Direct Action

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WARNING! EXPLICIT CONSUMERISM

BUY MORE STUFF

Consuming issues ● Is shopping a Human Right?

Sense & sustainability ● Mass-producing Poverty

Debt-defaulting: more market melt-down in Argentina

Buy Nothing

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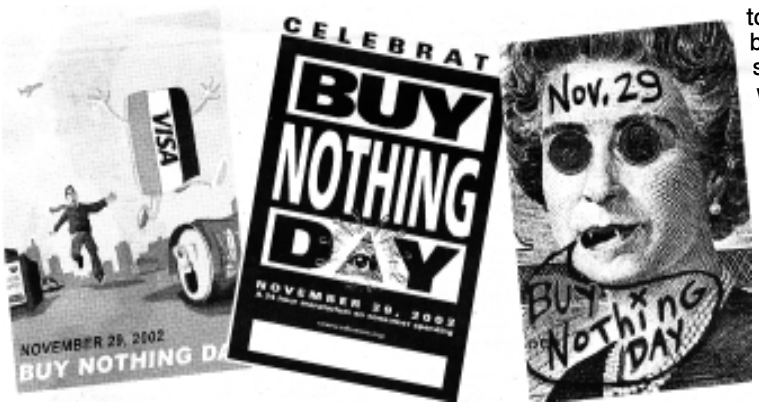
Consumption – you may ask, why theme an issue of DA around an old name for lung wastage disease, especially Tuberculosis? Well, it could be because the said TB is on the rise again throughout the west and endemic in parts of the Third World. But it isn't. However, while we are on the subject, TB is a classic example of a disease linked with poverty; it indicates the disgusting state of 21st century inequality; the poverty of a world where billions are spent on bombs and millions are left pitilessly to die of preventable disease brought on by them being denied access to the most basic of resources.

"Buy Nothing" might be misleading too. It is no more about retail abstinence or symbolic protests once a year than it is a crass phrase meaning; "don't get taken in by them", e.g. DON'T BUY THEIR WAR.

Now we've got that cleared up, hopefully it is clearer what this is not about, and time to get 'on-message'. For far too long, shops and advertising agencies have been force-feeding us with their products and information. We've been hearing, seeing, drinking, and eating what they've been producing, and it is sticking in the throat (the more so for the endless build-up to the festive orgy of consumption, followed by January pseudo-discounts to try to spin out the hard-core orgy funsters).



Why have we had enough? Surely 'the consumer is king' (sic), and that's a good feeling? One of capitalism's major flaws is that it is over-profligate at producing goods, so it is in constant danger of over-production and slump. To keep it going, we have to crown the consumer and urge them to eat cake and keep on having another piece. Not surprising that masses of people are reaching vomiting point. I wonder if kings long to be just left alone and treated normally.

There are so many reasons why consumerism is crap, it is difficult to know where to start. You know that as soon as you start opening up the gates, you are going to get drowned in the flood. Crap goods, obsolescence, slave labour, global destruction, climate change, junk food, in fact, junk everywhere... But I will start in the middle *(Consuming Issues, p.18)*, with that creeping uneasiness that consumerism causes; the feeling that you need to run to stand still these days just to keep up with where, what and how to get stuff; wondering what the Jones' have and if you are up with them; balancing being 'individual' yet 'in' enough, wearing the right image; culminating in fear and alienation (OK, that last bit might just be me, then). Maybe instead of asking '*Is shopping a Human Right?'(p.6)*, we should be asking 'can you please stop stuffing cakes in my mouth?'

At random, next up is the global environment *(Sense and sustainability, p.4).* The idea of a sustainable future is so conceptually simple, it is baffling why there are hundred of definitions of sustainability knocking about. Once again, capitalism creates a conjuring trick, with a whirl of the hands and deft concealment, in a vain attempt to hide the fact that is so obvious: Capitalism is about as sustainable and restrained as a school of small children in a sweet shop. Left to it, there will be nothing but sweet wrappers and tummy aches, and pools of vomit. As vomiting keeps coming up, it seems sensible to talk food. Since we can't limitlessly increase our consumption of food, capitalism has to find ways of screwing a profit out of it, so it provides 'value added foods' and very cheaply, mass-produced stuff which is unhealthy but profitable *(Are we what we eat?, p.8).* 24% of UK pigs now have salmonella in their guts, and this new epidemic is being kept under wraps because the government knows we remember BSE, ecoli, FMD, etc., and we are literally sick (oops, there we go again) of shit food and the misery bound up in the food production system.

Finally for today, is the big GAP that consumerism has created between rich and poor *(Mass-producing Poverty, p.31).* Incidentally, GAP is the US's biggest retailer and the biggest abuser of workers. Thanks to anti-GAP campaigns, we all know they use arm's-length contracts to pay peanuts and fatten profits. UNITE (the US labour union) recently visited GAP factories around the world and found widescale evidence of physical abuse, abysmal health and safety and pay and conditions, and generally a barbaric and inhumane picture of GAP's clothes production.

If Bush can get a majority, anything can happen. Authoritarians will play their 'them and us' cards until we don't buy it any more. Then, their game is over and the future is ours. As soon as the shops shut, let's go for it.

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Sense and sustainability

What shall we do once we have consumed our natural environment?

Sustainable development is a buzz term frought with problems. Instead of adding meaning to future planning, it has been mis-used and over-used until it now lacks meaning. Far from saying anything sensible about how to use resources and treat the environment, it has led to a mushrooming of initiatives, focus groups and other tripe. Maybe they are talking 'nonsense and sustainability'.

The 'ecocentrists' see capitalism as the problem, whereas the shallow sustainability people are more likely to see it as the solution. Clearly, anarcho-syndicalism is inherently ecocentric...

Since the Bruntland Commission's report of 1987, "Our Common Future", and certainly since the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, sustainable development has been bandied around by western (especially European) governments. Bruntland defined it as being "development which meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". While there as as many definitions as there are New Labour spin doctors, this one has stuck, rather like Alistair Campbell. Meanwhile, the whole roadshow has been given fresh impetus by the "Rio+10" summit in Johannesburg in summer 2002.

What is sustainability, and why might we want to entertain and redefine the term? Can it shed any light on the apparently fundamental conflict between capitalism and the environment? Assuming sensible sustainability is necessary, how can it be made to happen? These are the three main questions we need to answer if we are trying to make sense and sustainability.

First then, let's have a look at the concept, and how New Labour sees things. Back in May 1999, the government published 'A Better Quality Of Life': a strategy for Sustainable Development in the UK, which has four main aims:

1 - social progress;
2 - effective protection of the environment;
3 - prudent use of natural resources;
4 - high economic growth and employment.

We will come back later to the appparent conflicts between these, but for now, let us assume that their view is that sustainability means some sort of mixture of economic, social and environmental factors. Basically, the line is one of 'weak sustainability' when it comes to inter-generational equity. In other words, we do need to provide some sort of a world for future generations, but if the future economy is strong and we have developed some new technologies, then we have 'added value' to it, so we can afford to also pass on a trashed planet as far as biodiversity and the natural environment is concerned. In contrast, 'strong sustainability' would hold that you cannot mix and trade-off between these things. Since we do not know how much future generations will value our new technologies compared to the natural environment we are currently trashing, we must pass on equal amounts of the different sorts of these resources. So, environmental quality and diversity must be maintained or improved; it cannot be traded off against a bouyant economy.

Strong sustainability has its ethical and philosophical roots in environmentalism. While this is now a social movement, its origins can be traced back at least to the ancient Greeks. Plotinus (204-270AD), with others, came up with the 'Great Chain of Being' - the idea that the universe is composed of an infinite number of links, and to eliminate one of them (e.g. a species) would destroy the 'cosmic order'. This, combined with the concept of 'plenitude' (the idea that the earth is 'full' of nature and should be kept that way) had real longevity, and was accepted by medieval people as part of their cosmology. Indeed, despite the scientific revolution, such ideas were accepted well into the 18th century.

Baruch Spinoza (1632-77) was a case in point. Not only did he reject the god-given 'designed earth' ideas of the Judeo-christians, he also peddled the idea of bio-rights – that plants and animals (and therefore their ecosystems) have intrinsic value in themselves. Rousseau (1717-78) popularised 'romanticism', which also carried on Great Chain ideas and incorporated animism (e.g. giving names like brow, shoulder and foot to hills, mountains, etc.), and this arguably influenced later anarchists and feminists such as William Godwin and Mary Wolstonecroft. Romanticism also eventually led to the start of the French revolution, and subsequently also influenced the late 19th century environmental movement, which grew out of the recognition of capitalism's capacity to destroy morality, social order, human health and values, and nature. From this grew such radicals and revolutionaries as William Morris and Peter Kropotkin. With the burst of concern of the late 20th century, which persists today, we are brought up to date, through delights such as apocalyptic pollution predictions (e.g. Rachel Carson's 'Silent Spring', and now climate change) and the idea of green economics (e.g. Schumacher's 'Small is Beautiful').

Weak sustainability (or none) also has its history thread; from Plato and Aristotle's designed earth, and the idea that the Earth was deliberately

created for humans and they had a duty to change and improve it, to the birth of 'objective' science and economics. Adam Smith's Enquiry into the Wealth of Nations (1776) looked at the factors of production (land, labour and capital), and developed the concept of the market and competition, within which the environment was either ignored altogether or seen as a huge stock of endless 'free' resources and a repository for rubbish. The scientific revolution gave rise to the view that 'knowledge is power' and that humans had knowledge and, therefore, 'power over nature'. This is the dominant western government view, and, as such, humans are now placed outside nature, rather than within it.

So, to sum up the 'redefining sustainability' question, it is rather simplistic to talk of just two definitions, but hopefully the issues are clear. The weak campaigners include well-funded groups serving political/business interests and opposed to any real accommodation towards more environmentally sustainable paths, concentrated instead on economic growth as the solution. They also include more green-sympathetic pressure groups, green business organisations, etc., who think 'more needs to be done'. The strong 'Ecocentrists' split into very small 'back to the land' groups and larger anti-capitalist groups who seek revolutionary change and/or large paradigm shifts away from modern capitalism. Personally, I recognise the latter as a more rational and 'sensible' way forward than New Labour's.

money and nature

Turning to the conflict between capitalism and the environment: For a start, the 'ecocentrists' see capitalism as the problem, whereas the shallow sustainability people are more likely to see it as the solution. Clearly, anarcho-syndicalism is inherently ecocentric, not just because it opposes capitalism, but because it also rejects the conflict, hierarchy and domination that underpins the 'designed earth' ideas of shallow sustainability, and instead sees people as equal with each other, within nature, and organising themselves at small-scale, bottom-up and co-operatively.

There are at least three reasons why market economics just doesn't work when it comes to the environment. First, it is based on the 'theory of utility', a line of thought which puts human desire above all else; second, it is based on property rights and cash, but we do not traditionally ascribe property rights to the environment nor value it in cash terms; and third, it is inherently about creating competition, domination, monopoly and inequality, and despite sayings like 'it's a jungle out there', the natural environment fundamentally works on co-operation and interdependence, not these self-destructive principles.

So-called neo-classical environmental economics has been devised as a means to deal with the first two problems. The idea is that we expand utility value to include things like 'existence value' (for example, you might value King Penguins just for being there, even though you will never see one, nor directly materially benefit from their existence). Then, we also place a monetary value on everything (and property rights wherever possible). Hence, we give ownership of all the oceans, natural environments, etc. to organisations to look after to maximise the utility we can get from them. 'Pollution trading' (where companies buy the right to pollute) is a typical example of this sort of idea in practice. In reality, valuing the environment in cash terms is practically not sensible and, although various methods have been devised, none of them work (the most promising is 'contingent valuation'; if you want a detailed critique of such things, contact DA).

The main problem of economy and the environment is that it depends where you ask the questions from. IF 'market optimisation' is the goal, then it makes sense to try to value everything in the environment (all such things are called 'externalities', since they are costs which are currently paid by everyone, instead of being 'internalised' and paid by the companies who make the mess). Internalising externalities (valuing the environment and making companies pay for their damage to it) is the logic here. IF we assume we can have 'total knowledge' about things, then environmental economics could nearly work at this level. In reality, it is more a case of 'garbage in, garbage out'. The problem is, there are far too many 'IFs'.

(cont'd on page 7...)

Market economics... is inherently about creating competition, domination, monopoly and inequality, and despite sayings like 'it's a jungle out there', the natural environment fundamentally works on co-operation and interdependence, not these self-destructive principles.

Is shopping a Human Right?

There are plenty of politicians who harp on about this wonderful world of consumer 'freedom' and 'democracy'... If it is freedom, then shouldn't shopping be a Human Right? The yawning gap that separates rich and poor simply exposes the myth.

A mere half century ago, Britain was wrapped in post World War Two austerity and Cold War stalemate. Fast forward to the present, when capitalism has brought every manner of consumer luxury within easy reach – if you can pay for it. Built on mass production and rapid technological progress, the relentless consumer society now surrounding us reflects capitalism's triumph over the fast-fading memory that was Soviet-style 'communism'. Among the messages bombarding us day after day, often hour after hour, is that this state of affairs represents real progress.

That, of course, is not the state of affairs facing the vast majority of humanity. Consumerist heaven is within reach of one fifth of the world's population, concentrated in 'rich' countries. The rest face a hell of ill health, grinding poverty and premature death, the flip side of an economic system that puts over-hyped, over-priced and over-packaged rubbish first. Backed by the military might of their state sponsors, multinational corporations enjoy a hitherto unmatched stranglehold on the planet – its resources and people alike. Another spin-off from Cold War victory. This is globalisation; this is up-to-date imperialism; this is a system that pays peanuts in Bangladesh for rip-off trainers in Trendyville. This is not progress.

Consumerism is founded upon mass production. And mass production in turn has been built upon a mass market maintained through wage levels high enough to ensure a degree of working class demand for the growing supply of goods. As ever, capitalist logic demands yet more profit, yet more economic growth, and yet more consumption of goods that, on one hand, are increasingly short-lived and, on the other, increasingly valued more for their status symbolism than for their usefulness. To this recipe add the financial and advertising industries, one offering virtually limitless credit, the other peddling incredible claims about the latest product's power to make dreams come true, imitate the luxurious lives of the rich and famous, and generally fill the world with everlasting love, happiness and self-fulfilment. The spend, spend, spend result is the replacement of necessary consumption of necessary goods by an excessive preoccupation with the excessive consumption of all manner of useless tat.

In consumerism's wake has come a growing individualism, an 'I'm alright, Jack' culture, the denial of collectivism and human solidarity. The 'freedom of the individual' is supposed to be epitomised by the wide and often bewildering range of 'free' choices available to the consumer. The fashion industry, for one, goes to extremes. Designer label propaganda promotes the nonsense that happiness, confidence and self-image come attached to the latest creations. Simply stand out from the crowd and solve all your problems. In reality, consumer capitalism controls choice; mass production systems constrain variety; and the crowd, with everyone striving to stand out, takes on a certain uniformity. Uniformity of a bland, standardised and americanised culture – uniformity that brings us high streets and soulless out-of-town shopping centres stuffed with similar shops selling similar goods.

There are plenty of politicians and people in the media who just love to harp on about this wonderful world of consumer 'freedom' and 'democracy', often linking it to the myth of the classless society. If it is freedom, then shouldn't shopping be a Human Right? The yawning gap that separates rich and poor simply exposes the myth. Consumerism means very little when you work for low pay, with next to no job security in the increasingly casualised mess of large sections of the present day economy. It means even less if you're homeless or on benefits. No amount of spin is going to wish away the obvious fact that this society is built on class divisions.

A variation on this theme is the claim that a person's 'position' in society is no longer defined by their relationship to the means of production, but rather by their relationship to

consumption patterns. This too is easily dismissed. Conspicuous consumption has always been the lifestyle of the rich. Capitalism's thirst for ever more profit and economic growth now allows many workers in the industrialised world, led on by sugary advertising, to opt for a cheap imitation of that lifestyle. But this changes no-one's relationship to the means of production, not by an inch. What is more, despite the best efforts of the state and union bureaucracies, and despite their participation or otherwise in consumer society, working class people continue to prove, time and again, that it is precisely organisation according to relationship with the means of production that is capable of wringing concessions from capitalism.

(cont'd from page 5...)

And that is before we even get to the third reason why market economics doesn't work – the fact that it is in basic conflict with co-operative human nature and the way the natural environment works. It says nothing about welfare distribution, only 'market efficiency'. It says nothing about why we should value everything in money terms and not talk about quality of life (i.e. the things money promises but doesn't deliver). It has no answers to why more people are starving and being abused under market economics than ever before.

sensible sustainability

Finally, we come to deciding how things might work better and how sustainability might be a useful concept in the future. It goes without saying that 'business greening', Labour's sustainable development plans and various other greenwash are pathetic attempts at palliatives and empty promises. But how can we really have a sustainable present and future, and then, how will we know we have it? One problem is that 'sustainable' is an adjective, not a unit of measurement, so 'how sustainable' is always going to be a moot point, unless we devise some sort of sustainability ruler so we can measure everything - and that way lies garbage economics...

The answer is deceptively simple – we as individuals actually have a sophisticated view of sustainability, and we constantly evaluate things around us in terms of our present and future quality of life. If we concentrate on this, rather than trying to fit sustainability into the crazy market economics system we have, then we can really start to solve sustainability problems. Our lives today can only be sustainable when our lives are controlled by ourselves. As far as inter-generational equity is concerned, again, people not leaders or economists are the ones to decide what world we want to leave for future generations; after all, we all either have or know people with kids.

To give a quick example, transport; a major part of economy and development and crucial to our modern social lives. Most transport is based on fossil fuel use and is therefore unsustainable. Cars are ingrained in modern western culture as symbols of freedom, wealth and sexuality. The UK has around 25 million cars, and 0.75 million trucks. Cars are seen as less hassle, with no timetable and little restriction on what you can take around with you. Cars and roads are killing us, in accidents, and the chronic lung-related illnesses created by pollutants. They are creating visual impacts, land loss, noise and divided communities, not to mention global warming and acid rain. Market economics has no solution to the problem, except maybe road pricing and generally increasing costs until only the rich can drive about freely. Driven (sic) by big business and the profit motive, we are told there is no other way out. Of course there is.

We all know that if it was down to us, we could sort out an integrated transport system which really works, and make sensible decisions to cut down transport use too, such as stopping importing lettuces from New Zealand and growing them close to home instead. Even thorny sustainable transport planning problems have simple solutions as soon as we lose faith in the market god and look to ourselves for ideas.

Sustainability means quality of life – it can only really happen when we control our lives and our workplaces. Only then can we make our human world eco-friendly, and human-friendly, small scale maybe, and definitely taking the long-term view - inherently sustainable.

Cars and roads are killing us... not to mention global warming and acid rain. Market economics has no solution, except road pricing until only the rich can drive about freely. Driven (sic) by big business, we are told there is no other way out. Of course there is.

ON THE EDGE

Makes you McWeep

McDonald's shares have plunged since it announced it is closing 175 'restaurants' in ten countries, with the loss of 600 jobs. The company is pulling out of three countries entirely, and apparently part of their problem is McDollars' bad image as a symbol of US imperialism. Wonder where the punters got that idea.

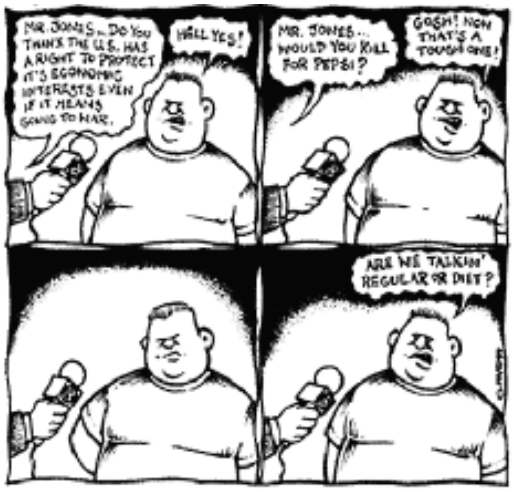
Meanwhile, UNICEF, the United Nations Children's Fund, launched a partnership with McDonalds to help raise money for McDonald's charities. Of course, this involves buying "Happy Meals", making it a clever marketing scheme by McDonald's. Why not tell UNICEF Chief Carol Bellamy what you think of this curious marriage between the UN agency and fast food mega-corporation!

Packed to madness

SchNEWS extensive research found that, for 49p (the price of a whole pound of apples), Sainsbury's is offering just one ready sliced apple, with the perfect added preservative - a plastic bag. What's next? Pre-peeled bananas? Ready chewed food? "If you are not entirely satisfied with this product, please let Sainsbury's know on 0800 636262". Apart from the scary nature of getting someone else to perform the labour (and apples are soooo difficult to slice, aren't they?), there is the whole environmental nonsense of packaging an apple in this way. Fruit are already packaged for consumption - they have skin! And here's another; stretch-seal packaging on cucumbers, which then are labelled 'cucumbers', just in case we don't recognise them.

Are we what we eat?

Burgers, bad behaviour and prison food.



The British government has given a private guarantee to the food industry that there will be no ban on junk food commercials shown during children's TV programmes.

In the past, ministers have been urged to restrict the aggressive market tactics used to sell junk food, such as burgers, crisps, fizzy drinks, sweets and breakfast cereals. However, successive Tory governments ended up giving assurances to junk food businesses that the ban on TV adverts during children viewing times was off the agenda. 130 MPs have signed an early day motion asking the government to implement the ban, at least for pre-school children's viewing. The move has been blocked by the government, which is clearly more concerned with the profits of the junk food industry and TV advertising revenues, than with our children's health.

Clearly, the price we have to pay to get any benefit from children's TV programmes is to subject them to junk brainwashing. The types of products depicted in these adverts clearly harm children, and can expose them to a lifetime of health problems. Junk food, in all its forms, is crammed with food additives (E-numbers, etc.), salt, fat and sugar – the very things we all now know have been proved to cause a vast range of conditions, from hyperactivity to heart disease. The sheer size of the junk food industry (and its advertising budgets aimed at the young) is huge; £161 million goes each year on chocolate and confectionery advertising alone.

The industry is well aware of the adage, "get them while they are young". The cynical use of cartoons and child-friendly characters, such as Ronald MacDonald, is aimed at persuading children to put unbearable pressure on their parents to take them to the junk vendors. The reluctance of successive governments to ban adverts, which virtually everyone agrees are harmful, is indicative of their general approach to food production and hygiene in general. Since the Second World War, food policy has been geared towards ensuring plentiful supplies of affordable food, with little interest being shown to nutritional value.

The common-sense approach summed up in the old saying "we are what we eat" has been repeatedly backed up with hard research findings. The links between poor health and well-being and sugary, fatty diet are well-proven, and more recent, controversial survey work has linked poor nutrition with anti-social behavioural problems, and even crime. Some research suggests that a daily dose of vitamins, minerals and fatty acid supplements could stop the tide of crime that is supposedly flooding western cities.

In fact, diet is linked clearly to inequality, and a poor diet is generally experienced by poor people with few prospects and poor education. While a few vitamin pills will clearly not solve the fundamental inequalities that contribute to crime, equally, diet is symptomatic of the poverty gap in modern capitalist society. If the link between poor nutrition and anti-social behaviour is real, then parents struggling to bring up children with few resources have yet another factor against them to add to the advertising tidal wave of pressure to provide.

Although there is relatively little known about how diet affects the brain, there is increasing evidence to suggest that omega-3 fatty acids found in oily fish are potentially important to the brain's production of mood-altering seratonin. While these are also found in other fresh foods, junk and fast food is not known for any such beneficial properties. Such links are backed up by research into prison diets, which connects poor diet with depression and anti-social behaviour. Prison food is not particularly good – not surprising, since only a pound a day is spent on the average prisoner's daily food.

Neither is subnutrition only confined to the banged-up and poverty-stricken. It is also present in people with busy, pressured lives, where long hours of work add to the burden of child/family care, ensuring that snacks and convenience food become the mainstay of their diet. So, poor diet, poor pay and long work hours leads to poorer diet, ill health and poor quality of life. Clearly, the potential link between anti-social behaviour and poor diet only adds to the argument that under modern capitalism, diet is a class issue.

The nutrition and well-being of children should not be left to the market's thirst for profit and TV revenues. The campaign against advertising directed at children must be seen as part of the wider campaign against inequality and capitalism, which is the root cause. So, successful class war can be waged while on the sofa in front of the TV – provided you are tucking into a fresh leafy green salad.

Friends of the Earth... but not of their workers?

Those of us who work in the community/voluntary sector, often employed by charities and 'right on' causes are becoming increasingly frustrated by the attitude of the employers.

Working for a small local project with your employment dependent on some outside funding or grant is tenuous. Contracts are mostly fixed term and part of the job is to secure more funding to cover your future job. Even if you manage this, you then have to re-apply for your own job. This puts you in a position of not wanting to annoy the management committee or, more usually, the most powerful member.

Unpaid overtime is the norm. Part-time contracts are common. At best, you can claim time off in lieu (TOIL) for extra hours worked. Unfortunately, because of the size and nature of the work, this becomes almost impossible, and the accrued hours are written off.

Even working for a big national or international charity, or major environmental/animal rights group, pressure is often exerted to accept inferior conditions of work, not to join a union and not to press for better conditions. They take advantage of you - after all, you are working for a charity that is doing 'good' for the community/environment/starving children/poor animals. So, isolated non-unionised workers are lulled into a false sense of security, thinking that their employers are nice and understanding due to the nature of the business.

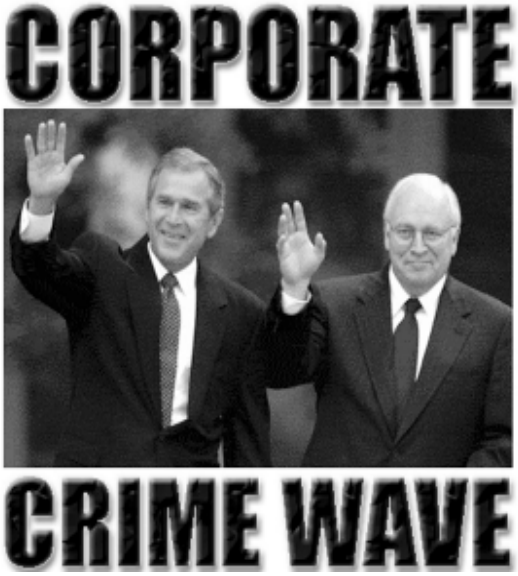
But let's get it right; it is a business. Those that are members of a union are spread across the T&G, UNISON and the GMB depending on local conditions and which leaflet they picked up first. So it is nigh on impossible for voluntary sector workers to take effective, co-ordinated action.

In October, workers at Bristol's domestic recycling collection service owned by Avon Friends of the Earth started a campaign of industrial action, demanding an end to compulsory overtime, a standard 40-hour week and strong measures to deal with the hostile, duplicitous and uncooperative management at Resourcesaver. Talks between UNISON and Resourcesaver ground to a halt because of unacceptable preconditions demanded by Resourcesaver, namely dropping one of the key members of the UNISON negotiating team, who is an elected representative! As a response to this, Unison members voted unanimously to hold a further 2-day strike that began on the 6th November.

It is not just Friends of the Earth; workers for other charities and environmental groups are reporting similar problems. Greenpeace (Canada) are becoming well known for their union-busting tactics and recently broke the contacts of thirteen workers and locked them out, one of them is still facing court charges for being arrested on a Greenpeace action!

What is needed is for us to network together across and beyond the union lines, and share experiences and problems and find solutions. If anyone has any experiences they would like to share, any ideas on how to address the problems or would like to get involved in building a voluntary/community worker's network, please contact:

SolFed, PO Box 469, Preston PR1 8XF.
www.solfed.org.uk



Jumping the queue

There are 4 people in a plane about to crash, only 3 parachutes. First person to react is Hilary Clinton. She stands up and says: "There's no time for debate; I was married to the most powerful man in the world and I will soon be the most powerful woman - the world needs me". She straps on a parachute and jumps.

The second person stands up: "I'm George W Bush, I am the most powerful man in the world and I am jumping next." Then, without a backward glance, he does.

That leaves an Imam and a 7-year-old girl. The Muslim cleric says, "My child, I am an old man, I have led a fulfilled life, you have your life to live, you must take the last parachute."

Then the child smiles and says politely, "but there's still 2 two parachutes 'cos the last man took my satchel."

on the edge

Oil Junkies

According to a report by British health professionals, a war against Iraq could kill half a million people, mostly civilians. 260,000 are likely to die in the conflict and its immediate aftermath, with a further 200,000 dying later from famine and disease - the US will target bombs on water systems and other infrastructure to cripple the country and will ensure these deaths. In the report's worst case scenario, nuclear weapons are fired on Iraq in response to a chemical or biological attack on Kuwait or Israel, leaving a massive 3.9 million people dead.

But all that's just for starters. US Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz has said that a US-imposed regime in Iraq would "cast a very large shadow, starting with Syria and Iran, but across the whole Arab world". The brutal Israeli occupation of Palestine could become the norm for the rest of the Arab world as a foreign power imposes its will by military force. The people of the Middle East are about to pay a very high price for capitalism's addiction to oil.

To get active, join your local Stop the War group, or contact DA for details.

Disk mountains

For every 100,000 junk CDs that internet giant AOL distributes, they add 1 tonne of non-biodegradeable substances to our landfill sites. AOL is one of the world's most powerful corporations and has a total disregard for environmental responsibility.

So why not support No More AOL CDs, aiming to collect 1 million junk CDs and dump them back at AOL Headquarters. Website in the US is www.nomoreaolcds.com, with a new UK collection point in Peterborough, and a site at www.super-stunning.com

ON THE EDGE

Asda – cheap lies

Asda/Wallmart have apparently been selling various NON-organic gluten-free products as 'organic'. These products - which include Salute pasta, and various wheat-free biscuits made by SunStart, actually probably contain GM-derivatives, plus artificial colourings and flavourings, etc. Anti-GM campaigners in Skelmersdale, Lancashire, have already campaigned successfully and got Asda to remove the offending products from the organic section at their local Asda store in Skelmersdale. However, Asda HQ have refused to do likewise in other stores around the country. You can help change Asda's crazy policy in this respect, and get them to realise that health conscious consumers who wish to purchase organic products, don't wish to be fobbed off with any old NON-organic/potentially GM products that Asda decides to put in it's "organic" section.

You can fax Asda's Organic Buyer - directly on 0113 241 8304. Ask him to remove all the products listed above from the organic section of every Asda/Wallmart store in the UK and comment on whether they are unaffected by GM ingredients.

Asda's Freephone is 0500 1000 55. (James McKenzie, Organic Buyer, ASDA House, Southbank, Great Wilson Street, Leeds LS11 5AD. www.asda.co.uk)

War is Peace

Taking the Orwellian (1984) dictum 'War is Peace' literally, Tony Blair used his October talks with Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, aimed at stabilising the situation and bringing peace to Kashmir, to promote the sale of approximately £1bn-worth of BAe Systems Hawk jets. www.corporatewatch.org.uk/news/arms_salesmen.htm

Radio Active

Under the Pavement is an explo new radio show which broadc on Tuesdays from 10.00pm until midnight every four weeks on south Manchester's ALL FM 96.9 community radio station, serving the areas of Ardwick, Longsight, Levenshulme and beyond.

The show, which takes its name from the Paris 1968 situationalist slogan 'under the paving stones, the beach', reports on Manchester's radical and activist communities. "Manchester has a rich radical heritage", says David, a local resident and one of the team of presenters. "It's a very diverse city, with a lot of radical and progressive activity. We see the radio show as a way of giving voice to this culture of resistance".

The show has already made links with a variety of local groups and campaigns. Loombreaker (Manchester's monthly direct action round up) provide the news content, the Networking Newsletter Project is behind the 'What's on Guide', and a recent show linked up with Beyond TV, an independent video/ conscious film project.

Under the Pavement has been broadcasting every four weeks since July, and has already featured a diverse range of guests, including Gee Vaucher, from Crass, a local activist from the Stop Esso campaign and a member of the Greater Manchester Coalition Against Sanctions and War on Iraq. Alice and Boff from Chumbawamba have also been in, fresh from their European tour and appearance at the National Anarchist Bookfair in London, to play a selection of songs that have influenced them.

Under the Pavement radio, ALL FM, 6 Newton Avenue, Longsight, Manchester M12 4EW.

Email: radio@underthepavement.org.
Website: http://www.underthepavement.org

On the rise: Bougainville

The people of Bougainville are sueing British mining giant Rio Tinto over the genocide and environmental devastation that were a regular part of Rio's 25 years of operations in Papua New Guinea (PNG). The lawsuit seeks compensation for every person who suffered during the nearly three decades of mining that went on at the giant, now defunct Panguna copper mine, located in the middle of Bougainville.

Bougainville has been under siege since it was relinquished as an Australian colony in 1975. Pre-dating this, CRA, an Australian subsidiary of Rio Tinto, had forced its way onto the island to build the Panguna mine. Twenty years on, and the mine had grown to a huge crater half a kilometre deep and nearly 7 km in circumference. This huge void created over a billion tonnes of waste, which was dumped in the Jaba River Valley, creating a wall hundreds of metres high, and turning one of the island's biggest river systems fluorescent blue.

By 1988, the islanders had started to fight back, taking direct action, which eventually successfully closed the mine. The PNG government, which relied on the mining for 45% of its export earnings, responded swiftly and violently, with Australia's help. However, despite ten years of violent oppression, the Bougainville Revolutionary Army has managed to keep the mine closed. Bougainville is now in the midst of seeking independence from PNG.

In solidarity with all indigenous peoples of the South Pacific, there was a week of actions from October 5-12 targeting companies and groups involved in ecological and cultural destruction in the region. Rio Tinto was the first to be targeted. Entrances to Anglesay Aluminium, a North Wales subsidiary of Rio Tinto, were blockaded for most of 10th October. A Toyota office in Redhill was paint-bombed, highlighting Toyota's involvement in logging in the South Pacific. The Indonesian embassy in London was forcibly entered in protest over the country's continued occupation of West Papua and the murder of an estimated 100,000 indigenous people. And last, but not least, the New Tribes Mission offices were paid a visit at their UK headquarters in Grimsby. The missionary group has stated that it is their intent to reach and preach to every "dark corner" of the planet. But the people of West Papua have declared missionaries to be one of the main threats to free peoples, one of the biggest reasons being that they build airstrips in remote jungles which are eventually used by businessmen, corporations and military personnel. First comes Christianity, then comes Coca Cola.

For more on the history of Bougainville, check out the excellent film "The Coconut War" (see 'Friends and Neighbours', p.35)

Institutionalised sectarianism

In October, the British government once more pulled the plug on the Northern Ireland assembly. By way of response, the Anarcho-Syndicalist Federation (ASF) and the Anarchist Federation Ireland (AFI) issued a joint statement opposing 'the communal and sectarian politics of Northern Ireland…which identifies the advance of one community as being at the expense of the other [and] continues to destroy working class communities'.

The statement points out that the Belfast Agreement, far from challenging sectarianism, has now institutionalised it: "The agreement was supposed to remove the gun from Northern Irish politics. But has this happened? The murder this year of postal worker Danny McColgan, and the increasing threat paramilitaries pose to the workforce in the north would seem to suggest otherwise…A new form of sectarian 'agreement' has been worked out by our supposed 'representatives' in Stormont…This agreement was about copper fastening sectarianism – it could be about nothing else. Sectarianism is…enjoying a profile now that it hasn't enjoyed since the early 70s…We are opposed to all forms of sectarianism, institutional or otherwise."

ASF/AFI go on to describe how the northern working class, 'Catholic' and 'Protestant' alike, have seen little benefit from the post-agreement state of affairs. In fact, given the same problems they face on a daily basis, there should be more to unite than divide them: "The politicians and the Catholic and Protestant middle classes may have benefited from some sort of 'peace dividend' but working class communities have not. We only need to look at the ongoing violence in North and East Belfast to understand how the working class is as polarised as ever, preyed upon by paramilitary gangsters on both sides."

The real source of division is identified as nationalism, an ideology which anarchosyndicalists and anarchists are totally opposed to, no matter which particular guise it appears in: "We need to engage in common struggle based on class interests and solidarity. Nationalism, be it the British nationalism of Loyalism and Unionism, Irish nationalism or the Ulster nationalist current evident within Loyalism, divides workers and is based on the myth that people in an arbitrarily drawn up nation have common interests which can be represented by the nation state. Nationalism is a regressive and divisive force which separates humanity on the basis of arbitrary national boundaries [which]…are nothing more than the 'barbed wire' which divides us…obscuring the domination of all oppressed classes by the ruling elites…The working class and those who hold power, the bosses and their lackeys, have no common interests…"

For us and our Irish comrades, there is only one possible foundation upon which the working class can unite to fight all oppression, division and injustice – that basis is class: "Government, no matter in whose name, no matter what jurisdiction it acts within…offers no alternative for our class…We have nothing in common with the wealthy and powerful of the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland, the United Kingdom or, for that matter, the rest of the world. We must organise economically as a class to pursue our interests as only we can. The only unity we aspire towards is class unity, in opposition to all bosses and states against sectarianism and for a better world…A united working class can build a world, in opposition to global capitalism, the state and our sectarian politicians, which is based on need, not profit, on workers control of their workplaces and communities; a world where we have adequate housing, public transport, health care, public services and food because workers themselves will be responsible for the running of society."

Full version of the statement is at http://flag.blackened.net/af/ireland/misc/wildcat_1.htm. For *Solidarity Bulletin*, contact ASF, PO Box 505, Belfast BT12 6BQ.

ON THE EDGE

Fixed-Term Work Regulations

In October, the Fixed-Term Employees Regulations came into effect. They are aimed at significantly reducing the use of fixed-term contracts of employment. Thus, the regulations will impact those on fixed-term contracts. The government's stated aim is for indefinite contracts to become the norm.

Under the new law:

** those on fixed-term contracts must be treated equally to those on indefinite contracts;*

** they cannot be discriminated against;*

** after 4 years, the fixed-term contract automatically becomes indefinite. Further fixed-term contracts must be 'objectively justified';*

** hourly-paid or sessional contracts should be converted into pro-rata indefinite contracts.*

This regulation bites after 4 years, although the equivalence and discrimination parts are effective as of now.

Grey guerrillas

Anne, 71, was one of the first women firefighters in the country in the 1960s. Loyal to her roots, she has been out on the firefighters' picket line in Bristol. Anne said she would return again to support the firefighters in their just struggle against the Government. (From the Bristolian, with the following comment: "Good on yer Anne, and pay up Blair, you Tory ponce!)

Solidarity call - Firefighters

As DA goes to press, the fire-fighters are centre-stage in New Labour's latest showdown. Unfortunately, these days strike pay is never enough to sustain workers in struggle, it is also even more important to support them given the nature of the spectacle the government have created. Sequestration of FBU funds is highly likely to become a weapon used against the union and the workers resolve to take on local employers and central government. It is urgent that WE ALL do what we can to SUPPORT THE HARDSHIP FUND. Anyone can show up at their local fire station to provide physical and financial support.

Dirty Mac Protests

October 16th was the annual world-wide anti-McDonalds day, where crappy fast food outlets the world over were picketed and free veggie burgers given away.

But this year, a load of workers got involved too: Workers at six McDonalds in France went on strike, there was a strike in Norfolk, attempts at strikes in three London stores and a walkout in Nottingham. McTrash was dumped back into stores in Australia, locks glued and stores painted in Austria, freezers and toasters sabotaged in Chicago, a mass resignation in Toronto... the list goes on – for more fun and frolics, go to www.geocities.com/globaldayofaction

Unfortunately, there are serious repercussions for anti-Macs in Mexico: 94 protesters were arrested and detained following complaints from McDonalds. They were accused of damage to an umbrella, a window, and carrying explosives, i.e. fireworks. The state has set a bond of $14,000 for each protester, a fee which could buy untold numbers of replacement umbrellas.

Financial help is now desperately needed; visit http://mexico.indymedia.org/front.php3?article_id=3486&group=webcast

Portugal

Hundreds of thousands of public sector workers in Portugal staged their first general strike for 10 years on 14th November, in protest at the government's labour reforms and economic austerity programme. Strike leaders say that about 80% of workers employed by the government took part in the strike. Transport and health services as well as refuse collection services were severely disrupted. Many public offices and courts were closed, while most schools were reported to have cancelled classes.

With 700,000 employees - or 15% of the workforce - the public sector wage bill sucks up a sizeable chunk of the country's expenditures. The government says that the new legislation which the workers are objecting to is designed to modernise labour relations, improve productivity and attract more foreign investment. The new law proposes more flexible working hours, more short-term contracts, experimental employment periods, mid-contract changes to job descriptions, and broadens justifications for firing workers, among other measures. Sounds familiar?

The planned new labour law seeks to roll back gains in workers' rights obtained in reforms since the end of four decades of dictatorship in 1974. Efforts by previous governments to go down the casualisation route have so far failed due to fierce resistance from the unions.

USA

For many years, the workers at the Azteca Foods tortilla factory in Chicago had a corrupt company union. But earlier this year, they finally got a real, independent union of their own, and entered in contract negotiations with their employer. Most of the workers are Spanish-speaking Mexican immigrants. They suffer from long working hours, low pay, workplace injuries, and verbal abuse from their supervisors. Azteca, which has sales of over $30 million a year, is demanding the workers accept a pay cut and an increase in wage stoppages for health care charges by 700%. The company has tried to intimidate the union with threats, interrogation and surveillance. In October, the workers began a strike over the unfair labour practices. Their union, the UE (United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America), is calling for a boycott of Azteca tortillas and chips (which are sold only in the US). They ask for help with the international campaign to focus global attention on this company.

Send emails of protest to the millionaire owner of Azteca Foods, Arthur Velasquez, from: http://www.labourstart.org/actnow/20021028.shtml

Canada

Months of complaints about staff shortages and poor treatment by hospital administration at Montreal General Hospital were recently exacerbated when workers found a video camera hidden in the ceiling – apparently placed there to spy on them. The camera appears to have been removed by security staff soon after it was noticed. Members of the Montreal General Hospital Employees Union have been picketing the hospital over lunch hour for weeks, and their complaints about bullying by administration and chronic understaffing have continued for over a year. There is clearly no depth to which the bosses will not stoop to try to 'catch' the people who are trying to stick up for their services and their rights.

Australia

Oil and gas giant Esso was solely responsible for the 1998 Longford gas disaster that killed two workers, the Victorian Coroner found on 15th November. The finding is a further blow to Esso, as it continues to battle a $500 million action in the Victorian Supreme Court. The multinational has already been fined $2 million arising from the 11 criminal convictions related to the explosion, and has paid out more than $1 million in compensation to 10 victims. As the Coroner put it, Esso's workplace safety procedures were inadequate, and its staff training programs had not provided employees with sufficient technical support and knowledge.

India

Say it the Bhopali Way ... With Brooms! Eighteen years after the Union Carbide's deadly gas leak in Bhopal, compensation claims go unheaded and some 10,000 people continue to be exposed to the toxic emissions from the hazardous wastes abandoned by Union Carbide at the factory site. The poisons have seeped into the groundwater and are showing up in the breast milk of mothers living near the factory. The company has refused to clean up the mess, and has ignored the needs for medical and economic rehabilitation of the more than 150,000 people who are chronically ill because of the long-term effects of the poisonous gases.

The women survivors of the Union Carbide disaster of 1984 have issued an ultimatum to Midland, Michigan-based Dow Chemical Company, Carbide's new owner: "Clean Up Bhopal" or prepare yourself to be dishonourably swept away from India. Dow Chemicals were given a chance to respond to their demands honourably, but they have ignored it. The womens' demands to Dow are as follows:

-Submit to the criminal proceedings in Bhopal Magistrate's Court, as the new owner of Union Carbide;

-Clean up contaminated areas and the poisoned groundwater;

-Release medical information about toxicity of MIC and poison gases, and arrange for long-term rehabilitation of survivors and their children;

-Arrange for long-term economic rehabilitation of survivors whose quality of life and livelihoods have suffered as a consequence of the disaster.

In October, women brandishing used *Jhadoos*, Indian brooms, marched on the streets of Bhopal and gave a sound thrashing to an effigy of Dow Chemical. Being struck by a broom is the ultimate insult, saved for use only against the worst adversaries. For women in India, the broom is the personal weapon of choice for fighting against injustice, within their homes and outside. Now it is being turned into a political weapon against the perpetrators of the world's worst (and ongoing) industrial disaster.

For more info, visit: www.bhopal.net Let Mr. Michael Parker, CEO, Dow Chemical Company know your views. For more information on the location of Dow offices, visit www.dow.com/facilities/europe/index.htm or www.dow.com/facilities/namerica/index.htm. If Dow has deactivated these links, email justice.bhopal@virgin.net and your closest Dow office will be located for you.

India II

On October 28, more than 5,000 people met at Gandhi Samadhi (Mahatma Gandhi's memorial) to protest against climate injustice. Police barricaded the demonstrators saying that they couldn't march without a permit. Tensions ran high as Nirmala Sharma, the leader of Jagriti Mahila Samiti (Women's Awareness Organisation), and her constituency of Delhi slum dwellers started rocking and slamming the barricades on the pavement, all the time shouting, "Delhi Police! Shame, Shame, Shame!" The march was finally allowed to continue.

Under police escort, the demonstrators proceeded towards Jantar Mantar, at the heart of the city. Starting at Gandhi's memorial set the tone for non-violent demonstration, although not a quiet one. Drummers and dancers from Orissa and Kerala kept set the beat for the march, presided by banners from the India Climate Justice Forum, with slogans such as: "Multinationals go home!" and "Jal, jameen, jungle, Hamara Hai ..." (Water, land and forests are ours). The Rickshaw Unions came out in force bringing about 100 pullers and their rickshaws. Foreign activists who marched in solidarity amused the crowd as they hopped on the drivers' seats offering to give rides. Cycle rickshaws are banned from the city centre, a district of big hotels, shopping areas, and the buildings of Parliament and the Presidential Palace. As the march approached this area, the police stopped the rickshaws. Immediately protesters sat down on the road in support of the rickshaw pullers, giving police no alternative but to allow the march to continue, with the league of rickshaws bringing up the end. As one of the pullers put it, "the rich people drive around this district of Delhi one person to a car - they are contributing to the pollution. We do not make any pollution, yet we are banned from being allowed to work in this district."

Russia

In October, Russian police illegally evicted Moscow's only political squat, giving one person a broken skull and hospitalising three others. The squat started out as a studio given to artist Evgeni Schetov two and a half years ago by the Moscow Union of Artists. Since then, the space has become an important base for ecological activism. Not appreciating this turn of events, city officials and bureaucrats from the Union of Artists threatened to evict Schetov. In retaliation, Schetov stopped paying his rent – making the space the first political squat in Moscow since 1997. On the morning of Saturday the 12th, the police and members of the Union of Artists managed to smash the door down with axes, and then violently attacked squatters inside. Everyone was arrested and all their property was thrown into the street. The squatters are launching a campaign against the eviction.

For more info, contact: dikobrazi@lists.tao.ca

Italy I: Anti-war demo on 9th November

The massive anti-war demonstrations in Florence featured active involvement by the anarchist internationals. A prominent FAI (International Anarchist Federation) banner read; "War needs you, you don't need war! Object! Desert!"

For info and more pics, visit http://italy.indymedia.org/news/2002/11/107619.php

Italy II

In October, a 24-hour national general strike was called across Italy by the Italian sister organisation to Solidarity Federation, the USI-AIT (Unione Sindicale Italiana) and four rank and file unions (Cub/RdB, Confederazione Cobas, Sin-Cobas, Slai-Cobas). The strike highlighted people's and workers' perspectives against the war, as well as against the politics of the Berlusconi government, its racist laws, temporary and casual work. In response, 300,000 workers hit the streets. The USI deliberately called the actions on 18th October as part of the wider struggle for social and workers' rights that they have been fighting for for some 80 years. They were keen to point out that they are not limited to narrow claims over pay and conditions, but will not stop until the world is free of capitalist war, oppression and injustice.

France

In January 2000, Rubbermaid (a US multinational) bought the Newell plants; four in France, one in Spain and another in the UK. Newell manufactures windows, metal products, blinds and locks. It also incorporates Parker/Eldon pens, Little Tikes-Gracco toys, Calphalon Wearever cookware, and Levolor/Kirch house hardware.

In summer 2002, the workers were told that at least two of the French plants would be closed by Christmas. After the announcement, the top boss promptly went on holiday, leaving behind him the stingiest redundancy package allowed by law.

The two plants earmarked for closure were Negrepelisse and Ablis. Negrepelisse is a small village near Montauban in the south west of France. It has a foundry and it mainly makes parts for windows. This small community has had more than its fair share of factory closures in recent years and everyone is aware of the misery this means for the community. Amongst the workforce was a small group of members from the French CNT (sister organisation to the Solidarity Federation) and, over the summer, they worked hard to channel workforce anger into organising strong and effective opposition. By August, the boss had noticed that people were talking to each other, and threatening letters were sent out to some of the suspects.

By late September, the workers had had enough. They called a solidarity and planning meeting, and asked the CNT to help. The meeting was a great success in helping them to regain confidence, strength, courage, and dignity.

As a result, a few days later the village support committee (made up of workers' relatives, pensioners, and local people) jammed shut the main gates to the factory. The solidarity action was spontaneous and effective, as lorries were stopped from entering or leaving, and the factory was paralysed.

As the sun rose the next day, the gates were holding fast. A local MP turned up to try to get some limelight and was asked to leave by the workers - they said they did not want to be exploited by political parties. The media said the workers were disorganised because they had no leader. The committee replied to this with a letter explaining; "we do not need a leader to be organised, as all our decisions are made collectively in a General Assembly".

Two days on, with the gates still jammed and some workers now occupying the factory, the bosses decided to start negotiating. The workers demanded that everyone should get 12 months pay, plus an extra month for each year worked. They explained that this was not a lot to ask from a global corporation raking in millions of dollars profit every day. The boss refused.

By early October, after another General Assembly meeting, they decided to go formally on strike and occupy the factory indefinitely. The boss responded with a new proposal which still fell a long way short of what the workers were asking for. At another General Assembly meeting, it was agreed unanimously to carry on with the struggle.

By this time, the Ablis plant, which had also been told that it would close at the end of the year, was also out on strike. The workers have co-ordinated their actions and, as DA goes to press, there are almost one hundred workers altogether out on strike.

Solidarity messages and/or donations to: CNT AIT, 7 rue St Rémésy, 31000 TOULOUSE, FRANCE. Tel/Fax: +33 561 52 86 48. Cheques to 'CNT' (write Newell Solidarity on the back). French webinfo http://cnt-ait.info

Brazil

The Brazilian working class mobilised in demonstrations against the FTAA (Free Trade Agreement of the Americas) during WTO-sponsored meetings in Quito at the end of October. Among other actions, in São Paulo, five thousand people marched against the FTAA; the following day, 500 people occupied the Praça de República with a street party; in Rio de Janeiro, there was a demonstration in Cinelândia, and in Porto Alegre, a demonstration closed Citybank offices. See it for yourself at:
http://www.midiaindependente.org/front.php3?article_id=40528&group=webcast

Spain

Predictably, the state picked on the wrong people. A mass demonstration against the 'legalised' fascist party Platform Spain2000 scheduled for the 11th October met with harassment. Two days before it, heavies from the private security firm 'Seguridad Levantina', owned by Jose Luis Roberto, *fuhrer* of Platform Spain, and the National Police met with the president of a local neighbourhood association which supported the demonstration. By the end of the private 'meeting', the said association formally withdrew its support.

The march itself was met with intense police repression. Although there were only two pointless arrests, over the following three days the hassle continued. Two workers setting up an anti-fascist benefit gig at the occupied social centre "PILONA" were detained at gun point and taken to police headquarters, where one was held incommunicado for 24 hours. Then, a joint force of riot police and 'Seguridad Levantina' raided another occupied social centre called "MALAS PULGAS", and attempted to forcibly evict the residents. Fortunately, the eviction was delayed due to some fast legal work by the occupants, but not before the police confiscated material.

On the 15th, four comrades were arrested for allegedly taking violent direct action against commercial real estate interests in support of Malas Pulgas. One was badly beaten. They were charged with "Illegal Association With Intent to Disturb the Public Order", punishable by up to fifteen years in prison. The police raided the homes of the four comrades and took pamphlets, letters, etc. as evidence. On the 25th, 2,000 people assembled for an illegal evening march to protest the arrests. The march was led by the families of the arrested. Buses brought supporters from Madrid and Barcelona. Police presence was heavy.

Two of the arrested are CNT-AIT members. Solidarity actions are ongoing, with demonstrations outside jails and courts, and press conferences by activists and speakers from the social centre, as well as family members of the arrested.
Messages of solidarity can be sent to CNT Valencia: Tel.: 34 96 341 93 41
Fax: 34 96 341 59 90
Email: cntvalenciapyp@mixmail.com
More info: http://www.cnt.es

Poland

The Polish government seems hell-bent on making the same drastic mistakes that most western European states have made over the last few decades. It has embarked on a huge road building programme, partly using European money, which will ensure that the country ends up with the same traffic queue private transport nightmare spiralling out of control that those of us in Britain are familiar with. The usual indicators are all there; a huge road building programme, mounting environmental and social costs, widening inequalities in access to transport, a rail system which served the country for years now being starved of funds. TEN - the Trans Europe Network - is the world's biggest transport project pushed by the transport and oil industry to help the movement of consumer goods across Europe, and is currently reaching the new frontiers of countries soon to join the EU, like Poland. As the motorway services, concrete ramps and truck parks spread, so does resistance. Among other valuable resources, Bialowieza Forest, Europe's last primeval forest of high bio-diversity (it supports populations of bison, wolf, lynx, etc.) is under threat from logging.
So - if you're up for a bit of digger diving... get in touch: pbielski@ore.most.org.pl; www.aseed.net; www.zb.eco.pl/gb/3/workshop.htm

Debt-defaulting

More market melt-down misery - and stories of great struggles

It now appears that Argentina, not so long ago the darling of the IMF and a shining example of how free market reform can bring stability and prosperity, will again default on its debt repayment. For over two decades, the country has been on the receiving end of IMF-imposed structural reform. During that time, just about everything worth having in the economy has been privatised; water, telephones, postal services, electricity, you name it - and western multinationals now own it. IMF therapy was supposed to ensure that Argentina prospered; instead, it has brought the economy to its knees.

Undeterred, the IMF is now insisting that the only way Argentina can pay off its $132 billion debt, 40% of which is owed to foreign banks, is by accepting yet more free market reform and imposing another round of cuts in benefits, health care, education, pensions, etc. In other words, the 'right' thing is to create yet more poverty and unemployment in a country where 40% live below the poverty line, 25% of the population is unemployed, hospitals go without basic supplies such as bandages and syringes, and schools are closing daily due to debts. Welcome to the economics of the mad house. The IMF is ordering yet more deflationary measures, ensuring that the battered economy shrinks even further, cutting production at a time when millions are going without the basic necessities. Argentina is reliving the great depression of the 1930s, when factories shut while children went without shoes and clothing.

Amidst the IMF-imposed misery, there are some rays of hope - in the form of growing workers' resistance. In December 2001, the last time Argentina defaulted on its debt repayment, as billions of dollars fled the country and the economy dived into free fall, the unions organised a 24-hour strike. This action sparked off a socio-political movement that is now putting down roots across Argentinean society.

Within days of the strike ending, people began to take to the streets in an attempt to join in their own form of consumerism – by looting posh shops. This caused outright panic in the government, and President Fernando De La Rua immediately declared a state of emergency, suspending all constitutional rights, and banning meetings of more than three people. If he thought this was going to solve his problems, he was sorely mistaken. The military clampdown brought back traumatic memories of the 7-year military dictatorship of the 1980s, during which the state murdered over 30,000 people. In defiance, millions took to the streets, resulting in the collapse of the government, as the President fled from his palace in a helicopter.

The spontaneous outburst of protest was put on a more permanent footing when neighbourhood meetings (*"asembleas populares"*) were established across the country. They rapidly became centres of community participation and resistance. Based on the weekly meetings, these self-organised, direct democratic organisations began to form together and co-operate, most notably in Buenos Aires, where every Sunday, there is an assembly of assemblies. This inter-neighbourhood plenary is held in a park and is attended by over 4,000 people from a mixture of rich, poor and middle class districts. Delegates are sent from the *asembleas populares*, and they report back on local work and proposals of their local areas. They also share ideas, debate, and reach agreements on strategy regarding the following week's city-wide mobilisations.

The work of the *asembleas populares* is varied. Most have health boards, and with many local hospitals on the verge of collapse, there is an urgent need to find alternative methods of funding the local hospitals. In some areas, those who own their own houses have withheld their property tax, using the money to fund their local health services directly. Some *asembleas* have also begun setting up their own alternative media, including newspapers, radio programmes and websites. As well as taking over some of the welfare provision previously administered by the state, the *asembleas* provide an alternative social and cultural focus. Local street parties provide a ready and lively mechanism for building community solidarity. On

In some areas, homeowners have withheld their property tax, using the money to fund their local health services directly. Some *asembleas* have also begun setting up their own alternative newspapers, radio programmes and websites.

DA has been following Argentina for the past year and more, so see previous issues for more background. For more detail on Third World Debt politics in this issue, see *closerlook*, p.31)

the defence side, the *asembleas* also organise and co-ordinate resistance against state incursions and cut-backs, with pickets, occupations and actions against closures and sackings.

Links are also being made increasingly with the *piqueteros*, which is Argentina's militant movement who, five years ago, tired of the corruption in the official unions and political parties and the way they were ignoring the unemployed, began organising huge road blockades. Demanding jobs, food, education and health care, the *piqueteros* effectively paralysed the country as their highway blockades took hold. This co-ordinated blocking of the movement of commodities was seen as the next best alternative to strikes – a tactic which was no longer available to these mainly unemployed people.

In August 2001, a nationwide mobilisation simultaneously shut down over 300 of the main highways across the country. Amidst the virtual standstill, the state responded by arresting thousands, killing five people in the process. Instead of breaking the movement, the government only gave it more strength.

The spirit of autonomy and growing practice of direct democracy in both the *piqueteros* and the *asembleas populares* is reminiscent of classic forms of working class organisation; non-hierarchical and inherently democratic, as sought by anarcho-syndicalists for over a century. Parallels can be drawn with the years leading up to the 1936 revolution in Spain. In the face of the new capitalist onslaught, it is apparent that the Argentinean working class are finally throwing off Marxist hierarchical forms of organising, and rekindling the tried and tested forms of struggles as practiced by their grandparents. Welcome news in a country that, at the turn of the last century, boasted the largest anarchist movement in the world, numbering several million. Far from a few idealists harking back to a bygone movement, the Argentineans taking to the streets today are discovering that anarcho-syndicalism and its core values of direct democracy and direct action are more relevant in the 21st century than ever.

Worker control breathes life into ailing factories

For nearly a year, the workers at the Grissinopoli bread stick factory saw their weekly salary steadily decline from 150 pesos to 100 and then to 40. Finally, last June, with the firm headed for bankruptcy, the workers demanded recompense. The plant manager offered 10 pesos to each of the 14 employees, and asked them to leave the factory. They didn't budge. He closed the shutters, and they stayed inside.

What began as a last-ditch effort to save their jobs, or at the very least to receive some back wages, turned into a dogged effort to gain control of the factory. The workers began taking turns guarding the factory 24 hours a day, surviving by asking for spare change at the public university and selling *empanadas*, *chorizos* and home-made bread on the street.

Four months later, the city legislature expropriated the factory and handed it over to the workers. In October, Grissinopoli began producing bread sticks again. In little more than a year, workers have seized control of scores of foundering factories across Argentina.

Even more remarkable than the take-overs has been the worker-led resuscitation of the factories, which in many cases are doing better than under previous ownership. Apart from saving thousands of jobs and softening the precipitous decline of the nation's once formidable industrial production, the factory take-overs are defying hard-and-fast notions about the relationship between capital and labour. They have also begun to alarm conservatives, who view them as threatening private property rights. But in this crisis-laden nation of 37 million, where more than half the population is below the poverty line and 34% of the workforce is unemployed or underemployed, the workers have won government sanction and strong public support.

In the past two years, 17 factories have been expropriated in the province of Buenos Aires and, in recent months, a further 3 in the capital itself. Provincial and city legislators are drafting bills that would create a government agency to assist in the formation of co-operatives and facilitate the expropriation of bankrupt companies to hand them to the workers.

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Consu
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Notes on consu
{WARNING: Sweeping

A successful, 'well-balanced' person is now deemed to be someone who consumes the right things in the right way. It is the fear of being a needy failure that drives the consumption that drives capitalist society.

Modern capitalism in the western world is identifiable by its intense obsession with consumption for its own sake. We indulge in retail therapy. Capitalism is explained as a means of meeting needs of those who consume its products. For a long time, the opposite has been happening; consumerism. The products have been made (by us, the workers) to create new markets amongst us, the consumers. And it's scary.

Consuming is not a new thing - living things need to consume to survive, and, when they stop consuming, they are consumed in turn. Consumerism has probably been around since there were enough surpluses to create trade. As a problematic economic and social ill, it has been around as long as there have been inequalities. The rich have been looking for things to spend their surplus on in order to flaunt their wealth; preening by top-slicing the benefits of everyone else's work. Conspicuous consumerism has been a hallmark of the rich elite, from the kings, queens and popes with palaces, fancy baubles and jewellery, to the new rich barons of the industrial revolution, to 1980s *loadsamoney* pretenders. The industrialisation of society bound up in its capitalist structure has led to the recent expansion of these worst excesses of consumerism. Mass production, whilst undoubtedly providing both realised and potential benefits, has become skewed to providing not what is needed by people, but what is needed to maintain profit; the maintenance of the flow and expansion of capital(ism). The beast must be fed.

The basic human needs for survival and comfort are often said to be food, water and shelter. To this, there could be added some secondary things which are strongly desirable and may vary from culture to culture and from individual to individual. These secondary 'needs' might include stimulus, company and communication, exercise and entertainment, etc. Modern industrial society could quite easily meet the basic needs for all people in the world, but, unfortunately for the majority of the world's population, meeting these needs is just not profitable enough, whereas continually expanding and reinventing the ways of delivering the secondary needs to the minority of the world's population is hugely profitable. What capitalism has done is to create an expanded and malleable definition of these secondary needs, and also find new and innovative ways of delivering expensive versions of the primary needs: needs that could be redefined and altered so that they are never actually met.

The trick is how to create new demand, or at least the idea of need in would-be consumers. There are a few stages: firstly the potential need has to be identified and a profitable way of fulfilling it, or vice versa, a new product or service has to be created and a new need identified in order to be able to make profit from it. The secondary stage is to inform potential consumers of both the new need and the new fulfilment of that need. The final phase is the ongoing sophistication of both to ensure profitability is ongoing for as long as possible. Hence, instead of product life or product quality, the main driver is market longevity – how long can sales be stretched out for?

The most tried and tested method used to create need from fulfilment is fear: fear of not being normal, of not fitting in, of falling behind, of not being unique, of ego bashing, of being considered in a bad light by one's peers – fundamentally, by the fear of failure. A successful, 'well-balanced' person is now deemed to be someone who consumes the right things in the right way. Not being willing to tag along is to risk public failure; not being able to consume in the appropriate way is being needy. It is the fear of being a needy failure that drives the consumption that drives capitalist society.

This fear is not much more than a fear of keeping up with the Jones'. The competitive consumer is central. The archetypal suburbanite obsession of not failing socially because one has not got the gadget that is equal or one better than the one the

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neighbours have got, is a symptom of an isolated and inward-looking society that has lost the human basics of solidarity and collective individualism. The main stokers of the fires of capitalism are not the old bourgeoisie, those with genuine wealth, but the would-be socially mobile, or those who fear being socially mobile downwards. Amongst the semis, estate cars and privet hedges, this fear of being out of step, or worse still, a step behind, is the driving force of consumerism.

There is no grand conspiracy to bewitch and bedevil us all into a merry dance of debauch consumption. All it takes is a myriad of little tempting eddies to create the overall tidal flow that is the capitalist social system. With non-essential goods, there has always been a problem that at some point, everyone who wants it will already have it. One response is built-in obsolescence - nylons that run, light bulbs that burn out, etc. This is OK when a producer has a monopoly or can enter into a cartel, but all it takes is a rogue supplier looking for a quick buck to start flogging something that will actually last (hence, big companies with said monopolies/cartels invariably snap up upstart companies who look like rogues and turn them away from such boat-rocking). Another aspect of obsolescence is to bring in apparently new technologies which are not compatible with the old, which is then ceased ("can't get the parts any more"). If mis-handled, consumers can get stroppy with such tricks and move on to another product, or simply do without.

Another method of growing the profit margins is to keep changing the product, and convince the target group that the new one is a must-have. This has all the advantages of built-in obsolescence (endless sales), without the disadvantage that the target group takes cash home and refuses to p(l)ay. You have them on your side – they actually want your new product, not a replacement of a naff broken one. Built-in phoney obsolescence requires more than just informing people about the product, it involves the creation of a whole social system based on consumption of more and more stuff, none of which is essential, some of which may be in some way better than previous stuff, but it is mainly impossible for the consumer to know what might be useful and what might be rubbish up front.

The socialisation of the process of demand creation is extremely successful; extreme examples are seen in the desire for the latest fashion, swinging wildly from fancy frocks to hooded tops to laceless trainers, depending on the glossies. Fashion is basically a method for using people's desire either to stand out or not to stand out, to be easily identified as part of a certain group of people. There are those who are conscious about what is in and out, and seek to always be in. Others, often under the banner of "don't care", seek always to be out (how "in" is that?!) - and some will seek to be just ahead. Those who are "in" either scene will need to keep moving, because capital demands that styles must change and blend (otherwise what will they sell and what will you buy?).

Computers are a top example of built-in obsolescence, combining both actual and phoney. The technical development of the home computer has been amazing. Some mobile phones now have more processing power than the computers of a few years ago. The technology may have many benefits, but the way it is developed is driven largely by convincing people that they are going to be left behind, or by actually leaving them behind by no longer supporting the product they have and making all new developments incompatible with it.

People are convinced that they will somehow not project what they wish to project if they do not buy. The fear that they will be left to ridicule if they wear last year's: the fear that they will miss out and be socially isolated if they do not have the latest mobile, cable, PC or what have you. As for me, I am balancing the wire from now on; not buying to be cool, and not not buying to be cool. I think I'll make that my New Year's resolution. In fact, I think I'll just text that to my mates, maybe with a picture.

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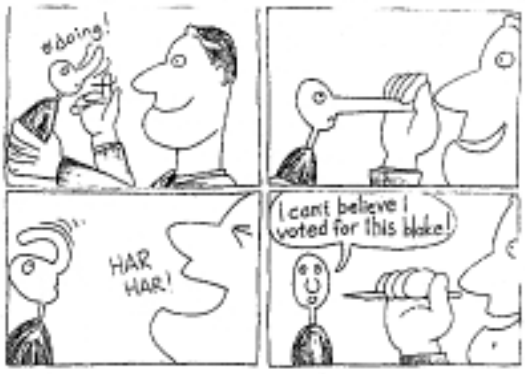
The ultimate New Labour focus group?



The Third Way is all about wishing away the fundamental differences between classes; the rich and politicians have power and use it against everyone else. New Labour's Blaired vision dictates that if we all sit down together, harmony will ensue.

Under the Local Government Act 2000, Local Authorities are now setting up Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs). The relevant Government Guidance states that LSPs are designed to operate "at a level which enables strategic decisions to be taken, and is close enough to individual neighbourhoods to allow actions to be determined at community level".

The idea is that the LSP brings together, at a local level, the different parts of the public sector, as well as the private, business, community and voluntary sectors, so that different initiatives and services support each other and work together. The logic is that public, private, community and voluntary sector organisations all have a part to play in improving quality of life. The more they can work together, with local people, the more they can achieve, and the more likely it is that, to quote verbatim:

"the benefits of sustainable growth are achieved across the country;
- *economic, social and physical regeneration happens – and is sustained – in deprived areas;*
- *public services work better and are delivered in a way which meets people's needs;*
- *local people can influence decision-making and take action to improve their neighbourhoods; and*
- *business and the community and voluntary sectors can play a full and equal part".*

The sheer number of crime, jobs, education, health and housing initiatives and "joined up thinking" bodies working across traditional public sector boundaries is now becoming an issue. For New Labour zealots, it is just getting confusing and bureaucratic. For the Tories (if there were any left who were interested in anything but themselves), it is costly quango-madness.

But have they worked? This depends how you measure it. If you pick the right targets, then some of them have apparently met them, notwithstanding the fact that figures can always be fiddled. The Tories might secretly think they've worked because they have encouraged privatisation and privilege.

The political reality is that tackling issues such as "social exclusion", "renewal of deprived neighbourhoods" and the like involves chasing rainbows, unless and until the fundamentals of power and wealth are on the table.

For the rest of us, surely the main target for any socially aware person is twofold - equality, and quality of life. So how do the various initiatives and schemes measure up against these? On the first; dismal failure. On the second; more complex, since the Government has its own Quality of Life Indicators nowadays, but look behind the figure-fixing and the result is invariably failure. On the other hand, New Labour generally has not dented profit margins and the fat cat salary system, and they have fundamentally allowed casualisation and the rightward drift of the political economy to continue apace. The latter alone has ensured worsening quality of worklife for millions of us.

So, are LSPs going to help the vast majority of people overall, since at least it seems to hold out the possibility of co-ordinating public services locally, and allowing discussion of such issues at local community level? Or is society going to continue to be unequal and unsustainable?

Let's look at the mechanics. The LSPs are unelected, unaccountable, and basically powerless. Hence, they are likely at best to be a talking shop. If businesses are persuaded to participate, they will only be interested in their narrow interest, such as getting better roads and cheaper workforces. Local Government departments and quangos, and faith groups, etc. will participate because this is their bread and butter, and a few crumbs of funding are likely to flow to them as a result. For everyone else, why spend time on a body which has basically no power? Fundamentally, the Local Council and big business will continue to wield all the political and economic power.

The political reality is that tackling issues such as "social exclusion", "renewal of deprived neighbourhoods" and the like involves chasing rainbows, unless and until the fundamentals of power and wealth are on the table. There is no Third Way, there is only one way; we need to build our own local partnerships based on working class solidarity. The only way out of poverty is major change away from capitalism, and that means avoiding Government inducements, getting dragged into the merry-go-round, endlessly chasing the crumbs from the table and ending up nowhere further on. Organisations that are really based in the community, run by and for people, do not need to talk to business or local politicians. We will get our power from our numbers and our solidarity, and our direct action. DA

Getting started:

Organising at work

What's the point in organising, what rights have we got?

Workers' rights are indeed in a sorry state, but this only underlines the need to organise on the job, in our own workplaces. What rights we do have, mainly in the area of health and safety, aren't properly enforced, so it's clear that the state has little interest in our welfare over and above the level necessary to keep the economy's cogs turning. Many situations at work fall outside the law, and so it is down to the workers themselves to 'negotiate'. Often, this is done only in staff meetings where the agenda is controlled by the bosses, or where workers can only voice concerns individually. Clearly this is far from ideal. The employer retains absolute control, as no effective threat is posed. Only by organising can workers force their boss to sit up and pay attention.

But how can we organise? There isn't a union in my workplace.

Just because workers belong to a union doesn't exclude them from poor pay and conditions, harassment, dismissal, etc. It is the strength of the workers' organisation in the workplace that matters most. Belonging to a union may help in certain situations (they have sizeable resources and enjoy some legal protection), but it can also be restrictive. Most unions have tried to ignore the fact that conflict between workers and bosses is inevitable, preferring instead to try and get the best deal possible out of a bad situation. Encouraging your workmates to join a union might provide a focal point for organising, but it's certainly not the be all and end all. The important thing is to encourage people to draw together and stand up for each other.

Won't I get identified as the ringleader though, and get sacked?

Don't be the ringleader then. Workers can make decisions and co-operate without the necessity for bossy characters telling them what they should do. When you reach the stage of pressurising the boss to improve your collective lot, there are ways and means that you can get your message across without placing individual workers at risk. Such methods include sending demands by post, electing ten people to go into the boss's office together and painting demands on the boss's garage door.

What sort of action can we take to improve our working lives?

Whatever you think necessary and appropriate at the time. Some bosses quickly change their tune when faced only with a potential threat, so organising and submitting requests / issuing demands alone often does the trick when negotiating on many issues. Sometimes though, firmer tactics need to be employed. Industrial action can include working to rule, go-slows, strikes, walk-outs, sickies, doing your job more thoroughly using better materials, making deliberate mistakes, etc. The important thing is to gauge the bosses' reaction (including legal repercussions) in the context of your own situation. Skilled workers or those working in times / areas of low unemployment have more power than other workers might. Timing can also be an important factor. All bosses have periods when a smooth running ship is absolutely vital to the success of the business / service. In other words, assess the situation and pick your moments.

What can we expect to improve?

Well, what do you want? Better holidays? More pay? A generous maternity or paternity policy? Nothing is impossible. A situation to aim at is one where all workers feel protected by their workmates and where the bosses' main concern when introducing change is not 'how quick can we get this implemented and how much will it save us?' but 'oh Christ, I hope we get this one past the workers'. Such a state of affairs puts the bosses on the back foot and allows workers to go on the offensive.

Well, how can I get things moving? No-one seems interested at the moment.

That's often how it appears but what worker isn't interested in improving their lot? A good starting point is to find an issue that affects lots of you, or a situation that is particularly bad at the moment. Arrange an informal meeting in the pub or café after work and talk it through, discuss what you think could be done about it, and plan how to get others involved. It's often best to first pick a battle that's easily winnable, so as to give you all confidence to move on and up the ante. You also need to be careful who you can trust in the initial stages. It's sad but true that some low-lives will inform on their own at a moment's notice to further their own position.

But I've no experience?

Doesn't matter. There are lots of helpful resources available, and if you've some industrial fight in you, then that's enough. Trade unions, libraries and the internet are good starting points when looking for material. For advice and support, your nearest Solidarity Federation Local can help.

Catalyst

Blairedvision: The Project

Casualisation Kills:

This article first appeared in Catalyst, the SolFed freesheet produced for workers everywhere, by workers in the Solidarity Federation. To join SolFed, for organising advice or information, or for more copies of Catalyst to give out at work, etc., contact: Catalyst, SF, PO Box 29, SW PDO, Manchester M15 5HW. solfed@solfed.org.uk www.solfed.org.uk Tel. 07984 675 281

Boisterous gatecrashers at the global street party:

21st century Bakuninism

Mikhail (or Michael) Bakunin suffers a curious fate in British anarchist circles. He is a forgotten figure, yet an increasingly common presence. Since the early 1990s, what might be described as a Bakuninist wing of the anti-globalisation movement has grown. Thus, given my fundamental views on the dangers of Bakuninism, it seems that the time may be ripe for some discussion of this subject. I begin however with a brief examination of the nature of the gigantic Gog and Magog of modernity - the terrible twins, globalisation and anti-globalisation.

In the UK at least, it seems reasonable to attribute the recent upsurge in the use of the term 'globalisation' to the rise of New Labour. For example, it has been coined by one of the government's in-house intellectuals, Anthony Giddens. Though prolific, Giddens is an author to whom both lucid argument and language and empirical evidence seem curiously alien. Nevertheless, his contribution to shaping contemporary socio-political discourse cannot be denied.

For Giddens and its other enthusiasts, globalisation is a phenomenon which neither can nor should be denied. It is neither more nor less than a qualitative acceleration of the interlinked growth of international communication and travel, and the spread of free trade, which has characterised western modernity since at least the end of the Second World War. It may also be an engine for the spread of a world-wide concern for, and respect of, the moral and legal values crouched under the banner of human right, though it also has been argued that its effect is quite the reverse; a progressive erosion of such rights. To its opponents, globalisation represents the untrammelled success of what has often been called 'turbo-capitalism'. In a variety of works, including the much-lauded but disappointing and bland 'No Logo' by the Canadian journalist Naomi Klein (2000), the anti-globalisation movement opines that worldwide movement of capital is harmful to natural and social environments alike. Anti-globalisation protests have resulted, including that associated with the (in)famous campaign against the McDonald's chain mounted by the London Greenpeace group.

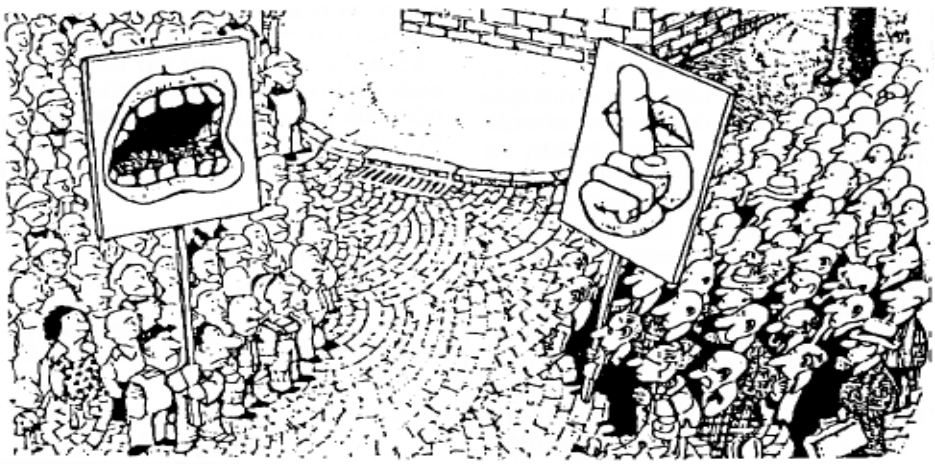
The anti-globalisation movement has often been criticised as incoherent... Further, it has not always, or even often, acknowledged its anarchist roots.

Anti-globalisation has increasingly come to stand alongside the developing anti-political politics of the green movement. As such, it is being identified with such causes as the move to opt out of the monetary economy and the increasingly popular 'low impact', self-sufficient lifestyle advocated by those concerned with 'downshifting'. But, crucially for present purposes, anti-globalisation has come to be associated in popular imagination with violent protests often at the gatherings of world leaders held under the auspices variously of the Group of 8 (G8) leading economic powers, the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and miscellaneous other international political and economic fora. It is to these protests that I now turn with a view to putting them in their Bakuninist context.

In accordance with the slogan or maxim first adopted by the green/ecological movement and since co-opted by the larger movement (which embraces human personal and social needs as well as the natural environment), anti-globalisation activists 'think globally but act locally'. Thus, the movement looks to international causes such as the remission of Third World debt - which it supports - and the liberalisation of trade -which it opposes - but also concerns itself with domestic issues such as, in the UK, excessive roadbuilding and green-belt development. Despite the label anti-globalisation, the movement's advocates are keen to make it clear that they are not parochial or isolationist. Rather, they favour a popular model of international, or inter-communal, solidarity and co-operation which is human(e) and organic. The anti-globalisation movement has often been criticised as incoherent. And certainly, in common with most nascent political movements, it is far easier to say what it is against than what it is for. Further, it has not always, or even often, acknowledged its anarchist roots. In the words of George McKay of the University of Central Lancashire (UK), discussing what he calls DiY anti-globalisation/green activist politics on the 'domestic front': "*It's... ironic that DiY's most consistent historical and theoretical antecedents lie in anarchist thought and practice, ironic because in some ways DiY repeats some of anarchism's (supposed) flaws: partial narrative, inchoate organisation, a naive (sic) utopianism, micropolitics, a preference for spectacle and gesture over long-term strategy.*"

Anarchism is not always directly mentioned in the self-descriptions of this new political phenomenon, and Bakuninism is almost never mentioned. Instead, in a language which often seems a little puerile, an opposition is typically drawn between the 'spiky' and 'fluffy' wings of the movement. While the former - those prepared

All articles in DA contain opinions, and many may not be shared by the DA Collective or Solidarity Federation, as it says in the blurb on page 2. However, this article has been printed in order to raise controversy and debate, so we would like to stress this point. We will be printing replies in letters, DA 26, so bring 'em on!



to use violence in defence of their cause - are not all necessarily Bakuninists, it is here that the Bakuninist tendency resides. By contrast, the typical fluffy activist, although not adverse to direct action, is concerned only to use non-violent means of protest, such as lock-ons (attaching oneself to machinery to prevent road building) and monkey-wrenching (covert sabotage of machinery). The fluffy, much derided by the spiky, is likely to be an overt green/ecologist and to be drawn to (so-called) new age, mystical beliefs. In the words of one collective of spiky activists, 'fluffyism' is characterised as not only fundamentally unconfrontational, but also supposedly 'apolitical'.

In a typical anti-globalisation leaflet (this one by Reclaim the Streets), we read: "*The global street party, with its challenge to private space and celebration of defiance, is not an end or a victory in itself but a premonition of the time when the present conditions of our lives will be no more than a memory.*" Here there is no clear discussion of tactics or strategy, but there is implicit endorsement of a range of forms of protest from the syndicalist (mass strikes) to the situationist (mass spectacles). A list of examples of the 'celebration of defiance' from the Sydney Olympics to Liverpool Dockers, via the Niger Delta and the Chiapas region of Mexico exemplifies the syndicalist and the situationist tactics respectively by applauding: 'dockers strike for 2 years against casualisation' and 'critical mass cyclists… (who brought) Toronto to a standstill'.

Reclaim the Streets represents the articulate end of this broad-based movement, and the Bakuninist potential of the anti-globalisation cause is not far to seek. At this point, however, I ought perhaps to explain in some little detail quite what I mean by the term Bakuninism in a political context. Bakunin urged anarchists to ally themselves with "men (sic - he did have only men in mind) who are rough to the point of cruelty, but whose nature is fresh and strong, unsubdued and inexhaustible".

The essence of Bakunin's argument was that the institution of the state makes children and slaves of us all. Liberty is curtailed and order imposed not in the interests of productive communal life but to secure the property rights of a small minority. As the state (an artificial creation) has appropriated society (a natural form of human life) for its own ends, so to be an anti-statist, it is necessary to be one who is anti-social. Hence, the Bakuninist endorsement of crime and criminality. The idea is that outlaws are the allies of anarchists because both are opposed to the current model of state/society. Acts of anti-social violence and disorder are thus morally acceptable and politically productive, if harnessed to an anarchistic end; the cause of individual self-determination in a self-regulating future society of free, but responsible, persons.

Bakunin is enjoying a renaissance, from both supporters and detractors. There is a searching, even scathing, discussion of Bakunin's career as a (failed) revolutionary and his subsequent (apparently, undeserved) influence in the biography of Karl Marx by public school Marxist Francis Wheen. For Wheen, Bakunin was a self-serving fraud, opportunist and undisciplined 'rogue elephant', who lacked Marx's intellectual rigour; "the very model of a thunderbolt-hurling revolutionist, all impulse and passion and pure will", but short on substance and stature when compared to St Karl.

While we do need men and women who are unsubdued and inexhaustible to co-operate in opposing globalisation, we also need to be clear that the only productive violence is that which is ultimately socially and morally acceptable as well as being anti-state. Hence, the challenge remains the same for the concerned person now as it ever was; how to persuade followers of some otherwise attractive cause(s) - and I do not deny my own anti-globalisation sympathies - to resist the siren call of Bakuninism, with its seemingly plausible, but ultimately self-defeating, argument. The alliance proposed by Bakunin will serve no good end. Once anti-social violence is endorsed and encouraged by the movement against globalisation, a Faustian bargain will have been struck. And, as Mephistopheles tells Goethe's eponymous doctor: "Wild work is on the winds - I see already Omens that say the boisterous guests are coming". Simply put, the Bakuninists are the boisterous guests - gatecrashers - who ought not to be welcome at the anti-globalisation movement's street party.

The alliance proposed by Bakunin will serve no good end. Once anti-social violence is endorsed and encouraged by the movement against globalisation, a Faustian bargain will have been struck.

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.

Killing the View

Dear DA,

Citizens of York, England, are campaigning against the plan to build a tawdry, unsustainable shopping mall in the most sensitive historically-charged area in York. This is the site on which York's Jewish population was exterminated in 1190.

The people of York were never properly consulted about the development, and the only independent poll in the Yorkshire Evening Press produced a 5-1 landslide against the development. It seems that the City Planners have made a cosy pact with the developers and contrived to push the plan through with the support of some forceful Council Members, arm-twisting others to go along with it. The Public Inquiry into the shopping mall proposal at Clifford's Tower ended in blackmail and intimidation when the City of York Council's barrister threatened citizens of York, who wanted a "green and open space", with punitive costs if their objections were not withdrawn.

Legal avenues of protest have now closed with the end of the Public Inquiry. We await the Inspector's ruling, but in the meantime, we fight on. There is an online petition linked from; http://www.geocities.com/cliffordstower/pages/petition.html. Please add your voice to the international body of protest. There is a vast catalogue of the events over the past two years. See the web page to get a real idea of what has been going on.

Castle Area Campaign Group

National Liberation

Dear DA,

I appreciated your analysis of SWP support for a Palestinian state. However, national liberation struggles led by socialist and communist parties, as well as anarchists (e.g. Makhno/Ukraine) are historically inevitable, as inevitable as Bolshevism and Spanish anarcho-syndicalism. Our programme, based on economic equality and its concomitant, and an end to all privately owned motor transport, will liberate humanity from elitist meritocracies, racism, nationalism, and all forms of economic differentials.

AR.

Capital letter:
Stopping the War

Dear DA,

Saturday 28th September saw the biggest peace protest of recent times reflecting the widespread opposition to military action against the Iraqi people. Mingling around the meeting point, rather on the early side, saw the usual suspects 'selling the paper' and handing out bundles of Trot banners to anyone. I managed to sidle up and park myself under the Anarchist Federation banner, together with a mixed bag of individual anarchist comrades with a variety of flags and some in attention-seeking garb.

The throng grew, and personal space began to become a premium. It was clear that this was going to be a big do, as the cops kept watch from on high with their expensive helicopter toys. The street vendors moved quickly through the crowd selling a variety of whistles, badges and flags - not the sort of kit likely to put the shits up Blair and Bush or their street gangsters in blue, making sure that we never get out of their control. As we moved off the drums beat, the whistles blew, and we rose as one, drowning out all other sounds as we voiced our collective cry for peace. Men, women, children, of all colours and sizes, moved off down the Embankment and up around Parliament. The amount of photography taking place surprised even me, as we were all filmed from atop buildings and out of windows by the state's spies. Those of 'our brave boys in blue' walking with us paid particular attention to our black and red section, especially when we were moving up Whitehall and past Downing Street, the war-mongers' lair, which now looks for all the world like a fortress - who's afraid of who here, then? We were accompanied most of the way by two groups on each side of us consisting of a police photographer and his two minders (all in body armour), with weapons bristling; they had more things hanging from their belts than I have in my garden shed. With them were two 'senior' fellows with booklets of photos of 'suspects' trying to identify 'the enemy' from amongst us. No doubt they did not bother the 'sex workers' group who were just behind us with their protest banners, nor did they seem to be interested in the 'actors' and the variety of Celebs just behind again.

London seemed to have taken on that distinct smell of old pee, as we walked around. It became ever clearer that toilet provision was wherever you ran out of the ability to hang on any more. This left us in no doubt that the previous week's marchers had left their distinct mark on the capital, and it had gained a pungency more noticeable following the previous hot dry week before we got there. Shops along the way seemed to have hefty folk standing in front of doorways ensuring that only customers were inside and the rest of us weren't.

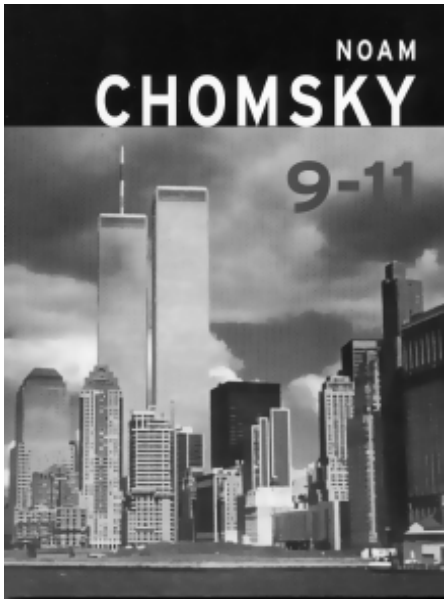
It was noticeable that many folk joined the march along the way. I talked to a Londoner who walked with us for just a while. All the time, we felt the developing self-confidence and awareness of our individual and collective power that our direct action was giving birth to by the minute. One group of media hacks set up their 'weapons of mass deception' to use our demonstration as a 'backdrop' to their filmed 'report'. They were given short shrift, and quickly and noisily shown the way out.

Direct action is not just a tactic, it is individuals and communities running their own lives outside the control of bureaucrats or politicians, and that's what scares the pants off them. Direct action is founded on the idea that we can develop the ability for self-rule through practice and that we can decide directly on the important issues facing us, ourselves. At the park, the speakers spoke, some cheered, some listened, but most of us talked and listened to each other in a myriad of groupings. Muslims from Birmingham together with farm workers from Somerset, all agreeing that the vast majority of humanity is against this war: that being here was important, but those in power can live with our demonstration if we all just go home! What they can't live with is sustained pressure that keeps building, organisations that keep doing things, people that learn from the last time and do it better next time. BM.

NOT FUNNY

9-11
Noam Chomsky

Seven Stories Press £6.99
ISBN 1-58322-489-0



Some might say that Chomsky is in danger of being interviewed to death. This is a collection of interviews and excerpts on 9-11 and after, and it potentially suffers from the sheer exposure Chomsky gets in this form of media. Also, despite clear attempts by the editor to avoid it, several interviews about the same thing in the same place means there is always the risk of repetition. I can't help feeling a booklet written by Chomsky, or one written by someone else summarising his ideas might have been a better format.

Notwithstanding this knit-picking, here is Chomsky at his best, cutting deep into the US war machine rhetoric and exposing the crass hypocrisy of the Bush Administration. It is a slender tone compared to some of Chomsky's works, but a handy and accessible dip-in on the train or bus, or even to keep on the coffee table.

Crucially, Chomsky also exposes the myth that American speak with one voice post September 11th. He mentions various opposition groups and loud voices against the Bush revenge line which fills the mass media. Another thing Chomsky excels at is placing the 9-11 events in the wider context of 'globalisation' and corporate control. Of special interest is his view that Bin Laden and the 9-11 attack had nothing to do with globalisation and everything to do with Al Qaeda's holy war against "corrupt, repressive and 'un-Islamist' regimes".

As ever with Chomsky, you get highly incisive, insightful, referenced and original views of current world events, making it a must for most, whether you are a dyed-in-the-wool Chomskyite or newcomer to alternative US politics.

Benefit corner

Dropping Food on their Heads is not Enough! A benefit CD for the women of Afghanistan
CD Geykido Comet Records, US, 2002 www.gcrecords.com

Plea for Peace – Take Action: Volume 2 – a benefit for the National Hopeline Network
Double CD Sub City Records, US, 2002 www.subcity.net; www.hopeline.com

Two releases of punk-type noise from across the Atlantic (though not all bands featured are North American).

Plea for Peace, a benefit for The National Hopeline, contains 33 tracks (plus an enhanced CD bit which is the entire QPR Gatekeeper course). Youth suicide is a huge issue across the western world; according to the sleeve, 4,000 a year in the US alone, that is 12 per day. The National Hopeline appears to be a resource for those who are concerned about friends who may be in danger of attempting suicide – it is hard to tell from this end quite how this works, but, obviously, in the short term, recognising those in danger and being able to offer constructive help has got to be a reasonable starting point. Whether there is a wider campaigning role, one which seeks to address the problems of a sick society that causes so many young people to take such drastic steps is sadly not addressed here. Musically, the first disc is a fairly consistent grinding metal punk; if that's not your cup of tea, then it's going to be a tough listen. The second disc is much more accessible - fun even - a very American type of punk which is fast, jolly and bouncy. None of the bands are household names, well, not in my household – although Anti Flag do pop up with '9-11 for peace' on both releases.

'Dropping Food', Revolutionary Afghan Women Association www.rawa.org and Afghan Women's Mission www.afghanwomensmission.org - both these organisations worked within the Taliban-controlled country offering education for women who were denied it, recording atrocities and facing the death penalty for daring to do so. RAWA began in 1977, working on anti-war work during the Soviet occupation, and working with women refugees in Pakistan. The AWM is a US-based organisation seeking to aid the work of RAWA. The work of the RAWA shows that internal opposition to the control by Soviets, 'warlords' and religious fundamentalists has existed and continues to exist inside Afghanistan. The west didn't save the Afghanies, it merely changed one set of rulers who it had lost control of, with another it hopes it can manage in a way that is at least more media-friendly for the western press and TV. The CD is a collection of generally fine standard punk, with the odd bit of variety not least in the form of a couple of excerpts from the RAWA CD, 'Patriotic Songs'. A fairly fine piece of hip hop by Fobia, and the almost benefit essential of a Chumbawamba track (this time it's 'Smart Bomb'). Other bands include: The Fleshies, Iowaska, The Voids, The Devil is Electric, spoken word from Jello Biafra and a great bit pop from Randy's 'Karl Marx and History' – how many songs do you know that name-check Emma Goldman?

Steve Earle – Jerusalem

"This is a political record because there seems no other proper response to the place we're at now", Steve Earle.

Jerusalem is Steve Earle's sixth album in six years and is his most focused work to date. It is his own response to September 11th and, unlike some of the other responses, Steve looks at the wider picture and he doesn't like what he sees.

So with a conscious snarl in his voice, he comes over like a modern day Woody Guthrie defending the rights of ordinary people. Musically, he's got harsher, although his alternative country roots still shine through.

A lot was said about this record already, and most of the excitement centred on one song, "John Walkers blues" (see last DA). The song shows how sensitive the US establishment is to any sort of criticism. But that song apart, the rest of the album is superb. There are no real filler tracks and not all of them are overtly political, although there are some surprises.

It starts with four highly political songs. "Ashes To Ashes", a rumbling and moody cautionary tale, which warns the US that no matter how powerful you think you are, it can never last. He even uses imagery taken direct from the Twin Towers. *"That every tower ever built tumbles/No matter how strong, no matter how tall"*

"Amerika V6.0 (The Best We Can do)" analyses the romanticised notion of the American dream, comparing it with the constant updating of Bill Gates' Microsoft.

"Four score and a hundred and fifty years ago,
Our forefathers made us equal as long as we can pay,
Yeah, well maybe that wasn't exactly what they was thinkin',
Version six-point-oh of the American way,
But hey, we can just build a great wall around the country club,
To keep the riff-raff out until the slump is through,
Yeah, I realize that ain't exactly democratic,
But it's either them or us,
And it's the best we can do".

A dash of R'n'B edges into the sound of "Conspiracy Theory" with the walking bass lines, drum loop, and distorted guitar, beneath a darkly humorous dialogue between Earle and Irish singer Siobhan Maher-Kennedy. Earle wonders aloud if things in the world are even worse than they seem;
"What if I told you it was done with mirrors,
What if I showed you it was all a lie,
Better be careful, someone might hear ya,
The walls have ears and the sky has eyes".

Meanwhile, Maher-Kennedy sings sensuously, hypnotically, *"Now take it or leave it, go back to bed now don't you cry".*

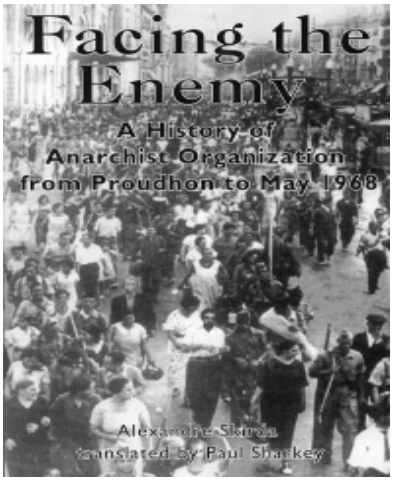
Then comes "John Walker's Blues";
"I'm just an American boy raised on MTV
And I've seen all those kids in the soda pop ads
But none of 'em looked like me".

Lightening things up a bit is "The Kind", a ballad complete with dobro accompaniment. Also hidden in there is the deceptive "What's a simple man to do", a joyous sounding piece of narrative Tex-Mex rock. The lyrics tell the tale of a Mexican who lost his job in one of the many oppressive, foreign-owned assembly plants called *maquiladoras*, and was forced to cross the border into the States for work.

"The Truth" features a background of a rattling bunch of keys, and that 'singing down a telephone line' vocal treatment that he used on El Corazon's "NYC". It has a bastardised bluegrass feel. Recorded originally for a charity album for the *Free the West Memphis Three* (to support three young Arkansas men who were wrongly convicted of murder), it addresses the unending problem of locking people up instead of looking at why. It contains the killer lines;
"God forgive him 'cause he doesn't see,
He's no less a prisoner 'cause he holds a key,
And God forbid he turn his back on me".

As if this wasn't enough, the set closes appropriately with the title track "Jerusalem", which is classic Steve Earle. Acoustic guitar, harmonica, and expressive, warm vocals; he laments the present situation in the Middle East, how civilisation arrived at this place in time, and looks forward to a braver, more peaceful future:
"But I believe there'll come a day when the lion and the lamb,
Will lie down in peace together in Jerusalem,
And there'll be no barricades then,
There'll be no wire or walls,
And we can wash all this blood from our hands,
And all this hatred from our souls".

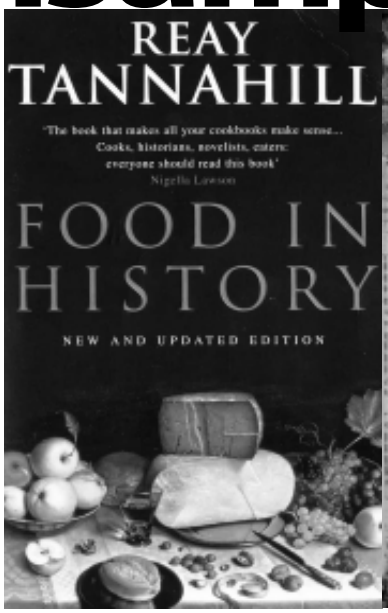
Earle is one of the greats. Eleven songs that span just over half an hour, great songs, no filler, and all of it executed with the consummate touch. 'Jerusalem' demands to be noticed. Earle has never been afraid to shoot his mouth off but, lyrically, this is probably him at his strongest. The best work has always been derived from subjects people feel strongly about, and on 'Jerusalem', Steve Earle has plenty to say. DA

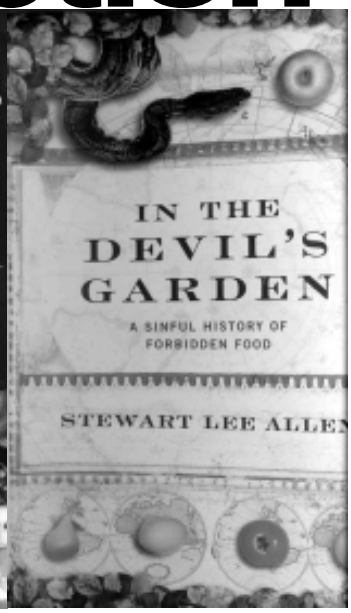


Edible consumption

In the devil's garden: A sinful history of forbidden food
Stewart Lee Allen
Canongate 2002, ISBN 1 84195 222 2, Hardback

Food in History
Reay Tannahill
New and updated edition, Review 2002, ISBN 0 7472 6796 0, Paperback





Food is both an essential component of life and an indicator, sometimes a bizarre and obtuse one, of the social and political mores of a society and the people within it.

Whilst approaching the same subject and containing similar references and examples, these two books approach the subject in very different ways. Tannahill's is a serious, though not overly dry, troll through the history, and pre-history of food. It has a slight European bias, but does try to cover the world's major cultures. Covering thousands of years and cultures spread over thousands of miles, the coverage is obviously selective, and seemingly important issues are skimmed over, and others ignored. Without a detailed knowledge of the history of food, it is hard to criticise the details, but the central place of food as a staple to life in the machinations of power and politics is useful to remember - starvation is mostly about politics, not lack of food.

Coming into recent history, Tannahill seems to take the space to engage with the contentious issues of the day. The book contains a reasonable critique of the 'green revolution'. Far from feeding the people of the world as its stated objective, Tannahill points out that it actually undermined their agriculture, ruined the land, irrevocably altered their way of life, and led to mass movements of people to the cities, consolidating land in the hands of fewer and fewer people and corporations. It might not please everyone; Tannahill sees genetic modification of crops as an extension of selective breeding, but only when thoroughly tried, tested and designed for the benefit of the people who need such products. There is a consistent point of view which distrusts those who Tannahill sees as protesting against all technological developments, whilst never siding with the big corporations seeking to make money at any costs. As an introductory book, it can't hope to engage in detail with many of the issues it touches on, but it does provide a reasonable historical and social background to contemporary issues.

Stewart Lee Allan's book is much, much less serious and an altogether lighter read. It's a selection of weird and wonderful, marvellous and horrendous snippets relating to food and drink. Laid out with a chapter assigned to each deadly sin and a menu per chapter, it manages to contain recipes (none followed by this reviewer as of yet) for every sin. Some of the recipes and processes are so different that they do inspire some incredulity, but it provides an urge to read up more on the subjects. In terms of oddities, Tannahill's book does support Lee's in that there was a time when the fat from sheep's tails was considered so important that they were bred with really fat tails, and had to be given little trolleys to lug their tails around on.

Lee's book is not all light and fluffy; it does contain information and ideas which are of fundamental importance. There is a section on food taboos, and another on the baby milk industry and its activities in marketing powdered milk. Companies, notably Nestle, who have been the target of a boycott for some years now, have heavily promoted their powders with free samples, using people dressed as doctors and nurses. The general plan is to give out the white powder until the mother's milk dries up for lack of use, and then the mother is effectively hooked on it, so Nestle can start charging. Often, this disgusting practice is undertaken in areas of extreme poverty, and where water quality is poor and inappropriate for use in baby milk formulas. (For more information on this, see Baby Milk Action www.babymilkaction.org.) Lee's book is full of wonderful things to bore/amaze your friends and colleagues with; you may even find a recipe that is just right for your next May Day celebration.

Facing the Enemy

A History of Anarchist Organisation, from Proudhon to May 1968.
Alexandre Skirda, translated by Paul Sharkey.
292pp £12.00 AK Press

Because of the huge breadth of the subject matter, the author has concentrated on three countries; Russia, Spain and France. As he admits, to cover other countries, even on the surface, would have taken a book ten times longer.

Facing the Enemy is well crafted, although necessarily sometimes hard going because of the sheer amount of detail it contains. It covers the major arguments, splits and divisions that occurred within the anarchist movement up to 1968. Because of the author's interest in the Makhnovist movement (he also wrote the excellent "Nestor Makhno: The Cossack of Anarchy"), there may be an overly heavy concentration on 'Platformism' for some people. Even for the less initiated, this is worth tackling for the excellent and original research it contains. It also makes an excellent reference source (read; book case filler).

Oysterband Rise Above

Seasoned followers of the Oysterband know that, in between their almost endless touring commitments, they will, every couple of years, record and produce one of the best folk-rock albums, guaranteed.

The new one, 'Rise Above', continues to justify the assumption, and after 20 years, the cliché about getting better with age is completely accurate.

There isn't as much ranting and raving on this recording as you would come to expect from a band that have made their name on expressing their political views in powerful and energetic folk-rock, opting for instead a more laid back type of sound. This is by no means a bad thing as the album flows, and the songs 'Everybody's leaving home' and the traditional 'Blackwaterside' are good examples that a chilled-out Oysterband sound is as impressive as a fired-up one.

The last track on the album, again a traditional number, 'Bright morning star', is performed acapela, recorded with as much heart and soul as it was performed live at the festivals in the summer, and brings the album down brilliantly.

Although not as pumped up and pacey as many of their others, 'Rise Above' has its moments. The stand-out track on the album is the awesome 'Uncommercial Song'. The driving guitar, a classic Ian Telfer fiddle hook and a storming beat make this vintage Oysterband. Add to this 'My mouth' and 'Shouting about Jerusalem', and the fire is certainly still burning.

James O'Grady on pipes gives the album a more distinctive Celtic feel than on previous offerings, and, as for singer John Jones, I don't think he has ever sounded better.

All in all, 'Rise Above' is another predictable triumph for the Oysterband. But a word of advice for the uninitiated; if you ever get the chance to see them live, seize it with both hands.

Waco Bros – New Deal

The Waco Brothers are almost impossible to resist. The on-again off-again band, one of several projects of Mekons co-founder, Jon Langford, is on again with *New Deal*, their sixth release.

As before, we get a collection of songs about people down on their luck, up shit creek, and trying to make it by on "alcohol, freedom, and a country song". Langford is actually a former punk, and Welsh to boot, but the Wacos now inhabit this insurgent country neighbourhood with the grizzled assurance of a thousand sozzled nights in sawdust bars.

The astoundingly prolific Langford is much in evidence on New Deal (this is his third album of the year, following the Mekons' *OOOH* and an anti-death-penalty compilation under the Pine Valley Cosmonauts guise — and that's not counting his painting and art exhibits). But his cohorts Deano Schlabowske and Tracey Dear also chip in with hell-raising tunes and whiskey-tinged vocals. Mekons' drummer Steve Goulding is along as usual, and he and bass player Alan Doughty provide relentless driving rhythm. Meanwhile, Mark Durante's pedal steel makes the weepers weep like they oughta.

What's striking about New Deal is how often the Wacos not only call to mind their influences but actually do them proud. There is evidence of the Stones ("New Moon", "The Lie", "New Deal Blues") that are much more convincing descendants of Exile on Main Street than anything Jagger and Richards have written in 20 years. Much of the rest is the kind of punky roots music Joe Strummer has recently been perfecting with the Mescaleros.

This being the Waco Brothers, the raucous sing-alongs on New Deal can't help but include a little more than your average somebody-done-somebody-wrong songs. The opener, "Poison", is a witty critique of the insularity of cyber-culture, the way it allows people to hole up in their homes and only communicate with like minds. *"You don't stray from your path, you hear but you don't see/If you're living your life in a bell jar you won't breath/They'll wrap you up in a shroud of your purity",* Langford sings, his remedy is agreeably uncouth: *"Time to break wind where your shrinking violets grow / You've got a one-party state of mind / It's your party, but I don't want to go".*

"New Deal Blues" is an opportune catalogue of recessionary hardships, *"Someone had to go/It's more cost effective/ To send you down the road/With your New Deal Blues".* "The Lie" sounds like it might just be about a certain leader of the free world. The bottom line is, there are a lot of people out there in the alt-country realm trying to do this stuff, but few who do it with as much brains or heart as the Waco Brothers.

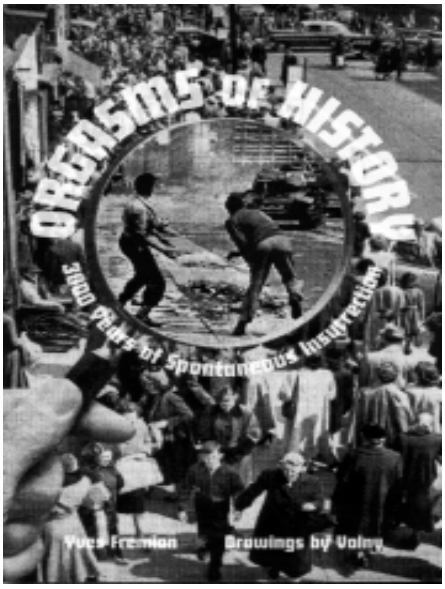
Housing Benefit Hill and other places

Collected columns 1993-1998.
C. J. Stone.
241pp *£8.95 AK* Press

This selection of writings, some previously published, some not, have a common hook; they are mainly about living on a sink estate existing on benefit. Stone also branches out to cover various campaigns, actions, events and personal development issues.

Generally, it follows the tradition of books written from inside the belly of the beast, not straight reportage, but one person's impressions and thoughts. There is no attempt to show life under those circumstances as some sort of pleasant idyll, but neither is it warts and all.

In many ways, Benefit Hill could be anywhere in the UK. It provides an engaging social document, and some readers of Direct Action will probably be familiar with several of the people mentioned and may even have been on some of the same events. If so, your recollections of the people and events may differ, as this is not designed as a straight factual history. What it is is a very well written impressionistic account, and one which can be read as a whole (it is in chronological order) or dipped into following one theme or another - all in all, a valuable addition to our social commentary.



Orgasms of History

Yves Fremion

£12, AK Press, Po Box 12766, Edinburgh EH89YE
www.akuk.com ISBN: 1 902593 34 0

So, you were flicking through the pages of DA reviews, scanning each one to see what to read next and this title caught your eye. *Orgasms of History* – what's it all about? Revolutions, of course – the slow burning passion and desire for change, the excitement and anticipation of collective action and, finally, the abrupt and uncontrollable explosion of insurrection.

Essentially, this book is a beginner's guide to some of the histories you'll never get taught at school. Fremion offers the reader straightforward, easy to read, enthusiastic and illuminating descriptions of nearly one hundred episodes of social unrest, spanning three thousand years from the Greek Cynics of the 4th and 3rd centuries BC to the direct actions taken by the peasants and workers of Le Lazac in 1971, taking in the Levellers, Diggers and Ranters, the French Revolution, the Paris Commune, the Zapatistas and, of course, the Spanish Revolution on the way (to name a few). It's a rip–roarer of a book, and essential for all in search of inspiration.

On the political practicalities, of course serious questions can be asked about the extent to which lasting change can come about through insurrectionary orgasms, but this should be seen less as a serious text and more as adrenalin for action.

Orgasms of History will fan the flames of enthusiasm for those beginning to explore revolutionary politics, and will act as a shot [redacted] for revolutionaries who are a little [redacted] tooth (or as a kick up the arse for [redacted] anarchists!). A great stocking filler [redacted] at only £12!

Schools out for…(ever?)

Alternative Approaches to Education: a guide for parents and teachers.

Fiona Carnie. 2003. Routledge Falmer (Taylor & Francis Group), 11 New Fetter Lane, London EC4P 4EE.
ISBN: 0-415-24817-5. www.routledgeflamer.com

Carnie sets out to give parents and teachers information about education options available in the UK; non-state schools; Steiner Waldorf and Montessori Schools; and democratic schools, flexible learning and educating at home. In so doing, the values, philosophies and methods of each alternative are evaluated, along with the first-hand experiences of children, teachers and parents. However, this is more than just a guide to alternative approaches to education; it also doubles as a damning indictment of the state education system in Britain.

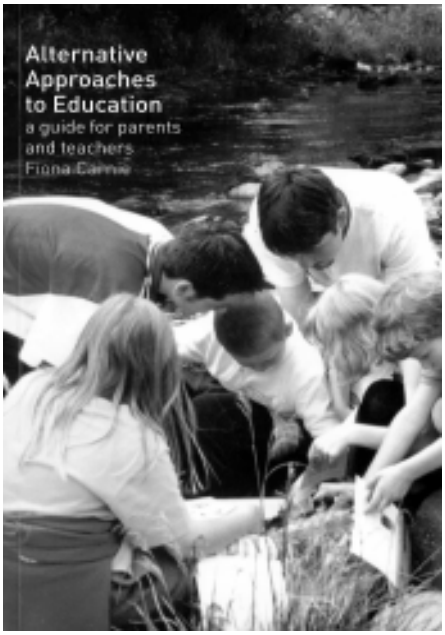
The state education system was originally designed to prepare the masses for work in an industrial society, and this aim has scarcely been altered since. Growing numbers of parents, teachers and academics agree that our current model of school is outdated and that a radical re-think is needed. The legal requirements to teach a narrow and prescriptive National Curriculum and the existence of large class sizes in particular have made it difficult for schools to meet the educational and developmental needs of most children. Research into how the brain works and how people learn points to the need for wide–ranging changes; we all learn in different ways and at different paces, so a 'one size fits all' approach is ultimately disastrous.

Given this state of affairs, no wonder there is a surge of interest in educational alternatives. Th[redacted]d 70 alternative scho[redacted] more than 20,000 children [redacted]d at home. Most European [redacted] more alternative scho[redacted]nts are committed to th[redacted]US, parents and local comm[redacted] new schools accordi[redacted]lieve will benefit children [redacted] the UK, public funding i[redacted] for alternative educ[redacted]ools often charge fees, ma[redacted]sible to the majority.

The encroac[redacted] values into the state educati[redacted] League Tables and com[redacted] schools), coupled with cr[redacted]n (PFIs), threatens the ess[redacted]cation should be about [redacted]t of the individual. The education process is being commercialised, as our schools are rapidly being turned into marketing vehicles, and children into compliant consumers. Concerns of parents are rising, and so is frustration in teachers. The endemic violence, vandalism, bullying, truancy, racial intolerance and mental breakdown in many schools are further indications of the fact that there are serious cracks in the system.

Growing numbers of parents, teachers and academics agree that our current model of school is outdated, and that a radical re-think is needed.

Alongside this reality, the many examples of the positive values underpinning alternative schools are a breath of fresh air. It is clear that, now more than ever, we need to change our schools from institutions that train children for jobs into organisations based on democracy, community trust, tolerance, openness and support. Fiona Carnie's guide will serve as useful ammunition for all those in the fight for progressive education.



Yannis Serifis:
Once more a hostage of state terrorism

On 27 October, the Greek state arrested the fighter for social justice, Yannis Serifis, and sent him to the new 'white-cells' of Korydallos prison. Serifis is 63 and is known in Greece as an anti-authoritarian trade union militant who, during the past 35 years, has taken part in many struggles, mainly in the name of the autonomous working-class movement.

The magistrates ordered his detention, on the basis of the false claim that he had confessed to the offences of "participation in a terrorist group" and "secret possession of weaponry". Following the announcement of the decision, demonstrators came into conflict with the police and one was arrested.

In a written declaration distributed before entering the court, Yannis Serifis said: "Throughout my case, the authorities have tried to cast aspersions against all those who took part in the resistance against the military junta (1967-74), and who, instead of selling out, have chosen to continue to resist. Their real target is the growing autonomous class movement. They want to hinder and attack the revolutionary left and the anti-authoritarian and anarchist movements." There has been growing suppression recently of social movements in Greece, following President Bush's calls for states to embark on the so-called 'war against terrorism'.

In his October 2002 statement, Serifis also stated: "I have been an industrial worker for more than 40 years. My political statements and activity have always been open and within the context of the mass syndicalist movement. I have taken an active part in the development of a principled and uncompromising autonomous working-class movement.

I am aware that, for 35 years, I have been targeted by those controlling the machinery of persecution and repression in my country. This has been the case even while I was for many years an emigrant abroad.

During the 7-year military dictatorship, I was twice sentenced in absentia for my participation in the resistance organisation 'Movement of 20th October'. My personal persecutors were well known in Greece: Hatzizisis, Adamopoulos, Karathanasis and others. On the arrival of the post-military government in 1977, I was arrested for 'participation in an attempted bombing action' in the AEG factory, where I had been working - but was fired after a 77-day strike. In the armed conflict that took place in AEG the same day, Christos Kasimis was murdered in cold blood. I was also accused of that. After 15 months in custody, I was declared innocent and released in an atmosphere of mass celebration.

Now the third round is coming. They want me accused of being the main recruiter and administrator of all the armed organisations and groups in Greece. They want to be rid of me and my family because of my disobedience; they want to strike a blow against the development of an autonomous working-class movement; they want to hinder and silence the revolutionary left, the anti-authoritarian and anarchist movements.

The working class, in which I belong, and with which I have struggled all these years for the abolition of every social injustice, is now being told to accept the 'reality' of the universal dominion of the 'global new order'. The only thing we have left is to answer with irreconcilable, uniting class struggles.

Yannis Serifis, 27/10/02

Platformism - party over class and anti-parliamentary communism

Party over class - how Leninism has subverted workers council organisation
Alan Woodward. £3 Gorter Press, 87 Grove Park Road, London NIS 4SL.
Sylvia Pankhurst and anti-Parliamentary communism.
SAE from PO Box 1681, London N8 7LE.

Given the chronic lack of organisation in the anarchist movement, it's not surprising that there has been some discussion of late about the question in anarchist circles. Alexandre Skirda's "Facing the enemy" looks at anarchist organisation in France, Russia and Spain, and reproduces many of the key documents. I was struck by reading the preamble to the "platform" (1926); how familiar the problems seemed.

Workers' council communism is an important political current, both for its similarities and differences with anarchism. As one of our Czech comrades put it to me, they were our nearest comrades, and we have a lot to learn from their successes and failures. The fundamental similarity is that both political currents believe in rule by organs of working class power, namely workers' councils and various other forms of direct democracy. Council communists, however, continued to argue for party organisation to "guide, not dominate" the workers' movement, but opposed Leninist democratic centralism.

Alan Woodward is a dissident member of the Socialist Workers' Party, and his dismissal of anarchism throughout this pamphlet will not endear him to anarchist readers. However, he has assembled a vast amount of information about workers' councils and the council communist movement, which was mainly active in Russia, Germany and the Netherlands from 1905 to the 1930s. He shows how Lenin suppressed the workers' councils in Russia, although it appears from his account that they went rather meekly to the slaughter, due no doubt to the domination of the soviets by members of political parties. He also gives an outline of the main theorists of council communism, such as Gorter and Pannakoak.

Alan discusses some recent experiences in Britain, such as the Solidarity for Workers Control group in the 1960s, the Lucas Aerospace Alternative Plan, and the early SWP/IS rank and file groups. These don't appear to fit very well into the overall history, except, as he says, as "tantalising glimpses" of the possibilities of workers' control. The text throughout is set out as notes headings, which doesn't make an easy read, though easy to refer to. The bibliography alone is almost worth the price of the pamphlet for those who want to study the subject further, given that material on council communism is scarce and hard to find.

The short pamphlet on Sylvia Pankhurst looks at the leading English exponent of council communism and her arguments with Lenin over the question of participation in Parliament and affiliation to the Labour Party.

In the end, the council communist emphasis on the role of the party was the source of their theoretical and organisational mistakes. They stayed loyal to the Bolsheviks for far too long - Gorter even supported the suppression of Kronstadt. And whatever the faults of anarchism, the Spanish movement came closer to genuine workers control than the various council communists ever did. DA

Mass-producing poverty

Globalisation and debt – how it is, and how it can be challenged.

It simply was not supposed to be like this. According to the advocates of globalisation, the world is in transition. The result will be a new era of prosperity for all. The emerging global markets will ensure that divisions between rich and poor - between developed and undeveloped - should disappear as global markets enrich all the citizens of the world. As *The Economist* wrote of globalisation, "the world system now delivers 'more for all', and vigorous growth in the Third World means it is the world's poor who will benefit most".

Behind myth and hype of globalisation lurks the stark, bleak reality on the ground. Far from the poor "benefiting most," amongst the 4.4 billion people living in Africa, Asia and Latin America, life is becoming more desperate with every globalisation step. Across Africa, the average household now consumes 25% less than it did in the 1970s. In Latin America, 75 million more people now live in poverty than in 1980. Attempts to reduce infant mortality faltered between 1980-2000, as did progress in life expectancy, education and literacy. Even the World Bank estimates that 1.3 billion people currently live on less than $1 a day, while 3 billion live on under $2 a day. Some 1.3 billion people have no access to clean water, 3 billion have no access to sanitation, and 2 billion have no access to electricity. It is estimated that a child dies unnecessarily for lack of such basic needs every 3 seconds. It is hardly a world being enriched by global markets.

The current obscene levels of poverty have been worsened by ever-increasing Third World debt. In 1997, total Third World debt stood at the staggering figure of $2.7 trillion (that's $2,700 billion or $2,700,000,000,000). Despite relief programmes, it continues to rise inexorably. The sheer scale of it in relation to the size of Third World economies is overwhelming. Already, in 1997, debt stood at $370 for every person on the African continent – where much of the population earns less than a dollar a day.

Faced with such crushing debt, Third World countries have been forced to divert desperately needed revenue away from health care, education and food subsidies in order to service their debt. This has led to a disgusting transfer of resources from the poor to the rich world, resulting in untold deaths, particularly among young children. The extent of the transfer of funds is, again, staggering. The countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America currently pay western creditors some $717 million each day in debt repayment.

And what of the much-hyped aid handed over to the Third World by rich western benefactors? Most aid comes as loans or is 'tied' – i.e. strings are attached to ensure that it is spent in areas beneficial to western multinational companies. Anyway, the total aid amount is minuscule compared to the amount robbed from the Third World in the form of debt repayment. For each $1 the Third World receives in grants from the west, it currently pays $13 back in debt repayment.

These figures are all the more tragic because the money used to pay off debt would otherwise remain under Third World control, and, as such, could potentially be targeted at anti-poverty or basic service provision programmes. Instead, the paltry aid that comes back must be spent on lavish western-related programmes which invariably make the situation worse for the poor, not better. There is also much negative western propaganda about how wasteful Third World countries are with funds when they do have them. To give just one example, Uganda was allowed to use funds from debt relief to set up a Poverty Action fund, and this directly increased the number of children attending primary school from less than 2.9 in 1997 to some 6.5 million today. At the same time, it helped ensure that the amount of the total budget spent on poverty relief rose from 18% in 1997 to 35% today.

The tragedy of Third World debt is not a case of helpless Third World "victims" constantly raising the begging bowl for yet more aid. It is rather the rich world robbing from the poor world amounts of money that in western terms are small, but in the context of the Third World, are literally the difference between life and death for millions of human beings. The countries of Sub-Saharan Africa, one of the most poverty stricken regions in the world, are currently paying $10 billion every year in debt service. In western terms, this is merely the price of the odd bomber or two, but, in Third World terms, it amounts to approximately 4 times as much as the countries in the region spend on health care and education.

The apologists for globalisation invariably try to argue that Third World debt dates back to the bad old days of the 1970s, when corrupt Third World governments tricked naïve bankers into lending them billions, which were quickly squandered. The argument goes that it is the forces of globalisation imposing market discipline which will, in the long run, ensure that loans and aid are directed to helping the poor. Again, this is little more than propaganda. It

The reason debt has risen hand in hand with globalisation is that they form part of the same process; one feeding off the other.

is true that most Third World debt dates back to the 1970s, when western banks overflowing with middle eastern oil money lent money to pro-western Third World dictators as part of the cold war effort. This does not explain why it is that Third World debt rocketed during the 1990s, just at the time when the forces of globalisation were coming into play. In 1980, Third World debt stood at $500 billion. By 1990, it had risen to $1.4 trillion, peaking at the current level, which is nearer the $3 trillion mark.

global poverty machine

The reason debt has risen hand in hand with globalisation is that they form part of the same process; one feeding off the other. From the 1980s onwards, world recession resulted in Third World countries increasingly struggling to meet debt repayments. In order to protect the western banks, the US-dominated International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank stepped in, loaning public money to debtor countries in order that they could meet their (private sector) loan repayments. But these loans came at a price - not just in the form of interest, but also on the condition that the debtor countries adopted economic programmes dictated by western governments. Since then, debt has become more than just a means by which the rich world extracts wealth from the poor.

The first major bail-out of the banking system occurred in the 1982 debt crisis, when Mexico declared it was about to default on its debt. In return for the IMF package, Mexico was forced to institute austerity measures to reduce domestic consumption, most notably public spending, while boosting exports in order to boost earnings to pay off the creditors. In effect, the whole Mexican economy became increasingly geared to meeting debt repayments by cutting welfare to the poor.

Around the same time as Mexico, a string of other debt candidates joined the queue. Meanwhile, western governments and their institutions were quick to realise the potential for debt as a means to force their will on these Third World countries. Thus, the IMF-imposed structural adjustment programme came of age.

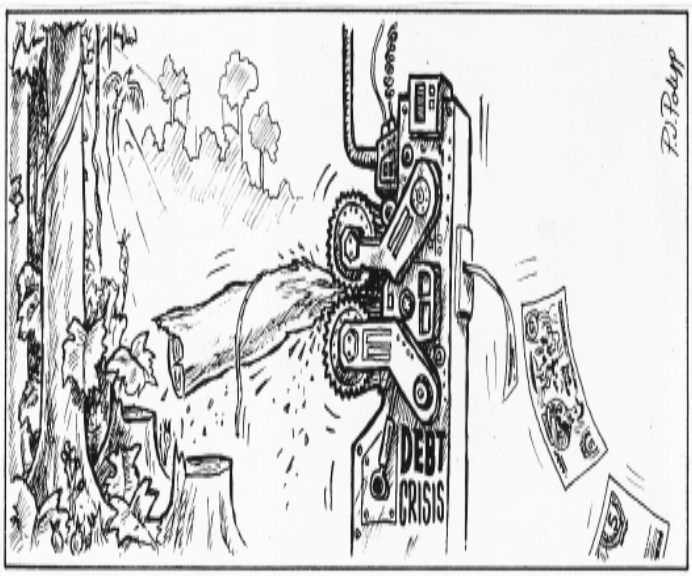
The idea was simple; as in Mexico, each debtor was forced to sign up to massive trade liberalisation. This forced open the Third World economies to privatisation, and the western multinationals moved in, thus wiping out domestic production, which was unable to compete with high-tech western companies. Trade liberalisation also meant the debtor had to raise cash by driving down the price of raw materials and basic commodities destined for First World markets.

While the IMF and World Bank were forcing the wonders of the global free market on the Third World, back home in the west, massive state subsidies continued, and one-way trade barriers were built and maintained to ensure that Third World economies had no chance of developing as global competitors. Even in areas such as food production, where low land and labour costs gave the Third World an advantage, effective cartels like the European Common Agricultural Policy ensured that the subsidies continued and cheap Third World imports stayed out.

As country after country were forced to lower their trade barriers, a new global economy began to be declared, and the globalisation myth was born. Ignoring the fact it was only the poor world being forced to lower its barriers, the rhetoric of globalisation was used to explain and promote IMF structural adjustment programmes. A further beauty of the scandal was that debt-ridden countries forced to adopt structural adjustment programmes were further ruined by them and ended up in a spiral of more debt, more loans and more free market 'medicine'.

Thus, debt became the lever of choice when it came to the west forcing open Third World economies. It proved just as effective as the gun boat, but far less bloody and more media friendly. Meanwhile, the voodoo free market economics became more sophisticated. Countries were instructed to devalue their currency to make exports cheaper, to earn more hard currency in order to pay off loans. However, devaluation increases debt at a stroke, since it becomes more expensive to buy hard currency. Tanzania has been forced under trade liberalisation measures to repeatedly devalue its currency, to the extent that the Tanzanian shilling value is now 1,500 percent less than its international value in 1985. The effects can be gauged by the fact that, in 1979, the government borrowed $9 million, which at the time was equal to 149 million shillings. Thus far, they have paid off $900,000, but this now adds up to 590 million shillings. Tanzania has paid off its debt many times, but due to devaluation, it keeps coming back and expanding.

Privatisation programmes are, of course, now a basic ingredient of forced structural adjustment. Sometimes, Government officials earn a fortune in commission, but always, western multinational companies get to buy state companies on the cheap. Hence, in easy steps, they extend their activities across the Third World economies into new industries and to an extent unimaginable twenty years ago. The result is simple. More wealth in the form of profit is exported from poor to rich, throwing countless workers onto the scrap heap, while raising prices so that basics like electricity and water slip beyond the reach of large sections of the



If the struggle against globalisation limits itself to campaigning against debt, it merely gets caught up in fighting the symptoms rather than the true source of exploitation - capitalism itself.

population.

Structural adjustments also force debtors to switch from domestic food production to cash crops for export, in order to earn hard currency. Since the 1980s, so many countries have been forced to follow the same IMF programme, that the world market has become flooded with Third World cash crops, sending the price of their goods plummeting. In 2000-01 alone, the price of cotton fell by 60%, while coffee fell by 10%. Predictably, the result is nice cheap stuff for First World recipients and devastated Third World economies.

As the IMF "cash crop miracle" fails, yet more debt failure results, all helping the vicious circle turn. All the recipients of structural adjustment programmes face the same falling export revenue and all are forced to embark on similar cost cutting measures, leading to what has become known as the "the race to the bottom", as countries compete to see who can make the most cuts to find the elusive export revenue boost.

desperate direct action

Invariably, as cost-cutting and rising prices hit home, people take to the streets to protest, normally to be met with bullets, tanks and tear gas. Civil unrest acts as a signal to the nervous local elite and foreign speculators that the house of cards economy is collapsing, and they flee the country. In response, the IMF demands that the country raises interest rates to 30%, 40% and 50%, in order to tempt the speculators into putting their money back into the economy. The result is massive inflation and further spiral into economic meltdown.

Of course, this is not the picture painted by western supporters of globalisation. Officially, it is supposed to integrate Third World economies, ensuring rapid development. Multinationals are supposed to rush in with huge capital investment. In fact, they have stayed rooted in the first world, only venturing out into new markets to asset-strip and profit-take. Instead of becoming integrated into the global economy, many Third World countries have become merely a source of ridiculously cheap raw materials, and are otherwise isolated, written off as basket cases and left to fester in abject poverty. Foreign investment in most Third World countries has plummeted, with the odd exception, notably China, which has concentrated on domestic investment and ignored IMF medicines.

Much of Africa has now entered what one commentator described as "an unrelenting crisis of tragic proportions". The dreams of becoming upstanding world citizens through hard work are long gone, replaced by a future governed by western agencies promoting a mixture of emergency relief and riot control.

In the new global economy, far from everyone becoming citizens of the global village, much of the world's population is simply not needed, and is languishing in the global village dump. The simple truth is that globalisation is nothing more than a new form of imperialism, in which the rich world plunders and lays waste to the poor world. In the process, the gap widens. The richest 20% of the world's population currently gets 86% of the global income, while the poorest 20% get just 1.3%.

So the fight against globalisation is a fight against imperialism. This brings us to the question of how it must be challenged. If the struggle against globalisation attempts to limit itself to campaigning against debt or fighting structural adjustment, it merely gets caught up in fighting the symptoms rather than the true source of exploitation - capitalism itself.

Capitalism is a mechanism for creating poverty as well as wealth. The abolition of Third World poverty will only be brought to an end through sustainable development – something capitalism is inherently unable to achieve or deliver. Therefore, the effective fight against debt necessitates a fight against capitalism and the states that support it.

Only in a world based on human co-operation, which has as its primary aim sustainability and quality of life for all, can we expect poverty to end now and in the future. This means an end to the madness of pointless and unsustainable consumption in the rich world. It also means ensuring that the poor world has the means by which to develop its way out of poverty – not by forced IMF medicine or state-imposed communism, but through bottom-up development, where people are allowed to develop their economy to meet the needs of their society in the way they know best.

An end to world poverty is easily within the reach of human ingenuity. The challenge is to bring about a decent future. Rather than stunting and distorting human endeavour in the narrow pursuit of profit, a worthwhile society will set free the human spirit in order to bring an end to world poverty as the first necessary step in building about a new world based on a common humanity.

For further information about issues raised in this or other close-up articles, or to enter into dialogue with the writers, contact:
da@direct-action.org.uk
PO Box 1095, Sheffield
S2 4YR, UK.

SF Contact Point:

SF, PO Box 469, Preston PR1 8XF.
Tel./Fax 01772 739724 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, Box 43, 82 Colston St, Bristol BS1 5BB.
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
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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.

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About Solidarity Federation...

Solidarity Federation was formed in March 1994. It is a federation of groups and individuals across England, Scotland 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

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

Free leaflets (1-100, just say) from: Sheffield SolFed, PO Box 1095, Sheffield S2 4YR

North & East London SolFed
Free Solidarity Bulletin out now. 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).

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

Catalyst
Freesheet of the Solidarity Federation - IWA
If you like DA, you'll like Catalyst. New issue out now. Pissed off with the boss? Get free light relief. 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

Manchester SolFed
Discussion - info. - solidarity - support

Spring 2003 discussions:
Weds 5 Feb - Higher Education
Weds 5 March – Casualisation
Weds 2 April – Economics
All meetings first Wednesday of the month, 8.30pm.
All sessions open & free at;
The Brow House, 1 Mabfield Road, Fallowfield, Manchester.
Any queries, contact Manchester SF (address in contacts, p.34).
www.manchestersf.org.uk www.solfed.org.uk

McWorkers Resistance
Get the unmissable MWR Bulletin from Glasgow MWR, PO Box 3828, Glasgow G41 1YU. http://mwr.org.uk info@mwr.org.uk http://www.mwrm.tk

Act Your Rage!
Manchester Anarchist Youth – network with regular Manchester meetings for organising struggles, all welcome. 07816 420 391 manchester@anarchistyouth.net

Community Anarchist Discussion & Solidarity Zone
CADSZ - if you are interested in discussing the tactics, actions and practicalities of community organising in the UK, subscribe at: cadsz-subscribe@yahoogroups.com www.geocities.com/cadsz/

Rebel Bull
Hereford's freesheet, from Hereford Anarchists, c/o PO Box 7, Pontypool, Gwent NP4 8YB. herefordanarchists@hotmail.com

BNNR
For info on Birmingham Northern Relief Road actions, look up Road Alert on the Internet. To watch BNNR action via Internet, visit http://www.roadalert.org.uk/roadalertuk.htm

The Bristolian
Bristol's freesheet, from Box 3, Greenleaf Bookshop, 82 Colston St, Bristol BS1 8BB. 07779076998 localnews4us@yahoo.co.uk

London weighting strikes
Support Hackney Library Workers, who have been striking on Saturdays for over a year. Contact NELSF, PO Box 1681, London N8 7LE (07799 251053) or Hackney Unison, 2 Hillman St, London E8 (0208 356 4071)

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.

Friends and Neighbours

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

Kate Sharpley Library
Dedicated to recording and revealing the history of Anarchism - send SAE for new detailed catalogue, donate documentation, reports, etc. KSL, BM Hurricane, London WC1 N 3XX. www.katesharpleylibrary.org/index.htm.

Films from Cultureshop
Online shop for independent/radical/political issue-based videos has been launched by not for profit group i-Contact Video Network. The films available currently are; Undercurrents 10 3/4, The Coconut Revolution, Crowd Bites Wolf (IMF demo Prague, 2000), Nonviolence for a Change, and Suits and Savages, with more coming soon. All at http://www.cultureshop.org.

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.

Networking Newsletter
Networking in Greater Manchester working for positive social change. Tel: 0161 226 9321. info@networkingnewsletter.org.uk http://www.networkingnewsletter.org.uk Also, don't miss Manchester Radical Bookfair, 7th December.

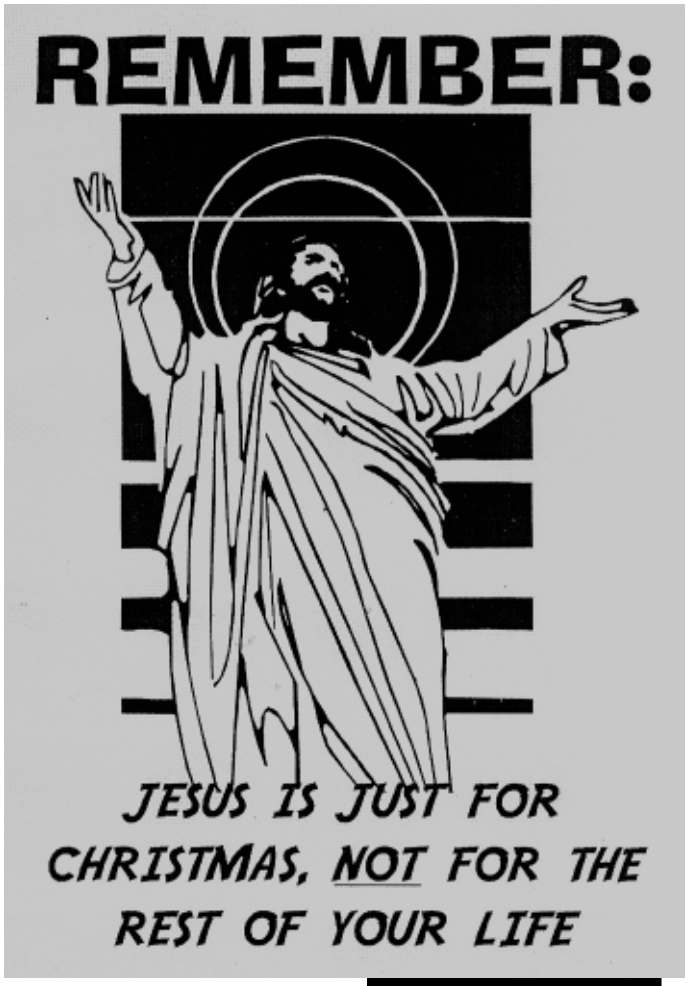
Toxcat
Essential exposures of polluters, polllution and cover-ups. £2 or sub £12 from ToxCat, PO Box 29, Ellesmere Port, Cheshire CH66 3TX.

Resistance
Freesheet of the Anarchist Federation. Anarcho news, views and comment from: AF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High St, London E1 7QX. www.afed.org.uk

Eroding Empire
Monthly listing of gigs, events, actions and classifieds for London. Punk, anarcho, squatting, etc. info. from: Eroding Empire, c/o 56A Crampton St, London SE17 3AE, Tel. 07890 350448, Email; eroding@eroding.org.uk

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

No expense spared, festive cut out and send card, with compliments and seasons greetings from the DA Collective



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