles. Not least are the various union leaders who, despite the bluster and tub-thumping within, have few real intentions other than to prevent militancy, plead for constraint and defend their precious funds from the anti-trade union laws. The growing groundswell against privatisation not only in the health service, but also on the railways, in the post office and elsewhere shows that health workers are not on their own. In the past, their reluctance to take action needed to defend wages and conditions for fear of losing public sympathy has been too easily played upon by union leaders and politicians.

The railways indicate what's at stake. In the run up to rail privatisation, anarchosyndicalists consistently argued for action against the sell-off, and despite the best efforts of some, there wasn't enough widespread action for the RMT to lose their grip. Now the rail workers find themselves up against continuing erosion of wages and conditions. Hopefully, rising militancy will help them now, but it is all too clear what lies ahead for the health service if privatisation and fragmentation carry on. The only option is for health workers to organise widespread opposition beyond the control of the union bosses; opposition that is prepared to break the law and confront the government head-on.

There is just one fly in the ointment for Labour's plans. They need a huge expansion in private health insurance, and at present, we just aren't buying it

Revolutionaries - don't wait for it! let's have

TOMORROW TODAY

Spirit of Anarcho-syndicalism

This is the second part of a two-part article - write to us if you missed part one and want to see it (PO Box 29 SW PDO, Manchester M15 5HW, www.direct-action.org.uk). It was developed by a member of the SelfEd Collective, from discussions and materials involved with its "History of Anarcho-syndicalism" course. For free downloads of this, to get in touch, etc., see box on p.35.

Under the state, we are all subject to authority. We agree to this in exchange for some individual freedom. This is known as the 'Social Contract'. We are promised by the state that, in exchange for our obedience, we will have security - a fundamental human desire.

In other words, we give up our freedom so we will be protected from the innate evil of others. The state therefore has no function if we realize that people are not naturally evil or inherently nasty. Freedom is not like money, something that can be stockpiled and handed out at will; it is a social phenomenon. Freedom can only exist within a group of people, or a society, where authority is removed or is not present. Creating a system based on the premise that we will kill given half the chance ensures that some of us will. Creating a system based on the premise that we are selfish and nasty ensures that many of us will be, at least some of the time.

The reality is that the state expects us to be selfish and nasty, and so we are treated accordingly. Instead of telling people who act like this that they are out of order, our society says; 'we knew you would do that, so that's OK, we have a control mechanism for that'. The control mechanism in question works differently depending on your background, status and connections.

We are products of society, and we have been social for a long time - since we realised that freedom and individuality were good things and attainable through society. Therefore, despite our present society, which treats us badly and makes us more selfish, we cannot help ourselves voluntarily helping each other. It is what worked when we first came together in society. Hence, we help each other all the time; we do things voluntarily with no expectation of direct return - only the knowledge of a greater return in the wider society.

Society and culture are the source of our freedom. Our physical instincts to survive did not disappear with the creation of society; they were simply added to, with the addition of social motivation – the possibility of higher and greater freedom and individuality. Our place in society becomes important once we are reasonably 'sure' of our survival. We could call social needs 'higher needs', because they come after the 'basic' needs. In any progressive global society, we should have assured each other of basic needs long ago - no one should have to die of starvation, for example. We should be moving on to satisfying our 'higher' needs by voluntary co-operation - the way we know it works.

Organisation

Once we have recognised the futility of trying to reform capitalism and the state, we have to determine the best way to start creating our new, free society, within the shell of the old and based on voluntary co-operation.

Our response must be co-ordinated and collective, and this means we need organisation. The motivation for our movement must be the same as the motivation for the society we seek - ever-greater individuality and freedom. So we need to develop non-authoritative, voluntary organisations that are motivated towards individuality and freedom. The term organisation in this sense means networks of like-minded people doing co-ordinated things in a voluntary setting, identifying with and supporting each other. In other words, we need to come together in groups, where we can develop our activities and ideas, and practise mutual solidarity - the basis of our future society. These groups must be without leaders or authority from above, so they must be based upon direct democracy, where decisions are made by all.

These groups would federate together. This simply means that they will each elect a delegate to meet regularly at federal level to discuss matters and pass on their community's decisions, in particular, those which affect more than one group. Under direct democracy, a delegate is someone who carries out the wishes of the group they are from. They are elected only to carry out or take forward specific tasks or views given to. They must also only serve a set time as a maximum, after which someone else has a turn, so that no 'specialist' clique can emerge within the group. This is different from a representative who has the power to make decisions in the name of the group they come from.

These are some of the basics of the organic relationships we must form if we are to successfully create a culture of resistance capable of building a new society. These solidarity groups, linked together into a solidarity federation, are to further our aims of creating more freedom and individuality. They provide us with the dual purpose organisations we need - capable of both creating and practising the basics of our newly emergent society starting now, and exercising community resistance to defend ourselves and our new society from capitalism and the state.

Self-education

For many people, 'school' and 'education' are dirty words; the state and capitalist-sponsored education system is designed to fail most people and prepare them for a life of failure, inadequacy, poverty and downtrodden cheap labour. For the small minority, it

is designed to tell them that if they comply with certain rules, they will do well; that they are 'better' than most people, and that, therefore, they have the 'right' to order them about and make decisions about their lives.

One of the main reasons we put up with our current bad deal is that we feel pretty powerless to do anything about it. Worse still, most of us have some lingering doubts from time to time; what if we *are* incapable of looking after ourselves? What if the world *does* descend into chaos?

Inadequacy and low self-esteem are essential ingredients in oppression. For Marxists, the problem is that most people are ignorant, and they will stay that way until after the great event, the 'Revolution'. They therefore need leading to the 'promised land' by the party - composed of the few clever ones. This ludicrous idea is as alienating as any capitalist one. For anarcho-syndicalists, ignorance is a collective problem we must all overcome, and all respond to, and all encourage each other in. Feelings of inadequacy and lack of confidence do not melt away miraculously - only when self-belief takes hold.

The struggle against capitalism and the state must therefore start with the struggle for self-confidence and self-belief. With self-reliance and co-operative sharing of ideas - self-education - we can start fighting back at the great myth of the stupid working class. In our heart of hearts, we all know we could organise our work far better without interference from management. Self-education and self-confidence are not all we need, but they are crucial, and a bit of both makes the rest much easier.

Beyond work

Economic exploitation is the device used by capitalism to make a profit out of people. So we organise at work and the community and fight back to advance the struggle against our economic exploitation. There are many other forms of power originating from politics and society, and there is more to capitalism than profit, so there is more to replacing it than simply changing the economy. The real focus of freedom is overthrowing oppression, the source of which is power.

There are basically three types of work today. Firstly we have paid, productive work, everything from building work to call centres, waged work to make things or provide services. The second category is essentially creative and may be paid or unpaid; it may be productive too, but it involves creativity, to a greater or lesser extent. The boundary between these two is not always clear; however, the distinction is made because the creativeness of the latter makes it essentially enjoyable. Thirdly we have productive, unpaid work, the daily tasks to meet the basic needs of our dependants and ourselves.

In the future society, work would be organised differently. Paid creative work is enjoyable, so it would take place voluntarily. Unpaid work, however much of a chore, takes place voluntarily already and can be expected to continue. The main difficulty which remains is, after wages are abolished and free access to goods and services is established, who and why will people do the paid productive work?

The question of why people will work if they do not have to is also easily addressed. They will not have to, but it will be obvious that without it, no one will have products and services they want/need. Therefore, work will be a social service, and most people will want to do their bit in order to ensure their stake in society. We must remember that all work will be completely transformed by the lack of orders and bosses. All workplaces will be run by the workers themselves, making all work, whatever it is, inherently more interesting, creative and responsible. Work, which is currently tedious or unpleasant will, in the main, become interesting and creative, or at least rotational and, therefore, will be done voluntarily.

Nevertheless, if there remain two nagging doubts, they must be that (a) the odd person may not respond to social 'duty' and may not turn up for work reliably or at all, and (b) some work, such as cleaning sewers, cannot be creative and will be understaffed as a result, given a voluntary workforce. Firstly, shirkers will be allowed to shirk. Unlike the New Labour rhetoric of today, however, they will have a real stake in society, and they will have real options to do any sort of work they like. There will be no reason for them to not recognise that society, and they will be better off if they do their bit. Secondly, any work that is not done voluntarily will not be done at all. People will soon realise that it is important enough to warrant doing - at the expense of some other, less essential work, if necessary. Thus, even if the work is seen as a chore, like the washing-up and so many other non-waged chores today, unpleasant jobs are already done voluntarily.

Products and consumers

The co-operative, democratic workplace would include any size or sort of industry. Always, the ground rules will be the same, based on freedom - no compulsion, free opt-in and opt-out, and direct decision making based on mass meetings of workers. Like anything else in society, non-participants would inevitably find themselves not in the centre of things, and so, marginalized from social life. Basic needs - housing, health, educational resources, access to media and information, communal resources, and so on, will all be available free at the point of use. Potentially, some groups may decide to also develop 'luxury' or non-needed goods themselves, which may have more limited availability. There may even be a recognisable 'economy', consisting of a market, democratically controlled, with consumers exercising choice over what they wish to consume.

A democratic market place would transmit information rapidly. The main mechanism for providing 'market information' will be people discussing their needs socially and then transmitting these to producers or setting up their own production units to meet these needs. Also, through this process, society as a whole will reach a consensus over how many resources to put into what sorts of activities, how much work we want to do, what our needs and wants really are.

By contrast, there is a world of difference between

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capitalist theory and practice, what it purports to achieve and what actually happens. Under capitalism, there is no miraculous match-up between production and consumption through supply and demand. Consumption is only confirmed after production, when the goods reach the market place, by which time it is too late - they have already been produced, hence the gambling and wasting aspects of capitalist production. There is then the added problem that market theory assumes that each consumer is prepared to put up with failure and shoddy goods - that they are prepared to try an infinite number of goods before selecting the one they want to consume (which, like many assumptions of market theory, is illogical and unworkable).

Solidarity forever

The idea of 'common humanity' is based on the premise that we are better off working together rather than for a state. Our solidarity is our morality. We are ethical socialist, not state socialist. The central test of our society and of those acting within it is; "how free or oppressive is this?"

We have a right to defend our ethical and moral fabric. If a group or individual threatens our moral code, we can rightly act to defend it. For example, if someone commits burglary, this interferes with free association and the right to security. We must act to stop it. However, our reaction would be completely different to the statist one, because we have a completely different view of humanity and society. Collective action would be far more effective than the police can ever be today, for they are protecting other people's property and an obviously spurious set of 'rights' and 'laws', and often they get little or no support from the people they are trying to 'control'. Today, it is blatantly obvious that things are unfair, and we are urged to take whatever we can get away with. Inevitably, some of us rip each other off. In a future society, confronting a robber personally with their crimes would in all likelihood be enough. Anyway, in a just society, no one will be there to buy knocked off gear, since people will have a stake in society and believe that it must work through everyone taking responsibility for living by solidarity ethics. Faced with a moral majority, a robber will have nothing to gain by robbing.

Bullying, as with robbery, would be eliminated. Bullying is a complex form of oppression, since it involves some form of direct relationship between bully and bullied. Some people are both to different people. Some people are forced to give tacit consent to allow themselves to be bullied. They may be shocked at first, but then they grow to endure it, and sometimes it becomes a long-term pattern of behaviour. At its core, bullying depends upon lack of belief in one's self-fear. In a confident, free, self-educated society, such a classic bullying relationship could not arise.

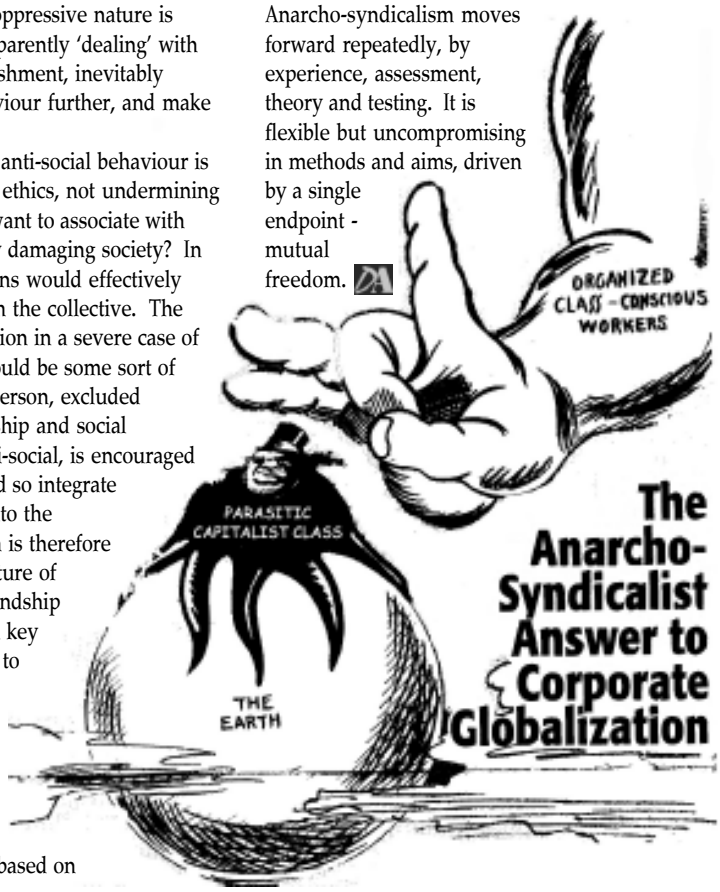
In the absence of oppressive relationships, physical offences such as rape, murder, paedophilia, etc. would not happen, since they are directly related to the oppression in an authoritarian capitalist, statist society (this is not an excuse for the perpetrators, merely an explanation - virtually everyone is conscious and therefore responsible for their actions). In a society based on freedom, the crime we know today would automatically shrink and eventually disappear, for it is abuse of power which causes it. In other words, 'prevention is better than cure' would certainly apply to dealing with the prospect of crime in such a society.

Current society supports oppression, and it is therefore rife with robbery, bullying, fear, physical abuse, etc. It is literally hopeless in dealing with oppression, since the dominant ideology preaches that oppressive nature is innate. The tools for apparently 'dealing' with crime, prisons and punishment, inevitably spread oppressive behaviour further, and make the problem worse.

The real solution to anti-social behaviour is strengthening solidarity ethics, not undermining them. Who is going to want to associate with someone who is actively damaging society? In other words, such persons would effectively exclude themselves from the collective. The most likely course of action in a severe case of anti-social behaviour would be some sort of persuasion, where the person, excluded themselves from friendship and social interaction by being anti-social, is encouraged to change their ways and so integrate themselves fully back into the community. The person is therefore 'self-sanctioned'. A mixture of support and waning friendship in local society may be a key stimulus for individuals to educate themselves and re-integrate. Decisions about what to do, like in every other walk of life, will be made by the community at the time, based on solidarity ethics.

Mutual freedom through solidarity is the spirit of anarcho-syndicalism. Within this, we can be creative and develop ourselves to our fullest potential, in our own vision - in other words, only then can we maximise our individuality. The way we organise our society and production processes will always be the key. We will need certain products and services, as we decide through our local organisations. In fact, ensuring equal access to the products and services we need is the only 'management' task we have. We must not manage each other, for this is contrary to freedom; we will, instead, simply organise 'things'. We can only make real progress towards the society we want by practising and developing our self-reliance and self-organisation now; by building the new society in the shell of the old.

To varying extents, many struggles against capitalism and the state share the ethical aims of anarcho-syndicalism and its methods. Anarcho-syndicalism is not a dogmatic prescription, but a living, breathing, and dynamic range of methods and ideas, all stemming from the culture of resistance and the spirit of freedom. The methods and tactics anarcho-syndicalists adopt in any given situation are those that arise organically from the collective efforts and experience of those involved. Hence, anarcho-syndicalism is ever changing, in response to the ever-changing circumstances we are in, and the ever-changing experiences we have. Anarcho-syndicalism moves forward repeatedly, by experience, assessment, theory and testing. It is flexible but uncompromising in methods and aims, driven by a single endpoint - mutual freedom.



Ebola with wings

If only some scientists could convince Bush and Blair that the growth and spread of TB and its more virulent strains was an Al-Qaeda plot, then we might get some real action in the war against the disease.

Since the mid-1980s, the overall decline of tuberculosis (TB) has reversed. While its presence as an ever-present scourge in Britain declined sharply in the 1940s, there is now an epidemic across chunks of the developing world. Hence, it remains the most common cause of bacterial death in adults, killing some three million people a year.

Recently, TB has re-emerged in Britain as a significant health problem. Current infection rates here are about 6,000 people a year. Resistant strains of TB have emerged, and outbreaks have also been put down to laxity with treatment regimes, which require a patient to take 3 or 4 drugs for periods of at least six months. The government and health services have also run down screening programmes, presumably in the complacent belief that they are not required.

Last year, a particularly large cluster of cases occurred at a school in Leicester, followed by a further cluster in Aberdeen. However, these media-reported events are just the tip of the iceberg. Every day, about 3,000 people in London take powerful antibiotics in an attempt to cure the disease. London now has double the number of cases of New York, which, as a city, has spent $1 billion and most of the last decade fighting the disease. Newham in London is now the new Manhattan, with 108 cases per 100,000, which puts it ahead of India, with 41 per 100,000, or Russia since the fall of Stalinism, with 91 per 100,000.

So, amidst all the official explanations, what is really happening? Speaking to medical staff, you'll hear the familiar story of TB thriving amongst the homeless and malnourished, and people living in overcrowded, unsanitary conditions. TB is a symptom of globalisation, and in a world of cheap air travel, one country's epidemic can quickly spread to another. As Peter Davies of Liverpool University, one of Britain's foremost TB experts, recently put it; "We've always let the developing world rot… But for the first time, the diseases of that world – particularly TB – are impinging on us."

Mario Raviglione, head of TB control for the World Health Organisation put it simply; "Three million people are dying every year… and virtually the whole sub-Saharan Africa is infected." You can catch TB by merely sleeping in the same room as someone with the microbe. "TB is not humdrum", says Raviglione, "it's ebola with wings", and it's flying like never before.

One person is infected by TB every four seconds, and one dies every ten seconds. The global total is grim; TB kills more people than malaria or AIDS. However, it doesn't seem to have the media appeal of some diseases. It's street cred is zero; three million is just a number, and TB conjures up humdrum images of African and Asian poverty. In relative terms, the Hollywood drama potential lies with anthrax, AIDS or ebola.

Every epidemic has been linked to the worst excesses of capitalism, and this time is no different. In Britain, the industrial revolution and then the Thatcher years both brought TB – both times of declining health, increasing homelessness and widening inequalities.

Of course, global travel is not really the main source of TB's latest big break. Every epidemic has been linked to the worst excesses of capitalism, and this time is no different. In Britain, the industrial revolution and then the Thatcher years both brought TB – both times of declining health, increasing homelessness and widening inequalities. Ten years ago, Russia and Eastern Europe had no serious TB problem, but the social and economic collapse which rampant capitalism has brought is now accompanied by rampant TB. To be imprisoned in Russia means almost certain infection, in a major breeding ground for the drug-resistant strains of the bacteria.

In the 1990s, the plan was to get the 22 worst affected countries to detect 70% of TB cases, and then cure 85% of them by 2000. Only two countries met the target, Vietnam and Peru. Most of the others came nowhere near, and 10 years into the programme only one person in ten had access to the necessary drugs world-wide. In sub-Saharan Africa, latent TB infections are flaring up as HIV deprives people of the immunity they have to keep the disease at bay. HIV is to TB what matches are to kindling.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) insists that it could get treatment back on course if donor countries like the US and Britain give $400 million. However, this money is not yet forthcoming. Meanwhile, the UN has set up a global health fund to tackle HIV, TB and malaria. The British government has said that it will give tax breaks to companies that invest in vaccines and drugs for diseases – but this only underlines the fact that, yet again, suffering humanity is up against the 'free' market. Capitalism is a barrier to health, and TB medications are peddled according to 'supply and demand' – drug companies will supply, but only to those who meet their demands for profit.

Meanwhile, a report from the US Institute of Medicine in Atlanta has advocated a screening programme for TB for all applicants for United States citizenship from those countries deemed to be TB hotspots. As one would expect from an extreme right-wing reactionary regime, the US government will choose repressive political measures instead of increased medical research or an expensive international medical campaign to address the

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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.

Apologies for the lack of space for letters this issue - we thought that, given the events in Argentina, it would be best to translate and print as much as we could fit of what Hugo had to say. Keep the letters coming and we promise we'll do our best to print them next issue. DA Collective, x

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

disease.

The same politicians who want trade globalisation (because it's good for their profit), when it comes to dealing with disease, start talking about erecting a "cordon sanitaire" against TB and disease in general. However, until the 'privateers' successfully privatise the consumption of air, we are all still connected by the air that we breathe. The idea of building a moat around disease has never been more ridiculous than now.

There are already signs of the chickens coming home to roost. A super-contagious TB strain dubbed 'Beijing' apparently spreads more easily and has developed an alarming resistance to drugs. From Russia, it has spread, and now accounts for half the cases in Indonesia. Could this virulent strain shake the complacency of the rich and powerful, as diseases are no respecters of persons? Or the anthrax scare in the USA following the 11th September atrocities (it's strange – the mainstream media dropped them quietly) may perhaps in the long run make US governments more responsive to questions of public health. If only some scientists could convince Bush and Blair that the growth and spread of TB and its more virulent strains was an Al-Qaeda plot, then we might get some real action in the war against the disease.

FUN ACTION-IDEA

Organise a "cough-in"
Issue a leaflet outlining the perils of the new strains of TB. Distribute leaflets at a political meeting, then attend coughing loudly and spitting stage blood or similar.

Letter from Argentina

Over a month has gone by since ruling political parties turned an illegitimate president into a 'legal leader'. He is knowledgeable in politics and knows perfectly well that time is on his side - this is the reason why he is not making any major decisions at this moment of crisis.

These owners of all things cannot and do not want to understand the reality of a destroyed country beyond their own convenience, conventions, congresses, committees, basic units, etc., which are only there to satisfy their greed for power.

All of those who accompany him have got wide experience as state workers, lawyers and businessmen. Their apparent task is to provide solutions to the problems Argentina is currently facing. Obviously, they do not consider these responsibilities as such; instead, they show pride in taking the positions of saviours of the world. It is them who as vice-presidents, ministers, MPs, senators and so on, put an end to the hopes of the people to lead peaceful lives in the security of their jobs, their pensions, their study and their work.

Hundreds of MPs, screwed to their benches in Parliament, have not been able to generate proposals that would give us the security to keep the jobs and savings of millions. However, they have been able to vote, ears and eyes closed to people's opinions, to bring in the laws that have worsened the crisis even more. The 37 million of us are the ones suffering from the decisions they have taken and their false proposals and lies. We are also the ones who have been kept imprisoned in their privileges, and we must make sure we start taking care of things and setting the priorities here, by any means necessary.

We mustn't allow them to act as if this is nothing to do with them. They should abandon the pedestals they are on. As they lack in creative politics, ideologies and thoughts other than those which allow them to keep and broaden their privileges, they have allowed the usual thieves to rob a whole country from their collective future. Through financing the electoral campaigns and false efforts of political parties, they have managed to increase their profits, which they have been taking abroad along with the savings from all of us, who now stand totally naked.

Without the illicit consent of these "politicians", it wouldn't have been possible to carry out a fraud of this magnitude. These same politicians have denied future generations the chance to lead a noble life. Instead, they bought themselves mansions and private neighbourhoods like the ones in the First World, multimillion dollar flats and pharaoh's houses, and took their investments abroad. Meanwhile, millions swelled the unemployment lists, living in misery, without access to decent food, education and health services.

I think this time the people are keen to make them pay for their malice – I'm not sure how this will come about, but it will certainly happen. To start with, they have already lost the freedom to walk in the streets, to go shopping and enjoy eating out, to take their children to school, to go on holidays and to go to the office to work. They are corralled in an immense enclosure marked by the borders of our country. And surely, anywhere they go, they'll end up being questioned and humiliated, as recently happened to the Argentinean foreign minister in Spain.

There are many who worry about this 'anarchic' state of affairs and the lack of a visible line to direct our will and thoughts. They are asking questions about popular assemblies, picket-lines, demos, meetings and all these sort of things. Today men and women are united in poverty, and they have learned to dismiss as useless a political model that can only bring more treachery, undercover pacts and parasites. There is one thing we can be sure about: we will NEVER trust them again. We have been putting up with it since the beginning of our Republic, and it has meant that we cannot think, make decisions or govern our lives unless it is through our leading representatives. And the popular question at the moment is; "who do they represent?" Just their own class, as ever. Today we can be more sure about the answer than ever before, because with the power in their hands, they have taken us dozens of years back in history.

And this is why, one by one, we must change all those rules and laws that only lead to abuse of power. We must take these away from them, as they have used them against our interests. We must not allow them to play the victims, because they are the ones who have committed these atrocities against society. We must take control of all aspects of our lives; justice, health, education, finances, foreign policies, taxes, distribution of wealth, Latin-American integration, insurance, employment, retirement and pensions, commerce, economic alliances, sanctions against corruption, etc. No middlemen needed - we must be the ones involved in bringing about this social, cultural and economic revolution. This way the future for our children will be guaranteed and safe. Ours will be a world of free men and women, and we will enjoy the self-determination that we deserve – we will not be slaves of corporate or foreign interests EVER AGAIN.

Today civil disobedience must be our only flag, against anything which could lead to more poverty. We must fight for our rights and freedom, and be at the centre of the political change taking place, directly participating in all matters related to our own future. We must rebel against any political and economic impositions coming from abroad. Success depends on us and our courage to take control of the great revolutionary change ripening in our own selves.

Hugo, Buenos Aires – Argentina, 13th February 2002

Slavery behind the label

Prison labour is basically slave labour, with ludicrous wages; for example, in Swansea, the pay is about 40p an hour. HM Prison Enterprise's website does a hard-sell job to make its slave labour attractive to particularly greedy corporations. However, there's scope for making it unprofitable for these companies. A visit to Hepworth Building Products had a very positive effect (see DA 21).

Here are some of the prison labour companies and their involvement. One solidarity gesture might be to help yourself to stationary and send it back to the prisoners when you write to them. Otherwise, visits and general enquiries to these companies (who are not public about their labour force) wouldn't go amiss.

Wilkinsons - the chainstore involved in Swansea prison

Dysons - using Full Sutton

Tysons (an electrical firm in Nottingham) - using Ranby

Polymer Reprocessors Ltd - using Altcourse

Virgin Atlantic - using Lewes

Harrods - using Exeter

Habitat - using Wormword Scrubs

Bearmark and Poplar Plastics – both using Parc

Mark Barnsley is still inside and still resisting the screws (see previous DAs and/or check out: www.freemarkbarnsley.com). Meanwhile, the Justice for Mark Barnsley Campaign has produced an essential benefit CD; One law for them: Another one for us.

Twenty-two tracks of punk and more featuring: Contempt, The Warriors, Reazione, Blyth Power, Gundog, Norm Rejection, Scum, Riot/Clone, The Templars, Violent Affray, Guet Apens, Funeral Dress, Red London, The Business, The Pints, Red Alert, Attila The Stockbroker's Barnstormer, Dogshit Sandwich, The Pink Torpedoes, Chester, The Hippy War Generals and Who Moved The Ground.
Prices (incl. post & packing): £7 (Europe - £8, rest of world - £9). Send name & address and payment by postal order/cheque/IMO (in £ sterling only, payable to 'Justice for Mark Barnsley') or well-concealed cash to: Justice for Mark Barnsley, PO Box 381, Huddersfield HD1 3XX, UK.
Further info: JoeBlackRecords@aol.com

USA: Break the Chains

The beginnings of breakthechains.net is finally online, in English AND Spanish! This site is dedicated to US NW Political Prisoners and has (will have) separate pages written by the three who receive primary support from Break the Chains; Free, Critter and Rob los Ricos, with links to updates and sites of other prisoners/prisoner support groups. http://www.breakthechains.net

USA: New "Anarchist Black Cross Information and Resources" available

In 1992-1993, a group called Nightcrawlers ABC (a US Anarchist Black Cross group of the early 1990s) published an organising guide called "Anarchist Black Cross Information and Resources." It included group addresses, articles and tips for doing support, and one of the first how-to sheets on starting an ABC group. It was a very helpful item for new activists and those looking for help in their isolated regions. A new version, with some of the original articles, some new and past pieces on criminalisation, and updated addresses, is now available online. If you've been interested in starting an Anarchist Black Cross group, this guide may prove to be very helpful. Plus, it's free.
You can download, print and distro your own copies from: http://www.anarchistblackcross.org/pdf/abciar.pdf

USA: Chris Plummer: Released!

After 8 years inside serving a sentence for alleged anti-fascist activity, Chris Plummer was released in January. He is keen to get straight back into organising in Texas. He would welcome project ideas and donations, as he really doesn't have much money. Also, he wants to gather as many e-mail addresses as possible from active collectives worldwide, he wants to be able to send out monthly updates on things as they develop. So, send in your e-mail adverts and collectives you know.
Chris Plummer, PO Box 1324 Austin, TX 78767 USA. E-mail: austinabc_@hotmail.com

USA: Karen Horning: Released!

Drug war prisoner/political prisoner Karen Horning was released in January after serving almost her entire 10-year sentence (originally a life sentence that was dropped) after a frame-up by undercover cops. Karen was pinpointed as an acid dealer by more than one individual. However, these individuals were being questioned on drug selling and simply decided to take the easy route, snitching out Karen who had nothing to do with it. But, like some involved in the Deadhead scene, she did have acid on her, so she faced time in prison. Karen spent many years in prison, and the last few at the FMC Carswell hospital in Ft. Worth, TX (the only hospital for federal women in all of the US), due to her illness with Lyme's Disease (see previous DAs). While in prison, she remained actively involved with the movement, mainly her continued fight to stop the "War on Drugs".

Antiprison

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

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.

Gregg Minns

Gregg is an anarchist who has been sectioned and imprisoned in a hospital mental ward. He's been there for 6 months, and has already been on hunger strike to demand that they stop giving him injections which were screwing him up. The hunger strike was successful, but it looks like he'll be there for another 6 months, and he really needs support. Letters and visits:
Greg Minns, Ward 18, Burnley General Hospital, Casterton Ave, Burnley, Lancs, BBIO 2PQ, UK.

Turkish anarchists

Numerous anarchists are locked up in Turkey's notoriously inhuman and barbaric penal system, and are due for release in 2024. They have been in prison over 2 years and seem certain to stay there for at least another 20-24 years. They would love to get letters or postcards. It makes them feel that they are not alone. Some names and addresses are given below, for more see the website or contact DA.
Zamir Karaagac, E Tipi Kapali Cezaevi, B-5 K.Maras 46060, Turkey.
Osman Ercan Ozel, Tip Kapali Cezaevi, C-2 Kogusu, Amasya 05100, Turkey.
Ibrahim Demir Ozel, Tip Cezaevi, B/1-2 Gaziantep, Turkey.
Bulent Kurt, E Tipi Kapali Cezaevi, D/8 K.Maras 46060, Turkey.
Abbas Irmak, E Tipi Cezaevi, B-2 Kirsehir, Turkey.
Ali Biter, E Tipi Cezaevi, B-2 Kirsehir, Turkey.
www.marsbard.com/kebele

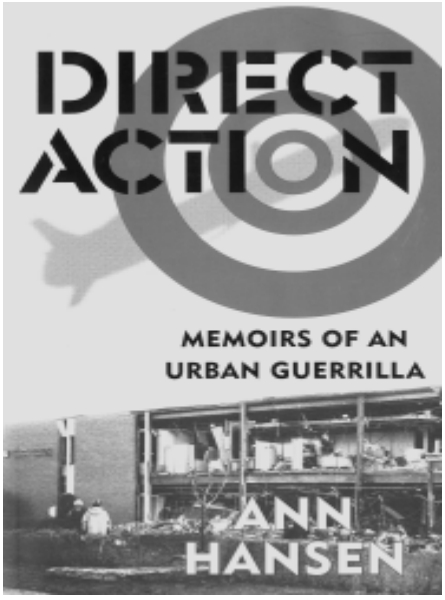
Support our prisoners

Political prisoners are inside because they put themselves on the line for a better world. Solidarity is necessary! By supporting them, you are fighting back alongside them – and it only takes a few quiet minutes and a stamp to write to them and let them know you are supporting them.
For listings of animal rights, earth liberation, indigenous, self-defence and other political prisoners, plus handy hints on writing letters, go to: www.spiritoffreedom.org.uk

Direct Action: Memoirs Of An Urban Guerrilla

Ann Hansen

Between the Lines 2002 - AK Press Distribution. ISBN 1-896357-40-7. 493 pp.
AK Distribution, PO Box 12766, Edinburgh EH8 9YE, Scotland.



No matter what has happened in the last twenty years, the defining moment of my political activist career was the bombing of Litton Industries. Their plant, in northwest Toronto, was where Canadian complicity in the arms race was more publicly revealed. In the factory on City View Drive, Canadian tax dollars were subsidising the production of the guidance system for the American air-launched, cruise missile. For years, the Cruise Missile Conversion Project and various local expressions of the Alliance for Non-violent Action, persistently and non-violently attempted to end this expression of Canadian involvement in the arms race.

In the fall of 1982 their was a rupture, an upheaval in the resistance to manufacturing the tools of war - a bomb went off at Litton Industries, a bombing that the group Direct Action took responsibility for. The police took this opportunity to go after peace activists. Our homes and offices were raided. People were picked up off the street or out of movie theatres for questioning. False charges were laid to pressure people to name names. It was a fearful and formative time.

Ann Hansen was one of the members of Direct Action. Her book is a slightly fictionalised account of the history of Direct Action and the political realities of the late 1970s and early 1980s. Reading Direct Action, one gets a hint of Emma Goldman's Living My Life. There is a strong, personal narrative linked to a broader world of movements for positive and compassionate social transformation. There is also a mix of conversations between known activists, sections that are almost a diary in nature, and parts that are close to a newspaper feature in balanced detail. Direct Action is a structurally complex work. Finding out that Ann Hansen had not read Living My Life was a surprise. Nevertheless, Direct Action is in the tradition - an open reflection on personal experiences living in a revolutionary milieu.

For about two years, there was a strong sense of fear in the lives of a number of activists wondering about what will happen next - who will have their home raided? Who will face a series of harassing charges? Our partners and families faced harassment as well. There is no indication in the book that the fall-out the bombing would cause to the lives of people far removed from the action had been considered by any of the participants. I know through correspondence with the five while in prison that all were genuinely concerned about the victims of the police actions that arose in the aftermath.

What is revealed throughout the book is a real militant compassion. Ann Hansen portrays the range of issues that the five participants in Direct Action had attempted to address. There was not a sudden leap from a desire for social change to a participation in urban guerrilla warfare. Rather, we are invited to share in a process that helps to reveal why people who were deeply committed to a just and ecologically sound world would accept the risks of both their freedom and lives and the lives of others as a step towards their ideals bearing fruit. The tapestry of relationships she was a part of was complex. Some were intensely emotional, indicating a capacity for love that I think also underlies her own willingness to take major personal risks in order to make life better for others. The practical details of how the various actions were done, from the fire bombing of Red Hot Video to the bombing of the Dunsmuir site to armed robberies don't indicate a romanticised view of armed struggle or sabotage. Rather, they are pragmatic and to a great extent background details to the story of the Vancouver 5/ Squamish 5/Direct Action/Wimmin's Fire Brigade, from Ann Hansen's personal perspective.

While Direct Action is a personal statement, it is also an historical document. Twenty years ago, revolution was not merely an advertising concept. In Nicaragua and El Salvador there were massive, popular revolts against US backed regimes. There was enthusiasm as victories could be pointed to - such as reproductive freedom. So if there were roadblocks to change, was it unreasonable to want to remove the roadblocks? If there was immediate harm going to occur, such as building weapons for the US military or destroying the ecosystem or exploiting women's sexuality, was it unreasonable for people to try and sabotage the actual places where harm was occurring? Direct Action looks at this reality and helps to question it.

In the light of a strong anti-globalisation movement and the U.S. response to the events of September 11th, this is an essential book to read and reflect upon. We are in a world where the police have recently been given extreme powers to crack down on dissent. If nothing else, this book will encourage serious thought about how to effectively resist while considering the consequences of resistance.

The World's first Anarchist Manifesto

Anselme Bellegarrigue
KSL, 2002, translated by Paul Sharkey. ISBN 1-873605-82X.
£1.50 from KSL, BM Hurricane, London WC1N 3XX

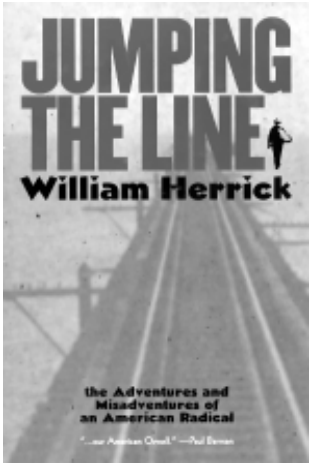
An absolute must for the anarcho-historians, this document provides a link between Godwin, with the first roots of anti-capitalism and anti-authority, and the mid-late 19th century emergence of class-conscious anarchism. It is a bit Stirnerist individualist in tone – just what you might expect from pre-class struggle, embryonic workers' movement times. Still puts the boot into politics quite nicely.

Jumping the Line

William Herrick

AK Press 2001, £10, ISBN 1902593-421. AK Press, PO Box 12766, Edinburgh, Scotland EH8 9YE.

Bill Herrick describes himself as an anarcho-social democrat; admirers have called him the American Orwell. I've never really been to the States, so I read this, Herrick's memoirs, as an outsider peering in.



Herrick has been a writer for quite a while, and it shows – this is no wooden work by an old man in a hurry to pass on hard-won experience. Not to say it isn't full of gems of experience. Herrick has been around a bit.

The obvious Orwell parallel lies in the fact that they both went to fight fascism in civil war Spain, both got shot and were lucky to survive, and both went on to write about it. However, there the similarity fades. Herrick was a Communist Party member, and fought with the communists; Orwell was with the POUM; Herrick was from a Jewish working class background; Orwell was from a well-to-do family. True, Herrick left the communists when he realised how they treated people, including when he was forced to witness them shooting comrades for contravening the party line.

Indeed, the title sums up not just Herrick's hobo days (he would have loved to have been old enough to be a wobbly in the '20s), but also his libertarian convictions, which led him to jump the CP line and become an outspoken ex-Communist Party critic. His coming clean about a CP officer being killed by his men caused a major ruckus in the CP many decades on from the civil war (as documented at length in the introduction by Berman).

However, the real strength of the book stems from two threads which run right through. The first is the reminiscence of bygone days, when times were hard and life was simpler – there is a precious, personal slice of US working class history running through – not to mention the pricelessness of the civil war years' accounts. The second is the unstinting moral and matter-of-factness about Herrick's lifetime of practising principles.

The memories give the book detail and delicateness, while the experiences give it real substance. In an era where morals are no longer to be debated (the market is now the god and no morals are required), and where even activism is often seen as a part time activity (turn out for demos and spend the rest of the time shopping/partying), Herrick's book makes you think. He was active in union organising; he went down south to oppose racism in the '30s; he then went on to Spain to fight fascism; and he then fought tirelessly both against communism and capitalism in post-war US. For commitment and inspiration, look no further.

Kandahar

Dir: Mohsen Makhmalbar, Iran 2001

Set in Taliban-ruled Afghanistan, documentary-esque *Kandahar* will take you through a desperate, battle-scared country – and that was before the recent British and US efforts to turn the ruins into rubble. The subject matter centres on the lives of women living under fundamentalist Islamic culture. The director, Iranian and from a Muslim culture appalled by Taliban oppression, skilfully records events without apparent sentimentality.

Though the plot and storyline are thin, it suffices as a framework for the message. Nafas, a young Afghan woman living in Canada receives a letter from her sister which threatens suicide because she cannot endure the conditions that Afghan women suffer. She enters Afghanistan illegally, and once there, has to journey through the perilous countryside. Don't depend on a happy ending; do expect cinematic detail and piercing observation. If your heart does not go out to the women of Afghanistan, you aren't human.

Mosquito

Andrew Spielman and Michael D'Antonio

Hyperion; pp. 256; Faber and Faber; £10.99

When we think of mosquitoes and disease, we tend to think of malaria, but the mosquito spreads not just malaria but yellow fever, dengue fever, filariasis, encephalitis and now the West Nile virus, which usually afflicts people in Africa and the Balkans.
However, when an outbreak occurred in New York in 1999, all hell broke loose, raising about as much local anxiety as the anthrax attacks.

The mosquito-borne diseases are major killers of whole populations, but they have been influential in changing the course of history. Amongst other things, they were directly responsible for the deaths of Alexander the Great and Oliver Cromwell. They even played their role in the decline and fall of the Roman Empire.

The malaria parasites mosquitoes carry are good at disguising themselves and changing their form, which is why so many modern anti-malaria medicines soon become ineffectual. Malaria and other diseases borne by the mosquito have a catastrophic effect on many societies in the Third World, and its eradication would have a revolutionary effect on many of those societies, which is one reason why little research is done on the mosquito and malaria, along with the fact that there is little profit to be made by the drug companies by producing medication for these diseases suffered by the world's poor. What a foolish idea, they haven't got any spare cash to pay for them.

Once drawn by the simple title, rather like a moth to a lamp, the facts take over. A word of caution; avoid reading last thing at night. That whinging buzzing sound just gets louder in the darkness.

VICTOR SERGE:

THE COURSE IS SET ON HOPE

Susan Weissman

September 2001, £22 (Hardback) ISBN 185 984 9873, Verso

In a world struck down with a far-reaching and malignant tumour – globalisation - an unholy alliance of the financiers of the WTO, the lap dogs of European parliaments with their storm trooper police, are being urged on by the world press. But for every cancerous cell, there is the counter-cancer of the anti-capitalist movement spreading with equal voracity across the globe. Takes you back to the 1920s?

Victor Serge was the personification of this revolutionary spirit – a man who genuinely deserved and relished the 'anarchist' label. He was a zealous participant in three revolutions, politically active in seven countries, spent a decade in captivity, published more than thirty books and left behind thousands of pages of unpublished manuscripts.

Victor Serge (1890-1947) was born in Belgium into a family of exiled Russian revolutionaries and quickly became involved in anarchist activities. Aged 21, he stood trial as a member of the notorious Bonnot gang – a group of French and Belgian activists. He escaped the death sentence and spent five terrible but formative years in prison, where he began to write.

He arrived in Russia aged 28 in 1919 as a seasoned revolutionary anarchist who had already served two prison terms, and fought in the failed Spanish insurrection of 1917. As a member of the Bolshevik Party, he participated in the first three congresses of the Comintern, and fought in the siege of Petrograd during the Civil War. He was sent on a Comintern assignment to Berlin to help prepare the German Revolution in 1923. With the defeat of the German October revolution, he moved to Vienna, where he continued Comintern work. In 1925, he returned to the Soviet Union to stand with the Left Opposition.

He was one of the main spokespersons in the Leningrad Party, but was expelled in 1927 by Stalin, and was arrested three months later and held for eight weeks. During the following five years of precarious liberty in Russia, he wrote five books, including three novels and *'Year One of the Russian Revolution'* – all published abroad. Incidentally, not one line of his work was published in the USSR until 1989, following the fall of the Communist regime. In 1933, he was arrested again and deported to Orenberg, where, for three years, he and his son nearly starved to death. He wrote a further four books – all confiscated by the GPU when he was expelled from the country in April 1939. Due to an internationally-faught defence campaign by supporters, he narrowly escaped death just four months before the first Moscow Trial, which initiated the 'Great Terror'. Once in Europe, Stalin stripped him of his nationality and passport, but Serge continued with his life work – exposing Stalin's betrayal of everything socialist as Serge saw it.

He remained in Paris until the Wehrmacht (German Army) arrived in June 1940, when he fled to Marseilles on foot with his family. However, he had to wait a year for his visa out of Vichy France, hounded by Hitler's Gestapo and Stalin's NKVD. Eventually, he was admitted to Mexico, where he spent the rest of his life writing "*Only for the Draw*", despite an almost total publisher's boycott. Filled with plans for future projects, he died in abject poverty in November 1947.

The essence of Serge, which Weissman is out to capture, is how his fertile mind strove to understand the past in order to see the future, which he believed would be organised by a healthy and profoundly democratic collectivism. He warned all along of the inherent dangers of a 'totalitarian way of thinking' – based not on looking for 'truth', but in conducting a political struggle. He opposed capitalism first as an anarchist, then as a Bolshevik, then reacted against its undemocratic practices and opposed Stalin with a lifelong passion. Weissman's account underlines his stoic refusal to surrender to either the Soviet State or the Capitalist West.

STALIN STRIPPED HIM OF HIS NATIONALITY AND PASSPORT BUT SERGE CONTINUED WITH HIS LIFE WORK – EXPOSING STALIN'S BETRAYAL OF EVERYTHING SOCIALIST AS SERGE SAW IT

Having been so long airbrushed from the platform of history by Soviet Russia, accessible examinations of Serge are welcome, and more of his work as well as critical studies are now appearing in print. Weissman's contribution is an important analysis of a political writer and activist, which also describes his life and traces his ideas and their evolution. This book is an intellectual and political biography aiming to bring to light the importance of this relatively unknown and forgotten figure. Events are viewed through the prism of his soviet experience and struggle with the sinister political developments in the Soviet Union. Other Serge books analyse his anarchism, his role as revolutionary novelist, his political practices in Belgium, France, Spain and Mexico. Maybe the definitive Serge book will never be written – meanwhile, Weissman contributes to fresh examinations and paves the way for new interpretations, debates and clarifications that must surely follow.

Private Profit from Pain

You think times are bad in public services. If GATS reformers get their way, they are soon set to get a whole lot worse.

The free market is increasingly focusing on the world service sector. The plan is to force open services such as health care to private competition. The World Trade Organisation (WTO) was the original tool envisaged for this job. However, anti-globalisation pressure, with events such as Seattle in 1999, has effectively prevented the WTO from going through with a comprehensive revision of international trade.

Behind the scenes, talks have begun in earnest to change one of the most important of the 28 agreements overseen by the WTO; the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS). The US, EU and Japan are trying to revise GATS, so that it can be used to overturn almost any domestic legislation governing the provision of services. The aim is to force open public services across the world, so the private sector can move in.

This is not simply a lucrative sideline for global capitalism. It is seriously big bucks. The service sector makes up about two-thirds of the European economy, and four-fifths of US Gross Domestic Product. Services, whether education, health care, finance, transport, utilities, tourism, entertainment, telecommunications, road building or you-name-it; once they are made into a tangible commodity, they can produce private profit out of the public purse.

This massive sector of the world's economy is doubly attractive because it is both growing and it presents lots of relatively new territory, since much of it currently remains under state control. The process has already started. Britain is well down the track, following the US in turning large parts of the service sector over to the profit takers. Many countries in the developing world have been forced to liberalise elements of their service sector as a part of IMF-imposed restructuring programmes, or in return for World Bank loans. GATS is seen as a means of forcing through another course of bitter pills.

GATS is a major change in direction for the WTO, which up until now has been mainly used by multinational companies as a weapon for opening up the developing world's private economy to First World dominance. The GATS agreement thus far has not been used to force through privatisation and deregulation, primarily due to the fact the deregulation of services under GATS is voluntary and the majority of the WTO's 141 member countries have only committed themselves to liberalising just a small part of their services, most notably in tourism. Further services currently provided by the public sector are currently exempt from the GATS agreement.

This is all about to change. Out go the negotiations taking place at international conferences surrounded by anti-capitalist demonstrators. In comes the softly-softly approach under which GATS can be extended way beyond its current form, well away from the glare of publicity.

Article VI of GATS covers domestic regulation. Its 4th clause aims to ensure that "qualification requirements and procedures, technical standards and licensing requirements do not constitute unnecessary barriers to trade in services". The term "technical standards" is at present undefined in GATS. However, elsewhere under WTO agreements covering technical barriers to trade, most types of government control are included. In other words, government regulations covering the service sector could be taken to the WTO disputes committee as a barrier to trade.

The potential implications are staggering. Government regulations aimed at anything from environmental protection to workers' rights could be challenged as a barrier to free trade in services. Both the US and the EU are currently considering bringing such challenges to the WTO disputes committee.

Article VI also states that national regulation should "not be more burdensome than necessary", and should not restrict the supply of the service. The term "burdensome" has been left largely undefined and currently does not provide a clear legal formula that a WTO dispute panel could refer to. So, the Working Party on Domestic Regulation, one of the sub-groups on the Council for Trade in Services (the body within the WTO that oversees GATS), has been charged with looking into the issue. To clarify the terms "burdensome" and "restrictive", the Working Party is considering incorporating the term "pro-competitive". The EU is pushing for this to be extended to include the term "anti-competitive practices", including cross-subsidising by monopoly providers of network infrastructure and services.

From such legal technicalities, millions of lives can be ruined. In a "pro-competitive" GATS world, governments who use social insurance funds, risk pooling block contracts and subsidies in order to deliver public services to as much of the population as possible, could find them challenged as anti-competitive.

State health provision will be open to challenge by private sector health providers, since "universal risk pooling" is a key aspect of public sector health provision. The idea that the young and old, ill and healthy are all pooled together across society to provide a universal health system would be seen as uncompetitive, on the grounds that a young healthy person could get far better terms from a private health insurer. Thus, tax based universal health care such as the NHS goes down the tubes, sunk by a GATS torpedo – and the government can claim it is

Just as the idea of making the sick, old, poor and unfortunate pay more is abhorrent to all sensible people, so any ideas of redistribution or universal public services are abhorrent to the capitalist 'logic' of profit. More to the point, any excuse will do for private sector companies, greedy for the untold profits privatisation promises.

all in the interests of global competitiveness, and out of their hands.

Equally, cross-subsidising becomes outlawed as 'uncompetitive'. Cross-subsidising is another basic universal services principle. International telephone calls in many countries subsidise rural telephone networks; busy bus and train services subsidise the less busy; city post services subsidise rural networks, and so on. Risk pooling and cross-subsidies between rich and poor, healthy and sick ensure that all get access to similar levels of service. Such methods are used to ensure universal access - the basic principle upon which public services were originally built.

Just as the idea of making the sick, old, poor and unfortunate pay more is abhorrent to all sensible people, so any ideas of redistribution or universal public services are abhorrent to the capitalist 'logic' of profit. More to the point, any excuse will do for private sector companies, greedy for the untold profits privatisation promises. The rush is already on for positioning amongst private companies to identify and move in on the more profitable aspects of public services, leaving the rest behind as a reduced greater burden on the tax paper. The cherry-picking commences.

And, indeed, this is just the start. Current fads such as Private Finance Initiatives (PFIs), Public Private Partnerships (PPPs), internal markets, contracted out services, competitive tendering, Best Value, and even the use of management from the private sector in public services, all lead only one way. According to GATS' logic, if a government contracts out any part of a public service, or, if a private company supplies services which are also provided by the government, then a WTO dispute panel may conclude that it is no longer a government service, and thus subject to GATS and to competition from abroad. The US could cry foul if the British government stopped a US multinational buying a National Health Hospital which had been privatised through a Private Finance Initiative.

At the heart of the whole issue is, quite literally, the struggle for world dominance. The EU regards itself as the world's biggest service exporter, while over a third of US economic growth over the past five years has been due to service exports. In contrast, services are a relatively small sector of the developing nations' economies, and first world companies know that if they can get in now, they can clean up. And in the OECD countries, public expenditure is massive - health and education alone accounts for 13% of gross product. Both the US and the EU are confident that they can be the biggest winners in the struggle for the global service market.

The fact that the private sector is slavering at the thought of the potential profits is not based on mere hype - as the part-privatisation of the service sector in Britain has already demonstrated. Almost 50% of total UK tax revenue is now going straight to private sector companies.

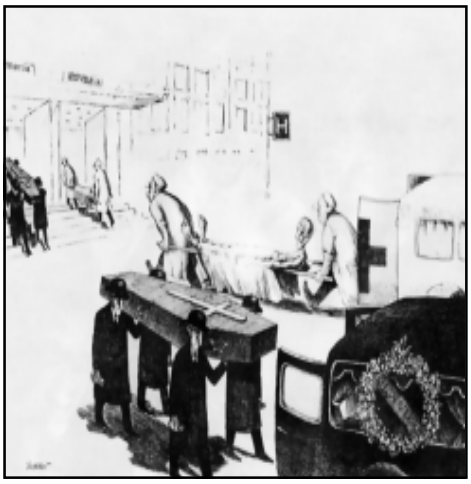
In the US, global health care is seen as big bucks, and back in the GATS 2000 talks, the US negotiators made the sector their special target. The US Coalition of Service Industries had already stated that; "We believe that we can make much progress at GATS negatotiations to allow the opportunity for US business to expand into foreign health care markets… Historically, health provision in many foreign countries has largely been the responsibility of the public sector. The public ownership of health care has made it difficult for the US private health care providers to market in foreign countries." The US negotiators went on to state boldly that "the United States is of the view that commercial opportunities exist along the entire spectrum of health and social care facilities, including hospitals, outpatient facilities, clinics, nursing homes, assisted living arrangements and service providers in the home". In other words, everything is up for grabs, once global deregulation of the service sector starts in earnest.

Such developments expose the modern fallacy of all-powerful multi-nationals and the powerless state, made impotent by global market forces. Behind the scenes, it is the state that is organising the private sector to ensure that they are in a position to take advantage once the changes to GATS are in place.

For its part, the EU has being flexing its institutional powers by actively reaching out to European companies, declaring; "GATS is not just something that exists between governments. It is first and foremost an instrument for the benefit of business, for individual service companies wishing to export or invest and operate abroad… In short, the GATS should be one of the key reference texts used by corporate planners seeking to do business on a world level".

The EU was instrumental in establishing the European Service Network (ESN), made up of service sector companies, both to ensure that the EU services sector was able to compete with the better-organised US sector and to advise "European Negotiators on the key barriers and countries on which they should focus". Moreover, in its own words, the ESN aims "to ensure that the EU's policies correspond to the real export and economic growth interest of our service sector." Hence, it was not slow to pick up on the EU's lead, declaring that it will "support and encourage the movement to liberalise serve sector markets throughout the world."

The movement to extend GATS has been conducted in secret, with no input from trade



...POWERLESS STATES MADE IMPOTENT BY MARKET FORCES? THE TRUTH IS THAT STATE POWER NEVER WENT AWAY, IT HAS SIMPLY GOT MORE FOCUSED ON PRIVATE PROFIT. GONE IS ANY PRETENCE OF THE NANNY STATE ACTING IN THE INTEREST OF ITS CITIZENS. THE TRUE PICTURE IS IN SHARP FOCUS; STATES ACTING IN THE INTERESTS OF CAPITALISM, AND IN DIRECT OPPOSITION TO THE INTERESTS OF THEIR CITIZENS.

unions, NGOs or national parliaments. The WTO, like the IMF and World Bank, remains highly secretive, accountable only to the world elite. Glimpses into the murky machinery are few. In 2000, the US Department of Commerce and the US Coalition of Service Industries jointly held a conference on "Services 2000: A Business – Government Dialogue on US Trade Expansion Objectives", the purpose being to "focus industries' priorities in the current WTO negotiations" and "allow participants to make detailed recommendations to negotiators". Not to be outdone, the Trade Directorate of the European Commission co-founded the 2000 European Service Forum on "GATS 2000 Negotiations: New Opportunities of Trade Liberalisation for All Service Sectors".

Does this look anything like powerless states made impotent by global market forces? The truth is that superstate blocks are mobilising capitalism within their borders to ensure ever-greater profits. State power never went away, it has simply got more focused on private profit. Gone is any pretence of the nanny state acting in the interest of its citizens. The true picture is in sharp focus; states acting in the interests of capitalism, and in direct opposition to the interests of their citizens.

The state, of course, can never do anything other than reflect the elite, so the current trend is hardly surprising. The elite are always opposed to everyone else, so it also follows that the state invariably acts against working people. Whether it purports to be left or right, revolutionary, Marxist, democratic or fascist, the effect, more or less, is a constant weight on the working class.

This brings us to the inevitable issue of the losers in the liberalisation of services. To state the obvious, everyone who works in the service sector will lose, and everyone who uses public services will lose. All the evidence overwhelmingly supports this. Take health care - all the pressure from the IMF, WB, and WTO is for moves towards a world health care system based on the US system. The figures speak for themselves. Despite health care being the largest sector of the US economy, with over $1 trillion annual spend (46% of which is directly from government), 44 million people – one in six – do not have any form of health cover, while millions more are underinsured. The US also has the most administratively expensive health service system in the world – and it covers the lowest percentage of the population.

The US system has been transformed from a mixture of for-profit and social forms of medicare, such as health maintenance organisations (a form of insurer-type intermediaries) and non-profit hospitals, into a totally for-profit system, under which the over-riding aim has become capturing market share. In the search for profitable admissions and relentless cost-cutting, the inevitable losers have been staff-to-patient ratios, sick (costly) patients, and the outright denial of care to many in need.

Nor is the US alone; Latin America has become a testing ground for the privatisation of health care in the name of "reform", with disastrous results for the old, the poor and the sick. Private companies have targeted the young and well-off, and have refused to operate in the countryside, where poverty and ill health coincide. Chile moved from being a pioneer of equal access to health services for all in the early 20th century to pioneer of the free market system by the end. The main tool for the change was slashing state provision and replacing it with private insurance based on the US system. The top 30% of the population now enjoy private health provision, while the other 70% depend on a cut-to-ribbons state sector. Wages, conditions and numbers of health service workers declined rapidly. State sector investment has collapsed to the point where equipment is antiquated and patients routinely have to bring their own bedding, syringes, etc. Since the top 30% contribute nothing to the state sector, it is the middle percentage who have to fund it entirely, as the bottom 30% are too poor to contribute. The pattern repeats; in Brazil, the top 30% of the population have 120,000 doctors to treat them - the rest depend on less than 80,000. This is the kind of health care GATS is set to spread across the globe.

While health care is clearly important, we must not forget just how pervasive GATS could get. Air quality, drinking water, food safety, road safety, drainage, sanitation and so on are all up for private sector grabs. The shift is deliberate, and is motivated by competition amongst state blocks centred on Europe, the US and Japan, all pushing for more profits for their private sectors. They are locking themselves into using the World Bank, the IMF and the WTO as the global free market police to force their own agendas for ever-greater exploitation. Thus far, our combined anti-capitalist efforts have at the very least slowed the pace of free market reform. But high-profile demonstrations will never be enough to stop the hunger for profit. The choice is stark. Organise politically and economically around anti-state, anti-party, anti-capitalist and pro-democracy principles – and across the globe. Or face ever-more poverty, job cuts, inequality and greed.

The International Workers' Association is the only anti-state, anti-capitalist, global organisation dedicated to taking on capitalism by organising both politically and economically (www.iwa-ait.org). Solidarity Federation (www.solfed.org.uk) is the British section - to join, contact SolFed (details p.34).

SF Contact Point:

SF, PO Box 1681, London N8 7LE
Tel. 0208 374 5027 Email; solfed@solfed.org.uk

www.solfed.org.uk

Networks - make contact with others in your type of work-
Education Workers' Network, PO Box 29, SW PDO, Manchester M15 5HW.
Public Service Workers' Network, PO Box 1681, London N8 7DN.
Communication Workers' Network, PO Box 29, SW PDO, Manchester M15 5HW.

Locals - get involved locally in regular meetings and action-
North & East London SF, PO Box 1681, London N8 7LE. Tel. 0208 3745027.
Red & Black Club, PO Box 17773, London SE8 4WX. Tel. 0207 3581854.
South West Solidarity, SWS, Box 43, 82 Colston St, Bristol BS1 5BB.
South Herts SF, PO Box 493, St Albans AL1 5TW. Tel. 01727 862814.
Lancashire SF, PO Box 469, Preston PR1 8XF. Tel./Fax 01772 739724.
lancashiresolfed@hotmail.com
http://mysite.freeserve.com/LancashireSF/index.jhtml
Manchester SF, PO Box 29, SW PDO, Manchester M15 5HW.
Tel. 07984 675281. manchestersf@manchestersf.org.uk
Sheffield SF, PO Box 1095, Sheffield S2 4YR. solfed@solfed.org.uk
West Yorks Solidarity Federation, PO Box 5, Hebden Bridge, W. Yorks HX7 8YN.
West Yorks SF (Leeds), PO Box 77, Leeds, LS8 3XX.

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

Direct Action - delivered

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- ○ 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!)

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STANDING ORDER (SO) FORM:

To the manager, ...Bank, ...Branch,
Address of your Bank:
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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

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).

Catalyst

Freesheet of the Solidarity Federation - IWA

If you like DA, you'll like Catalyst. New Spring issue out now. Workplace news plus wry insider 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@manchestersf.org.uk

Education Workers
New Higher Education Bulletin out end March 2002. Free copies from EWN (address in contacts, p.34). www.ewn.org.uk

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).

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.

MANPOWER: THEIR LOGO SHOWS THEM CRUCIFYING WORKERS

2nd week of April 2002: Coordinated actions of the IWA

Co-ordinated actions against Temporary Work Agencies, casual labour and unemployment are planned across the world in the second week in April. Information about actions co-ordinated by SolFed will be available around mid-March at www.solfed.org.uk or contact the Solfed Contact point or your nearest local (see addresses etc. on opposite page).

Alternatively, why not visit your nearest Manpower, Reed employment or other casual work agency, and find your own creative way to let them know what you think of them.

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.

SolFed Discussion Days

Sessions 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.

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

Manchester SF, PO Box 29, SW PDO, Manchester M15 5HW. Tel. 0[redacted]1. www.manchestersf.org.uk [redacted]fed.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 group, see; 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

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

Kate Sharpley Library
Send SAE for new detailed catalogue, donate 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
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 Also: Conference to Defend Asylum Seekers Manchester, Saturday 23 March 2002. Working with refugees, migrants and asylum seekers. Workshops on Detention, Deportation, Dispersal and organising, Fortress Europe, media, trade unions. Contact and bookings Tel: 07905 566183 E-mail: info@defend-asylum.org Mail: BCM Box 4289, London WC1X 3XX

The Sheffield Digger
Get copies, volunteer, make donations (cheques to "The Sheffield Digger"): Sheffield Digger, c/o Brambles Resource Centre, 82 Andover St, Sheffield S3 9EH.

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) - 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.

Planet Easton
Community media produced on limited resources. Virtually all articles are written by people living or working in Easton. Planet Easton, Easton Community Centre, Kilburn Street, Easton, Bristol BS5 6AW

SchNEWS of the World
Schnews annual - send articles either short - accompanying a pic - or else email us if you have an idea for an up-to-2,000 word article. Editorial deadline will be early April 2002 but get in contact before then. Please give pics time/place details (and make them 300 dpi 4"x6" jpgs if you're emailing). schnews@brighton.co.uk (visit www.schnews.org.uk).

Road to Ruin
The protest camp at the site of the proposed Alvaston bypass is calling for more people. The site has a kitchen and tree houses, but bring your own accommodation - tent space may be limited! www.alvaston-bypass.i8.com

W.O.M.B.L.E.S.
New meeting structures;
1. London Underground/Networking meeting - 1st Sunday of every month 2pm. Venue: London Action resource centre, corner of Fieldgate St. and Parfett St., London E2 (nearest tube: Whitechapel or Aldgate East).
2. Practical tactics workshop - 2nd Wednesday of every month, 7.30pm. Venue: The Exchange, Sebbon St, Islington (behind Islington Town Hall) nearest tube Highbury and Islington.
3. Building Liberation - 3rd Wednesday of every month, 7.30pm. Venue: The Exchange
4. Wombles Campaign meeting - 4th Wednesday of every month, starting on 23rd January, 7.30pm. Venue: The Exchange.
5. 5th Wednesday of the month - if there is one., 7.30pm. Venue: The Exchange.

New GM trial site locations
Help yourself or see www.geneticsaction.org.uk & www.gm-info.org.uk 24 spring sown oilseed rape and 17 beet sites in England. Details of the sites in Scotland are available on the Scottish Executive website at www.scotland.gov.uk. Contact DA if you need info off the web.

[redacted]

Fishing for answers?

DA - Fanning the flames for as long as it takes

www.direct-action.org.uk

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