Direct Action

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Freedom:

The Madness of King George

globalfocus: Venezuela

Immigration: Freedom Denied

US vs. EU: In pursuit of Empire

The Market is Anything but Free

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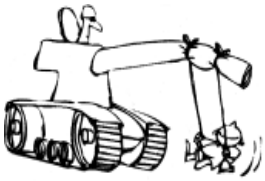
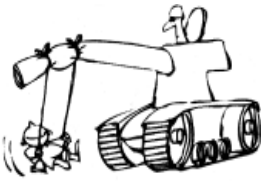


Freedom

And what makes Tony tick?



Freedom – this issue's theme – suitably nebulous and lacking in meaning for anyone to use, in or out of context. So why should we bother trying to reclaim terms like democracy and freedom, and how do we do it? (*Reclaim the words, p.24-5).* The act of reclaiming them means taking re-affirming direct action – we reclaim by doing, and that way lies real progress for humanity.

Like the word 'anarchism', 'freedom' has been *abused beyond meaning (p.22-23)* - but this only indicates we must redouble our efforts to make ourselves heard amongst the cacophony of bullshit emanating from western capitalism and its media machine. In short, reclaiming freedom is not an esoteric, late night Channel 4 chat-show topic, it is the stuff of life; it is not a luxury, but a necessity.

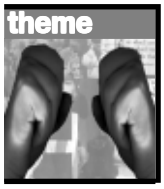
Tony Blair is a great upholder of freedom. He believes deeply that the fire fighters should be free to live on poor pay; that the mass movement anti-war marchers should be free to be ignored; that his business friends should be free to exploit people and planet for their own profit, and that, er… the UK government should be free to stop people being free to escape oppression in their country by seeking asylum here (*Freedom Denied, p.4-5).* Some might say he is living proof of his support for the freedom to be a poodle to a Texan warmonger. Some might say that the sight of a poodle shitting in the sand-pit (no offence, lovers of Iraqi soil) is not a pretty one *(for cooler, anti-war slogans, see p. 7)*.

Seriously though, Blair is no fool. He may have lied to and fooled some Labour voters, but that only illustrates his cunning. One of the key unanswered questions in the anti-war movement is; why is Tony playing the lap-dog to Bush, given the risks it involves with his own career? Do you buy the stuff about wanting to help out the down-trodden Iraqi people? Loads of other states have unelected leaders (e.g. US); there are plenty of dictatorships with weapons of mass destruction around, and plenty that might sponsor anti-western violence or terrorist acts. There are also plenty of states who have proved they will kill their own people at will repeatedly (e.g. Israel to name just one). Does he really know something about Iraq that we don't? Well, I think he would have told us. In fact, the real reason must be one he won't tell us (because he hasn't), so it must be something he wants to hide.

Let's look at some possibilities. Oil? – probably not, although this is clearly one of Bush's main motivations (*The Madness of King George, p.18-19)*. To revitalise the UK/western economies? Now we are talking – this has to be a real possibility, given the current state of the UK economy (and how much Labour's success has ridden on 'strong' economic performance). Or what about a grandiose throwback urge to uphold the old empire, the one we sold on to the US when we went bankrupt through two world wars trying to sustain it? History repeats itself, and here lies the true reason Blair risks everything to play Bush's poodle *(In Pursuit of Empire, p.20-21)*. Quite apart from this, Tony believes his own rhetoric – that he is a great statesman, upholding western capitalist values. He has not quite become a victim of his own illusion – the one where he claims we can achieve freedom through the 'free' market. But he knows that his Labour project has succeeded so far on the basis of peddling such garbage and, as the health service budgets crumble under the weight of PFI payments, he is increasingly tempted to concentrate on the illusion rather than the reality *(The Market is Anything But Free, p.31)*.

Capitalism is not about to collapse. But no amount of papering over the cracks seems to be able to hide the current crisis, and no straight-thinking person honestly believes the market is about freedom. To labour the phrase, people have long known the market is the problem, not the solution, but now they are prepared to act upon it.

The other week, I was talking about the idea of a general strike against the war. What about a general strike FOR real freedom? Think of it – we could all do with some time off, right? Plus, it would be one in the eye for the politicians, and for all the armchair cynics. It might even be something to tell the grandkids about one day.



freedom

7-11 ***actions+comment***
7; The big one
8; Tri-dented egos
8; Tony prefers stockbrokers
10; Energy planning
11; PATRIOT II: The sequel
On the edge: Crapita; Dogfights; Grave-turning job ; Anti-war drivers; No nukes, thanks; DA – better than prozac; Death by chocolate; Prawnography

9 ***blairedvision:* B-LIAR**
We've paid the taxes - so where are your pledges?

12 ***international news***
Italy, Kenya, India, USA, Greece, Ireland, Trinidad, Brazil, Nicaragua, South Africa, Czech republic, El Salvador.
Features: Anti-war World; Coke 'n' Pepsi; Bolivia Protests Rock Government

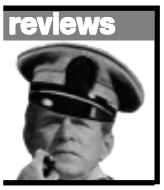
16 ***globalfocus:* Venezuela**
More mass-action against capitalism in South America

24 ***action for change:* Reclaim the words!**
Democracy and freedom;
reclaiming meaning through action

26 ***notes+letters***
Bakuninism or bullshit?; Obituary - Clem Turff; Another regime change is possible; Reclaiming our past

27 ***justicepage***

34 ***DA resources***
Info., upcoming events, campaigns, friends & neighbours.



28-30

reviewfeatures:
In the Land of the Free: US civil rights and the prison system - In a Pig's Eye; Doing Time; Prisons on Fire
Women on the frontline - Quiet Rumours, an anarcha-feminist reader; Desire for change, women on the frontline of global resistance.

books
MI6: 50 years of special operations - Stephen Dorril
Stupid White Men - Michael Moore

music
Crimson/American Eye Aeroplanes - Drowning Dog/The Deletist
The human atom bombs - Randy
Mobilize - Anti-Flag

4 **Fortress Freedom**
Is western democracy and the 'free' market really about maximising everyone's freedoms? Look no further.

5 **Reason to be cheerful?**
The Government has lost round one of the legal struggle over its anti-asylum law.

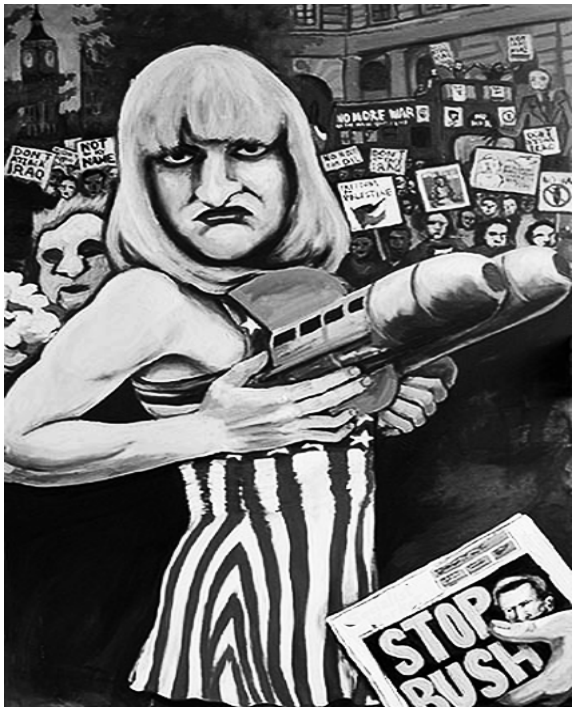
6 **Whipping it up**
Racism rising - is it real, media-driven, politician-driven, or filling a vacuum?

18 **The Madness of King George**
"Eat Another Pretzel, Asshole " - The war analysis in 5 easy questions.

20 **In Pursuit of Empire**
For almost a century, US policy towards Iraq has been focused on taking control of its oil.

22 **Abused beyond meaning?**
The use and abuse of the f-word

31 ***closerlook:* The Market is anything but Free**
Labour persists in promoting the illusion that the market is the solution, not the problem. DA probes the dark underbelly of 2nd term Labour rhetoric and reality with a case study on health care.



Hypocrisy

Western democracy:

Fortress Freedom

Is western democracy and the 'free' market really about maximising everyone's freedoms? One look at the Government's latest immigration policies is enough to answer that one.

Immigration is never far from the tabloid headlines. It is surrounded by emotive issues, and is routinely used and abused by the likes of Blunkett and the Daily (Hate) Mail. It boils down to control and freedom.

On the one hand, there is capitalism's control over Third World economies and political control of the ruling classes within countries. This control denies even the most basic political and economic freedom to millions upon millions. It is also the driving force behind immigration. On the other hand, in search of more control over their own lives, migrants risk everything to cross borders and whole continents, usually finding government controls on their freedom of movement once they reach so-called 'safe' countries.

The level of Third World debt in recent decades has allowed the IMF and World Bank to force 'free market' economic policies upon countries most of whose people were already living way below an acceptable standard. Such policies are brought in and overseen by the rich and powerful, often exploiting existing ethnic and religious divisions, or provoking some kind of backlash leading to civil war. Migration is the only option left to the many caught in the middle. Whether this is for economic or political reasons, or a combination of both, is irrelevant.

If you are a refugee seeking help, contact:
Refugee Lifeline on
0114 270 1073
For further information, contact:
Refugee Council Enquiry Line on
0171 820 3085
or www.defend-asylum.org/

Growing numbers of migrants now make their way into Europe, North America and other 'developed' countries. Governments, quick to pander to the xenophobic ranting of populist tabloids and politicians, have responded with severe controls on migrants' freedom of movement, ability to earn a living and desire to live among their own communities. Immigration controls are oppressive, but they will fail nevertheless. They will fail because they ignore the inequalities that drive migration; because people will always find a way to migrate if driven to it.

Media and political circles continue to play the race card, continue to talk immigration up into some sort of super-problem, and continue to warn of various doom-laden scenarios which, were it not for the threats, abuse and violence they encourage, could be dismissed out of hand. Meanwhile, they ignore the fact that capitalism needs migration. The original Irish, West Indian and South Asian immigrants to Britain were all encouraged to come because of labour shortages. Today the situation is similar. While the press and politicians promote the view that immigrants take 'our' jobs, the reality is that these jobs are so insecure, poorly paid and rife with rubbish conditions, that no one else will take them.

What is more, Britain, and some eighty other countries, have 'subreplacement fertility rates' – births are no longer enough to replace deaths. It is suggested that levels of immigration into Europe, including Eastern Europe and Russia, will need to double to maintain the population at its present level. The British population has remained broadly static for about twenty years for two reasons – people are living longer, and numbers of immigrants have largely balanced the numbers of people leaving the country. Nevertheless, the workforce continues to shrink, as that part of the population past retirement age continues to grow. Labour shortages and immigration are therefore hard economic facts.

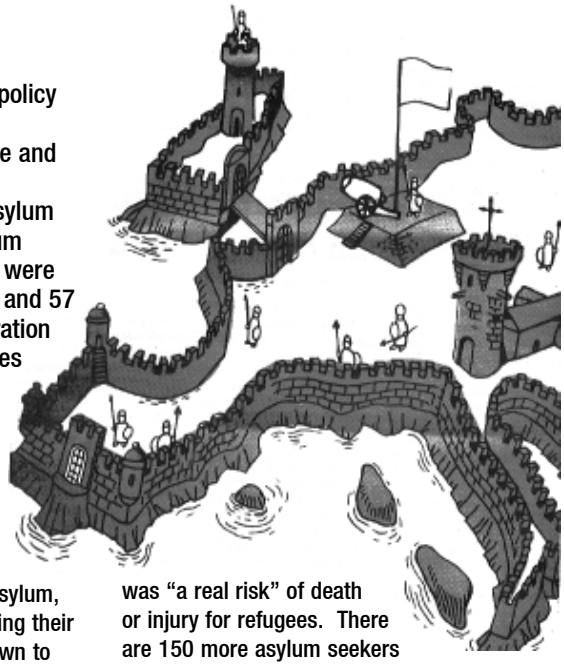
But you won't see or hear much about this in the mainstream media. Instead, 'mere' economic migrants, who lack the good grace to be properly persecuted, are especially despised by the opinion formers. By contrast, and with typical double standards, it's just fine for Brits to work in Saudi, for pensioners to retire to foreign countries, for young people to leave for Australia and New Zealand. Economic migrants? – Nope, not us!

"Mere" economic migrants, who lack the good grace to be properly persecuted, are especially despised by the opinion formers.

What passes for discussion on immigration is highly islamophobic and totally colour blind. The portrayal of the typical immigrant is a brown-skinned Muslim but, in fact, there are more white immigrants – Irish, European and Commonwealth citizens, for instance. No one thinks of Bob Geldof, Ulrika Jonsson or Rolf Harris and their ilk as immigrants, but they are.

Why is then that governments fear immigration so much? Given that modern states are built on patriotism, nationalism and xenophobia, and given the sheer opportunism of political parties, opposition politicians find it convenient to manipulate the immigration issue to gain ground on the government. Fearing their grasp on political

Reason to be cheerful?



The Government's vicious new policy has been designed to throw thousands of already desperate and vulnerable asylum seekers into destitution. From January 2003, asylum seekers who did not apply for asylum immediately they set foot in the UK were refused support (under sections 55 and 57 of the notorious Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act - see previous issues of DA). Since they are not allowed to work, they were to be left without any form of income or support.

Not surprisingly, many of us pointed out that this openly flouts international law, which allows for the clandestine arrival of people seeking asylum, as many would be prevented from fleeing their countries if they made themselves known to the authorities. It denies asylum seekers the basic human right to seek refuge.

The new Policy meant the worst case misery for people already traumatised by war, torture, rape and persecution, as well as pregnant women (who were not entitled to support until after the baby is born) and people with disabilities or special needs waiting to be assessed by their local authority.

The Government's says the measures (along with a host of others in the Act), will discourage people from claiming asylum in Britain. However, the truth is that people fleeing persecution are not motivated by the system of support they will find in the countries they seek to reach. They are seeking a safe haven - and they risk their lives in the pursuit of it.

The government's get-tough policy on asylum suffered a setback this February, after six asylum seekers won their High Court challenge to the inhumane laws which stopped them receiving state support. Mr Justice Collins pulled no punches when he handed down the ruling on the draconian Section 55, which stops support for people who don't apply for asylum the minute they arrive in the UK. He said denying them benefits and shelter breached the European Convention on Human Rights and agreed there was "a real risk" of death or injury for refugees. There are 150 more asylum seekers in the legal pipeline.

The ruling means that the Home Office now has a duty to ensure people who apply for asylum are not left without food or shelter, but Blunkett was outside immediately after the hearing ended, furiously announcing that the government will appeal against the decision. He wants the right to mercilessly force people fleeing persecution to live in phone boxes and starve on the streets.

We are opposed to attacks on asylum seekers, and we invite you to join us in our campaign to scrap these measures and to fight back against the racist climate being created by government policy. The old, hated voucher scheme was defeated by a magnificent unified protest; we need to do the same.

Basic Demands:

- The right to work for asylum seekers
- Income support for asylum seekers
- Abolition of detention centres
- No forced dispersal
- Full legal rights and representation
- No to deportation
- The scrapping of the Asylum and Immigration Act

Find out what you can do at 0121 554 6947 www.ncadc.org.uk or contact SolFed for more info. (see contact point details on page 34).

Five truths behind the media myths

1. There is a 'flood' of asylum seekers. - *Untrue* -
Of 20 million refugees in the world today, only 0.16% of these applied for asylum in the UK last year. 10% of the world's refugees are in Europe. Less than 1% reside in the UK.

2. The majority of claims are 'bogus'. - *Wrong again* -
Before the current restrictive immigration policies were introduced, 87% of asylum applications were found to be genuine. Despite harsher policies, 54% of applications are still accepted. In 1990, there were 15 asylum applications from former Yugoslavia. In 1998, the figure stood at 17,980 as war broke out. People are not *choosing* to leave home, but are forced to flee persecution and abuse.

3. The UK is a 'soft touch'. - *Er, No* -
Over 9,000 asylum seekers are held in detention in the UK (more than in any other European country), half of these in prisons - most of them have committed no offence. The last three major asylum laws ensure asylum seekers have less to live on, fewer rights to appeal and often only 5 days to make their application.

4. They are 'defrauding' our benefits system. - *Very difficult to do* -
Asylum seekers are no longer entitled to welfare and receive only 70% of income support levels, forcing them to live below the poverty line. The food voucher system means an adult asylum seeker has only £10 cash per week for travel and other needs.

5. Britain cannot afford asylum seekers. - *It can, easily* -

- Tony Blair said in Parliament that asylum seekers cost 0.2% of government expenditure. The cost to the taxpayer is 10p per week.
- What costs money is the slow and inefficient asylum system in the UK, which can keep families waiting 27 months for a decision.
- Reaching safety in the UK is harder than ever for a person fleeing persecution. Asylum seekers are now being scapegoated by politicians and are subjected to racist attacks, which have increased in this country by 89% this year. We should welcome asylum seekers and the valuable contribution they make to our society.

control to be under threat, governments predictably respond by rushing through yet more ill-considered measures to control immigrants. That question of control again.

Governments love control – the state constantly seeks ever greater control over more areas of our lives. Immigrant communities, however, are often characterised by a greater social cohesion, greater bonds of solidarity and less dependence on 'welfare' and other state-sponsored control mechanisms than is the case among the population at large. And doesn't the state just hate that.

Whipping it up

Racism rising - is it real, media-driven, politician-driven, or filling a vacuum?

Across the country, the far right are whipping up racist feelings and fuelling populist campaigns against immigrants and asylum seekers. They are aided and abetted by Tories clutching at any straws to regain some popularity, and the Labour Government who do not want to appear 'soft' on immigration. This extends right down to local level, where Labour MPs and councillors are pandering to the BNP and other fascists and racists. Having abandoned the white working class in their thirst for power, and with the Conservative Party and the BNP positioning themselves to capitalise on this burgeoning resentment, they no longer are capable of any meaningful resistance, as they have no idea how to challenge the threat.

In Burnley, the Labour council chose to commemorate this year's Holocaust Memorial Day by inviting along to the official ceremony the town's three BNP councillors. Thankfully, not everyone in Burnley Labour Party follows the strategy of appeasement pursued by local officialdom and, when the BNP attempted to lay a wreath accompanied by a press release which insultingly equated the Holocaust with the crimes of Stalin and the recent violence against whites in Zimbabwe, the offending item was quickly removed and set aside by Labour councillors Paul Moore and Alice Thornber.

When the Lancashire Evening Telegraph quoted Burnley BNP councillor Terry Grogan accusing Paul and Alice of theft, the pair faced a torrent of abusive telephone calls from BNP supporters, and, disgracefully, received no backing from the Labour Party at any level. The key point here is that it is shameful and hurtful to Jewish people and to all Holocaust survivors that Burnley council chose to invite the BNP in the first place. Have they forgotten how party leader Nick Griffin compared those who accept the historical fact of the Holocaust to those who claim the earth is flat?

Meanwhile, in neighbouring Blackburn, the recently elected BNP councillor Robin Evans today said he would stand against Foreign Secretary Jack Straw at the next General Election. Evans caused controversy among the mainstream political parties at a full council meeting of Blackburn with Darwen Council, when he refused to publicly denounce comments made by the BNP national leader Nick Griffin that the Holocaust was nothing more than 'Allied propaganda.' Labour's reaction has been typically limp, as Straw's agent commented: "This is a democracy. People are entitled to stand for election if they want. It's a choice for the people of Blackburn.''

Elsewhere, the government's plans to house asylum seekers outside major cities are being challenged by a wave of protests in Kent, Sussex, Oxfordshire, Dorset and Lincolnshire. This mood of anger is being encouraged by national newspapers, which are linking immigration to fears over terrorism, disease and crime. Derek Wyatt, Labour MP for Sittingbourne and Sheppey has called for all asylum seekers to be barred from Britain. The BNP has announced that, due to 'massive interest', they will be standing three candidates in the Medway area at the May council elections. In Portland, Dorset protestors hung a banner declaring 'No asylum here'. The anti-asylum campaign is supported by Jim Knight, the Labour MP, as well as the South Dorset Conservative Party.

This scenario is being repeated across the country with Conservative and Labour MPs supporting anti-asylum groups. The BNP and the NF are also moving in trying to win support on the back of local campaigns. There are increasing reports of fascist activity in Lincolnshire, Caythorpe in Nottinghamshire, Carlisle, Lancaster, Bicester in Oxfordshire and elsewhere. In Throckmorton, Worcestershire local celebs, Stella McCartney, who has a £1.3 million farmhouse in the village, as well as her father, Paul, and Songs of Praise presenter Toyah Wilcox joined local Tory MP, Peter Luff, in protests against asylum seekers.

David Blunkett, and other government ministers, making wild statements about immigration in general and asylum seekers, are fuelling all this anxiety in particular. Asylum seekers are also being made the scapegoats for an NHS in crisis. Firstly, there was the trend of viewing immigrants as carriers of infectious diseases. Now, there are signs in Britain that ill-informed health scares are becoming central to public fears about immigration.

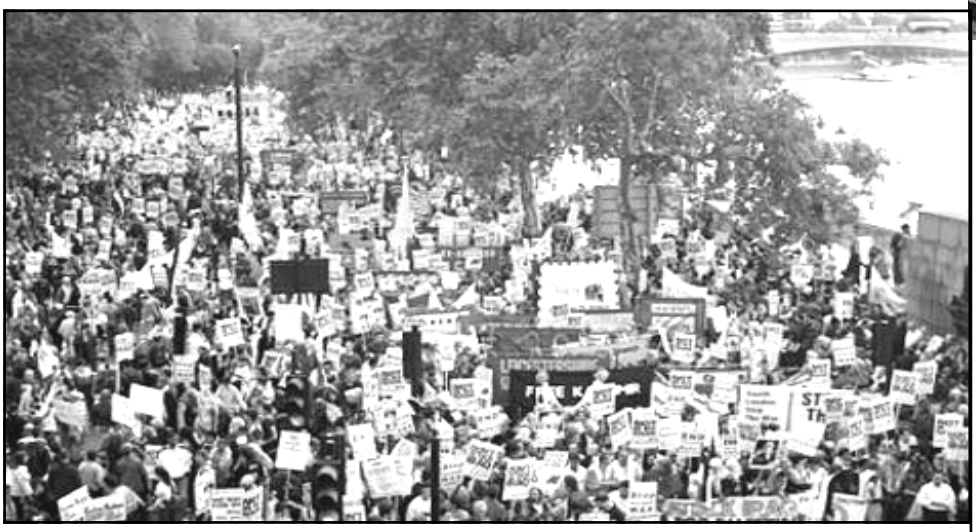
Shadow Health Secretary Liam Fox has wrote to all Primary Care Trusts and Hospital Trusts suggesting that UK citizens were being denied access to treatment on the NHS because of 'preferential access' given to asylum seekers. He also claimed that the NHS was becoming a 'health tourism destination'.

The media has fanned disease fears. Trevor Kavanagh, political editor of the Sun newspaper, wrote on 27 January 2003 that immigrants had brought *'alarming levels of infectious TB, Hepatitis B [and] incurable Aids'* to Britain. The Sun newspaper is currently running a petition calling on Tony Blair to *'stop Britain becoming a soft touch for illegal asylum seekers'*. With over 300,000 signatories, it is claimed to be the biggest newspaper petition in history. The Mail on Sunday of 26 January announced that disease is *'the new asylum peril that we cannot ignore'*. Under a heading speaking of *'imported plagues'*, Anthony Browne wrote: *'We live in fear of foreigners bringing death to our land... It is not by allowing in terrorists that the Government's policy of mass immigration, especially from the Third World, will claim most lives; it is through letting in too many germs.'*

Across the country, Local Election will be held on May 1st. There is a real fear that the BNP will build on these campaigns; especially in the areas they already have councillors, to make gains. The Labour Party has no idea what to do. The left runs around chanting 'asylum seekers welcome here' to pissed-off residents in run-down estates. They launch 'Don't vote BNP' campaigns that only encourage people to vote for anyone, preferably Socialist Alliance, next best Labour, or even Tory at a pinch!

Anarchists find this all a bit duplicitous and are naturally reluctant to take part in any campaign that encourages people to get out and vote in capitalist elections. The best way of providing meaningful opposition to fascism in those areas where the BNP are operating and gaining ground is to continue to attack the Labour Party and its policies, campaign against racism and fascism, and expose the falsehoods peddled by the government, the right, and the media. Countering hypocrisy and outright lies is still the best hope we have of persuading people in our own communities to turn away from the sinister 'quick fixes' of group blame being offered by the fascists.

The Big One



It was impossible to say exactly how many people were at the anti-war demonstration on February 15th in London. All we know is that it was many more than the laughably inaccurate police 'estimate' of 750,000. Between 1.5 and 2 million would be nearer the mark. Certainly, it was the biggest demonstration in British history.

Many on the march were protesting for the first time. The atmosphere was good, and people came up to our little group asking what the red and black flags stood for. They were rewarded with a leaflet, and hopefully they went away with a better impression of anarchists than the one peddled by the media.

Mercifully, the size of the crowd meant that the paper sellers were also swamped, so they were only really in evidence at the beginning and the end. The rest of the time was spent on a stroll through the (very cold) streets of London, with occasional singing and chanting thrown in for good measure. Every now and then, a ripple of noise went through the crowd like an aural Mexican Wave, only to return the other way some time later. A nice, and effective, way of mass communication.

We passed the time laughing at the variety of home-made banners that showed the inventiveness and humour evident in the crowd. One simply read, "*War is Silly*", whilst another opined; "*We have guided missiles and misguided men*". Cynical references to oil were abundant, and included the plaintive; "*How did our oil get under their sand*?", and the rather more direct; "*Special Offer: 1p off each gallon of petrol for 1 million dead Iraqis*". Everyone concurred with the wisdom of one woman's placard, declaring, "*The only Bush I trust is my own*".

In Hyde Park, there was music as well as the predictable speeches. Mo Mowlam managed to get up people's noses by declaring that; "*This is a peaceful demonstration*" and that "*those who have come here to commit violence should restrain themselves.*" There was absolutely no evidence of any intended violence. Although no longer in the cabinet, she clearly cannot resist New Labour control freakery. The irony of having Mo Mowlam (known as 'Mrs. Churchill' since her T.V. championing of Winston as the greatest Briton) address a crowd on the morals of war-mongering was not lost on one contingent, who brought a banner asking, "*Who gassed the Kurds in 1924? – Winston Churchill!*". Since most people didn't need to be told why they were marching by the invited speakers, many left as soon as they got to Hyde Park in order to start making their way home.

The local constabulary were their usual helpful selves – at Green Park, the boys in blue could be spotted sending people back into and across the oncoming march, towards a locked underground station. We weren't sure which crowd management technique this came under, and remonstrated audibly with the gentlemen in question when a crush began to develop. It was particularly heartening to have immediate support from a number of women who had children with them, who warned our Wonderful British Bobbies; *'Get your act together'*. This was a nice bit of authority- flouting, which came from people who had probably never protested against anything before in their lives, let alone considered questioning a police officer. Sweet!

Overwhelmingly, the march showed that people are beginning to question the lies that are fed to them daily. Even if many people on the march were there for the single issue of the war, they have taken the first step of seeing through the spin and the misinformation over Iraq. It's only a first step, but maybe – just maybe - they will start to question the bigger lies about our political and economic system. Here's hoping.

People came out because they are sick of the hypocrisy and lies of the politicians. For a decade, Blair and cronies ignored numerous early day motions condemning Saddam's treatment of his people. Has he suddenly woken up to the Iraqi suffering? Wheeling out tiny groups of Iraqi dissdents who say we should bomb their countryfolk gives the game away. As Jesse Jackson said, the war does not pass the smell test. A pre-emptive strike against Iraq will destroy any modicum of moral authority, and all because Saddam conceals weapons of mass destruction? If Bush wants to know how many his father sold them, why doesn't he just look at his sales receipts?

Such street wisdom was well in evidence on the march - here are some choice placards and sayings (organised for your convenience by category):

BLUNT
Oil war whore
Fuck Bush
Hey Tony, how many kids will you burn out there?

SMUTTY
*Bush, that's a good name for a cu*t*

CLEVER
Guided missiles - misguided operators
Smart bombs, dumb politicians
Regime change? Start here!
Ex-Labour voters against the war

PLAYFUL
Tony, does my bomb look big in this? (guess the dress)
Make tea not war

VISUAL
LISTEN TO US, NOT THE US
LISTEN TO ~~BUSH~~

ON THE EDGE

CRAPITA

Capita is infamous for winning contract after contract across the country to run public services for a profit – and then cocking them up spectacularly. Their latest prank was taking over the running of TV licensing in Bristol. They sent out tens of thousands of leaflets to homes inviting punters to call a hotline. However, they had printed the phone number of a local tyre wholesaler, who proceeded to get over 500 TV licensing enquiries a day. The tyre company may now sue Crapita for loss of earnings. (www.bristolian.freeservers.com)

DOGFIGHTS

Various domestic airlines may be flying dangerous weapons and troops. The agreement with civil airlines is intended to strengthen NATO military operations, by placing the transport capacity of passenger aircraft at the disposal of NATO. Movement of weapons with these aircraft could start as soon as military aggression is launched against Iraq. Many believe the agreement makes these aircraft a legitimate target for opponents in NATO warfare.

So, you have been warned! And amongst those it may affect are; Icelandair, Atlanta, Air France, Iberia, Virgin Atlantic, Malaysia Airlines, Saudi Airlines, Air Algerie, Excel Airways, Garuda Indonesia, Air Asia, Southern Winds Airlines, Nigeria Airways, and Aeromar.

GRAVE-TURNING JOB OFFER

America may have lost 2.36 million jobs during George Bush's presidency, but now there's good news! The White House work creation program is finally getting some traction. "We are looking for candidates nationwide!!!!", crows the ad for Navy morticians. There's even a $6,000 sign-on bonus at www.hotjobs.com

ANTI-WAR DRIVERS

Tony prefers stockbrokers

February was definitely a month of activity for the Blair Government.

Up front, they whined about how we have to bomb the crap out of innocent people, because it will be good for them in the long run. Behind the scenes, a more truthful picture emerged, as they led another major European attack on workers' rights. Oh, and the Low Pay Unit also wound up after 30 years, due to lack of funds, and they offered a £200,000 a year salary to the new head of the audit commission, confirming that even the watchdogs are turning into fat cats.

Trade Unions hopes for a big extension of legal rights, including a new right to strike without fear of the sack, were dashed with the Government's new White Paper, which was met with outright delight by the bosses club, the CBI. The unions had also been pressing to make it easier to gain recognition and bargaining rights, mainly by scrapping the dual requirement that unions gain majority support in a ballot, back by at least 40% of the workforce. Not only have unions got very little of what they hoped for, the Government has also decided to only partly implement a European Court of Human Rights ruling preventing pay discrimination against unionised workers, and it still hasn't decided how to implement EU directives on temporary workers and information consultation.

The Labour Government's attacks on workers and unions are now depressingly regular. In January, it was Peter Hain calling on the Convention on the Future of Europe to abandon any ideas to protect the right to form or join a trade union or to take industrial action. He went on to quote Labour's position that industrial relations issues should remain subject to member state veto, effectively crippling the EU's ability to act on any matter affecting workers' rights. Unlike most things, there is complete clarity about the Government's plans for workplace relations; they want to see the erosion of workers' rights across Europe, in a 'race to the bottom' for wages and conditions – one which they clearly feel they can win.

Tri-dented Egos

Britain's main nuclear dockyard, at Devonport in Plymouth, hit the news after 2 Trident Ploughshares (TP) activists entered the supposedly top secret number 9 dock, and performed a weapons inspection of Trident Submarine HMS Vanguard last November.

The activists spent 2 hours inside the base, before deliberately alerting clueless and bemused security staff to their presence on board the submarine.

According to arms forces Minister Adam Ingram, the base was not only on high alert, but also had in place "additional security measures" in order to protect it from the TP Peace camp, established the day before the action. Embarrassed base commander, Commodore Andrew Mathews said the Navy and MOD clearly needed to "understand what has gone wrong".

The 2 activists climbed the pouter security fence using a piece of thick carpet to defeat the barbed wire on top, then cut through a second fence and proceeded to the dock for the inspection. They were later charged with criminal damage to the fence, and bailed by Plymouth Magistrates. Referring to the non-existent security, one of the activists said "everything on the submarine was open, we had the opportunity to go almost anywhere". The TP peace camp represented a significant hardening of anti-nuclear protest in the region. Successive marches, a sit-down blockade, and demonstrations, have helped turn local support into an active lobbying group, the Nuclear-free Coalition. It is hoped a combination of lobbying and direct action will further stiffen resistance.

A principal affect of the camp and accompanying direct action was to stimulate debate in both the local and national media. local MPs scrambled for the most reactionary response, demanding the most severe punishments for the activists, while deliberately ignoring the issues surrounding the illegality and immorality of Trident. Questions were asked in Parliament, and as any lobbyist will tell you, to achieve such a response requires serious action. Normally, lobbying by non-multinationals is publicly tolerated and privately dismissed, such is the moral bankruptcy of those laughingly referred to as our leaders. Local letters to newspapers were largely supportive of the action, although fears of terrorist action outweighed a commitment to outlaw Trident.

The Devonport experience shows that, in order to achieve genuine progression, the two methods of lobbying and direct action can be made to work loosely together. Direct action can stimulate debate, and generally ruin the plans of those who seek to enforce their will upon us, while lobbying can provide a framework for those in mainstream society to recognise the issues and engage in mainstream debate. Logic dictates that to combine the two can only benefit our various causes and campaigns. Increased dialogue between groups, with mutual respect for the guiding principles of those groups can replace the factional rivalries and petty tribalism that have bedevilled our movement since its inception. In order to win, we must learn to work together, and failure to do so may quite literally cost us the earth.

By way of post-script, in January, 70 peace activists were arrested at Britain's military HQ, Northwood, in January, after blocking the main gate for over 8 hours. The blockade was organised by Voices in the Wilderness UK, ARROW (Active Resistance to the Roots of War) and the D10 group.

B-LIAR

We've paid the taxes - so where are his pledges?

Cutting numbers on NHS waiting lists by some 100,000 patients was one of the more important pledges given by Labour. This target was achieved in time for the 1997 general election. Now, however, the list is above one million and rising, and is only 50,000 lower than when Blair first took office. If we can believe the figures, the government spent an extra £9 billion on health over the last two years. However, fewer patients were admitted to hospitals in England in 2001 than was the case in 1999.

Another of this government's targets was the pledge to halve child poverty in a decade, and to abolish it all together in twenty years. Some headway has been made on this, but they still are nowhere near fulfilling their grandiose claims.

The question of transport is also a hot potato: the government looks increasingly like a bunch of incompetents with the admission that the key elements of their ten-year transport plan are discredited. This adds one more failure to the growing pile of missed goals, own goals and strategies that have backfired.

On the railways, delays are increasing, and rail fares surge ahead, while the government bail out the failing private companies. Their rail strategy is falling apart in front of our eyes because soaring costs has swallowed up the money allocated.

The government is unable to meet the target it has set itself in reducing road congestion, with the transport secretary admitting as much. Since he can no longer blame the Tories, he has tried to switch the blame to Stephen Byers and John Prescott. They are set to abandon policies rather than persist with targets that cannot be realised, and they will have to deal with the political flak from this as a result.

Regarding public services, this government has no better idea of how to make progress other than to push on with their obsession with Thatcherite free-market solutions. Although their plans are full of holes, and largely discredited, this doesn't appear to be deterring them from forging ahead with them. However, it will not be long perhaps before the public's patience finally snaps. The war with Iraq will be very costly. The sum involved would pay for the abolition of hospital waiting lists, the restoration of grants and decent wages for the fire-fighters ten times over!

At the last election, the Tories mooted a slogan: "Y*ou've paid the taxes – so where are the nurses?*" Realising its dangerous implications for themselves, if they had persisted with this line, they dropped it like a hot brick. The government got off very lightly indeed: if the Tories had persisted with the slogan, they would have had an easy target to keep hitting at today.

The reality is that our present political system cannot resolve the problem of poverty, forge an effective transport system, or build and maintain an effective health service or a decent public service sector, because the state and capitalism are in the way (aka the problem, not the solution). Still, it doesn't hurt to remind the politicians of their failed promises – why not get together with some comrades today, and get a block booking with your local Labour MP at their surgery to ask some awkward questions? Particularly the one about the nurses...

IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF DA:

A lower class of degree? - analysis of Government policy on Higher Education.

A detailed look at where New Labour is, 6 years on from its "Education, education, education" election refrain. To be sure, get your next 4 copies delivered to your door for a fiver - sub details p.34.

ON THE EDGE

Train drivers for English, Welsh and Scottish Railways (EWS) in Motherwell began refusing to move arms and ammunition in January. Efforts by EWS management to persuade them to do it failed.

The government tried to cover up the action - which kmakes it all the more important to pass on this information; discuss it among your colleagues and at union meetings; and support any other action your colleagues take against the war.

It is also important that the Motherwell drivers are not left isolated by their union leaders. We urge all railworkers, both in ASLEF and in RMT, to pass motions of support; to refuse work normally undertaken by Motherwell; to work to their dockets during the coming weeks and months and not take on extra work that will aid Bush and Blair in their slaughter of Iraqi civilians.

Further info from SF contact point, p.34.

NO NUKES, THANKS

A recent MORI poll showed that 72% of people prefer clean, renewable energy from sources such as wind and solar, rather than nuclear power stations. 150 Greenpeace volunteers occupied Sizewell B in January, to highlight the fact. Closing down the British nuclear industry would be logical, even on straight economic terms. Sizewell B nuclear power station in Suffolk cost the taxpayer £2.7 billion, and its owners are losing money hand over fist, and being bailed out by the Labour Government, again using taxpayers' money.

The 'new' threat, of course, is a 'terrorist' attack on a nuclear power station. In the event of an emergency, US armed forces will evacuate the Royal family. The plan has been rehearsed every year since 1949. Of course, there never has been, nor ever will be, any plans to evacuate us.

ON THE EDGE

DA – BETTER THAN PROZAC

Direct action can be good for your physical and mental health, a new British study suggests. Researchers found that people who get involved in campaigns, strikes and political demonstrations experience an improvement in psychological well-being that can help them overcome stress, pain, anxiety and depression.

"Collective actions, such as protests, strikes, occupations and demonstrations, are less common in the UK than they were perhaps 20 years ago," researcher Dr. John Drury said in a statement. "The take-home message from this research, therefore, might be that people should get more involved in campaigns, struggles and social movements, not only in the wider interest of social change but also for their own personal good."

Furthermore, "Empowering events were almost without exception described as joyous occasions," said Drury. "Participants experienced a deep sense of happiness and even euphoria in being involved in protest events. Simply recounting the events in the interview brought a smile to the face of the interviewees."

Energy Planning

Talk about the pot calling the kettle black

America seems not to have learnt anything from Vietnam, or its countless excursions into other countries. Critics of the critics of the war on terror ask; "why bring up Vietnam, it was 30-odd years ago?" This is precisely the point. Rather than learning from what happened there (and I am not talking about getting its ass whipped), it still seems intent on repeating it, because 39 years later, it is engaging in more adventures overseas, still acting as the world's corrupt policeman.

The apologists say; "what do you want us to do, you accuse us of isolationism when we do nothing, and imperialism when we do". Well, frankly, we do not want you to do anything that involves starting wars, manufacturing the conditions for war, nor creating an atmosphere in which war fever can gain momentum.

In considering the reason why many capitalist countries go to war, which is to protect their vital corporate and vested interests, and asking them to abandon those interests is akin to asking the Pope to renounce Catholicism and say; "hey folks, it's been a big con all along". This is the way these people think about the world, and always have done. They say Iraq has weapons of mass destruction. Well, so has the US and every western European country. "But these weapons are for defence only…" Is that why NATO bombed the hell out of Serbia, killing 4-5,000 people, including many Kosovars – the very people they claimed to be protecting? 400 villagers were massacred in Mylai, Vietnam. Sure, they are for defensive purposes – defending their own interests. In Serbia, was it to liberate the Kosovars from the brutality of Milosevic? It was to 'free' Kosovars from Milosevic, so they could be enslaved to a government more inclined to western capitalism; one form of oppression to be replaced by another.

It wasn't a Middle East country that dropped the first atomic bomb, which wiped out a third of the 340,000 inhabitants of Hiroshima, even though Japan had already been defeated. They wanted to see their war toy in action. The US has intervened in every way conceivable, covertly and overtly, in over 70 countries across the world. They have turned countries inside out and up-side-down, for their own selfish interests, by a variety of methods, including destabilising democratically elected governments, preferring bloody dictatorships instead, a good case in point is Nicaragua in the 1980s, where, because the ideology didn't fit (it was socialist), it sent in its own terrorist butchers – the Contras – to massacre and rape peasants and workers, and anyone else who just wished to be left alone. In Chile, it supported the coup which led to the Pinochet regime, responsible for the murder of thousands. Even those in exile were targeted by US-backed Operation Condor, involving assassinations and car bombings (see also El Salvador, Honduras, etc.).

The US also funded a 9-year war between Iran and Iraq, when it backed Iraq. It cost 1.5 million lives, and would not have lasted as long without US involvement. All of these, of course, can be explained away by what the apologists think are palatable excuses, such as the cold war but, to quote Chomsky; "Let's put aside the excuses, it had nothing to do with cold war, in fact, Russia was also supporting Saddam Hussein. It was because this is the way they think about the world – and they think about the world the same way today" (BBC Radio Interview, October '02).

This is history, but it is not *"ancient history"*, to quote Noam again, and in light of the self-righteous propaganda coming from the Bush administration about other countries' nuclear capabilities, which is increasingly "whiter than white", it is important to remember what Uncle Sam has been up to himself. Bush rips up the ABM Treaty, North Korea gets edgy, and starts reactivating its nuclear programme. Bush goes ahead with Son of Star Wars missile defence systems, and China increases its military spending to 28% of its GDP. The result is a proliferation of those nasty weapons of mass destruction.

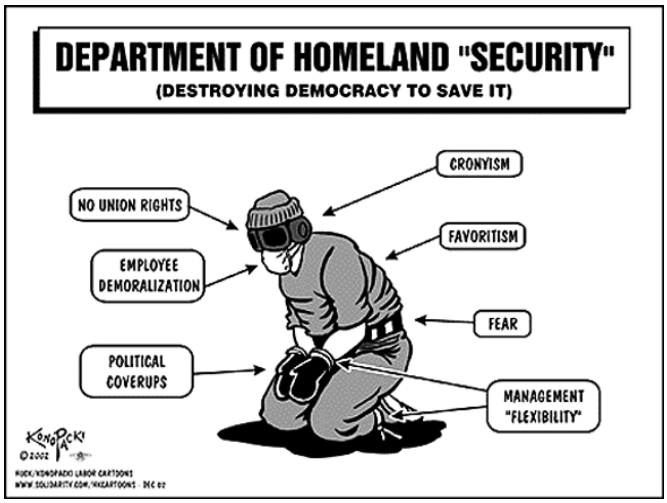
The opposition from Germany and France to the US war on Iraq should not be read as opposition *per se*. They are opposed only because they know they will get nothing out of it. If the oil spoils were coming their way, they would have no hesitation in contemplating the murder of innocent Iraqis. It does not suit their particular vested interests, which is a strong EU trading block which can rival America. Bush knows this. Russia is not keen either, it has an $8 billion deal with Iraq and doesn't need this war. The US needs to occupy a Middle Eastern country to assert its political and economic hegemony in the region, and they don't care how many lives they have to take in order to do it. But there is hope. The massive anti-war demos attracted a great cross-section of US society. These are the people with the real guts to work for some real change. As Jello Biafra once put it, "these people realise that another world is possible".

Anyway, wasn't it Osama Bin Laden they were supposed to be going after? Maybe they never were. Maybe it was Saddam Hussein all along, we shall see. To quote Shakespeare, "truth will come to light, murder cannot be hid long".

PATRIOT II: The sequel

The USA PATRIOT Act II sounds like a movie sequel, and like most sequels, it is a lot worse than the original.

In October 2001, in the wake of the destruction of the Twin Towers, Bush signed the first USA PATRIOT Act, the official title being; **U**niting and **S**trengthening **A**merica by **P**roviding **A**ppropriate **T**ools **R**equired to **I**ntercept and **O**bstruct **T**errorism. This initial law reached into every space that Americans once imagined was private. For instance, it allowed the police to obtain court orders to conduct so-called "sneak and peek" searches of homes and offices. This is where the authorities can break in, examine and remove or alter items without immediately, if ever, presenting owners with a warrant detailing what they were doing and why.



The Act also extended the government's power to examine records. Authorities can browse medical, financial, educational or even library records without evidence of crime as justification. The law overrides existing state and federal privacy laws if the FBI claims that the information is connected to an intelligence investigation. In addition, credit-reporting firms must disclose to the FBI any information that agents request in connection with a terrorist investigation, without the need for a court order. In the past, this was only permitted in espionage cases.

Biometric technology, such as fingerprint readers or iris scanners, have become part of an "integrated entry and exit data system" to identify visa holders entering the United States. Face recognition technology has been installed in several US airports. It's sequel, The Patriot Act II goes way beyond that, and here are some choice bits:

■ American nationals can be stripped of their citizenship and deported, if the government decides that they are acting in a way so as not to comport with how a "citizen" acts. (Yes, even native-born citizens.) It happens to naturalised citizens already – the state can strip someone of their citizenship, and all the associated rights, because they have associated with a group that the Attorney General has decided is a "terrorist organisation". In other words, on the word of one man, an organisation and all of its members can be considered 'traitors'.

■ There will be a DNA database created on "*suspected* terrorists," expansively defined to include association with suspected terrorist groups, and "non-citizens" suspected of certain crimes or of having supported any group designated as terrorist. So if the government suspects you of being a terrorist - not proves you are a terrorist, mind you – they can collect and keep your DNA. Perfect for tracking you.

■ Limits on law enforcement agencies from gathering information about individuals and organisations would be lifted. The authors of this statute claim that consent orders, which were passed as a result of police spying abuses, could impede terrorism investigations.

■ Since Sept. 11, 2001, the US government has rounded up hundreds of people in secret and refused to disclose even their names, on the spurious grounds that this protects their privacy. Any existing protections under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) would be removed by USA PATRIOT Act II, making it easier for the government to hold people secretly, and preventing the public from ever obtaining embarrassing information about the government overreaching itself.

■ Presently, private companies that use potentially dangerous chemicals must produce a "worst case scenario" report detailing the effect that the release of these controlled substances would have on the surrounding community. This Act, however, restricts FOIA requests to these reports, which the bill's drafters refer to as "a roadmap for terrorists." So, do you want to know how bad things could get - and what to do if things go wrong at that chemical plant down the road? Sorry, classified.

It gets scarier. They have been hiding this proposed bill. It was leaked on American TV but there has been no public discussion before. The unavoidable impression is that they are waiting for a moment when the country is scared - the war in Iraq, another terrorist attack - to push this through Congress with little or no public debate. For Britain, the implications are serious. With a government that seems intent on control over every aspect of our lives and which kowtows to the USA in every other aspect, it may not be long before a similar measure is introduced here. Watch this space – you can be sure that somebody else is watching it with great interest...

ON THE EDGE

Death by chocolate

In the run-up to the New Year celebrations (when better?), Nestlé's made public their demands for millions of dollars from Ethiopia, a country where 11 million people are facing famine. As if the current drought and the collapse in the global coffee price weren't enough, Nestlé demanded that Ethiopia pay over $6million in compensation for a company that was nationalised 27 years ago under the previous Mengistu regime - a company that Nestlé didn't even own at the time. It is small change to Nestlé, but 10 per cent of Ethiopia's revenues already go on international debts.

Nestlé's website proclaims that the company "contributes to your well-being and enhances your quality of life".

Nestlé is not new to hostile publicity, having made itself a target of boycotts by flogging breast-milk substitutes in developing countries. It has recently been singled out by the International Baby Food Action Group for its "long-standing record of poor compliance" with the 1981 code drawn up to regulate the marketing of baby milk.

Prawnography

Fancy a prawn and mayo sandwich? For every 1kg of prawns caught, 10-20kg of 'bycatch' is caught. These are then discarded overboard dead or dying. 150,000 sea turtles are killed by prawn trawlers every year. Prawn trawling is also thought to be the greatest threat to seahorses. This luxury product and other factory fishing methods are destroying the world's fisheries, undermining the sustainable use of the oceans.
www.ejfoundation.org/trawling.html
www.schnews.org.uk

Anti-war world

F15 - We all know what happened - people protested everywhere.

They came out in big numbers in more than 70 cities in France, and in a nationwide demonstration in Berlin, Germany. However, the most right wing, pro-war countries in Europe saw the biggest demonstrations of people's outrage – Rome, London, Madrid, Barcelona (2.5, 1.5, 1 and 1 million respectively).

If you add up all the hundreds of smaller demos, the numbers get really outstanding – e.g. someone worked out the total for Spain, and it came to 4.5-7 million (depending on whether you use police, press or protestors figures, see www.barcelona.indymedia.org). This is something like a 5th or 6th of the entire population, including children, etc.

Over 30m people worldwide demonstrated in cities, towns and villages (see lists, accounts, links and pics, at www.stopwar.org.uk), including; Adelaide, Albacete, Alicante, Amsterdam, Antwerp (12.02), Aotearoa/NZ, Athens [Greece], Auckland, Bangkok, Barcelona [and 9 more across Catalunya], Beirut, Belfast, Berlin, Berne, Bilbao, Brisbane, Brussels, Budapest, Busan, Cairo, Calgary, Canberra, Cape Town, Chicago, Chittagong, Copenhagen, Cyprus British Army Bases, Damascus, Dhaka, Dili, Dublin, Edmonton, Foster, Geelong, Glasgow, Granada, Guernsey, Havana, Helsinki, Hobart, Hong Kong, Huelva, Islamabad, Istanbul, Jaén, Jakarta, Jersey, Johannesburg, Kiev, Kigali, Kuala Lumpur, Lahore, Launceston, Lisbon, Lismore, Llubljana, London, Los Angeles, Luxembourg, Madrid, Málaga, Manila, Martinique, Melbourne, Mexico City, Montreal, Moscow, Murcia, New York, Newcastle [Australia], Osaka, Oslo, Oviedo, Paris [and some 50 cities in France], Perth, Philadelphia, Poznan, Prague, Ramallah, Reunion Island, Reykjavik, Rockhampton, Rome, Salamanca, San Francisco, San Juan, Santander, Santo Domingo, Sao Paulo, Seattle, Seoul, Skopje, Sofia, Stockholm, Strahan, Sydney, Takaka, Tallinn, Tel Aviv, Tokyo, Toronto, Vienna, Valetta, Vigo, Vilnius, Warsaw, Wollongong and many more (total, over 600)...

Thousands turned out in Tel Aviv, others shut down the Nato airport runway in Cyprus, 500,000 stopped Berlin, massive and unprecendented protests occurred across Oceania from Hawaii to Perth, while tens of thousands in Budapest (Hungary) formed a "Peace Chain" across the river Donau.

As DA goes to press, actions are planned for the day of the first (official) attack against Iraq, and the talk is of ongoing strikes and walkouts...

All demos in Manhattan have been banned since 9-11, yet 500,000 people turned out on F-15. Baton-wielding police let rip, and 400 people were handcuffed and locked in freezing buses all day. Police interrogated arrestees and deprived them of lawyers. Saddam would have been proud! Still, New Yorkers brought their banner skills out, including GLAMericans for Peace, who went for "Makeup Not War", "Baby, I AM the Bomb", and "War in Iraq is Wack". One addressed Bush with the simple words, "Eat Another Pretzel, Asshole."

This international news could not have been brought to you without the following excellent WebSources:
A-Infos News Service; www.ainfos.ca/
DAMN (Direct Action Media Network); http://damn.tao.ca/
IWA (International Workers' Association); www.iwa-ait.org
SchNEWS; www.schnews.org.uk
Labourstart; http://www.labourstart.org/
ASeed - Roots; http://antenna.nl/aseed/
Earth First – Action Update; http://host.envirolink.org/ef/
Corporate Watch; www.corpwatch.org
No Sweat; http://www.nosweat.org.uk
Hazards; http://www.hazards.org

For updates & future events, visit antenna.nl/aseed/, www.anarchyaction.co.uk, www.schnews.com/guide.htm

Italy

There was an anti-militarist demonstration organised by anti-authoritarians in the port of La Spezia, not far from Genoa, in January. Among the 5,000 participants were the USI sections established in the region (sister organisations to the Solidarity Federation in Britain), the "Comitato di Intervento dell'USI-AIT contro la guerra" (USI-AIT Committee against the War). The march passed the principal military sites of the city, including the Navy barracks, the military courthouse, the Admiralty and the arsenal. At the end of the demo, the local Food Not Bombs groups distributed hot drinks, and, in the evening, there was a concert at a local social centre.

See photos at: http://italy.indymedia.org/news/2003/01/161677.php

Kenya

A wave of strikes swept across the country in February, as thousands of workers downed tools to voice grievances over exploitation by employers and non-payment of salary arrears. There were strikes in the capital city, Nairobi, involving Coca Cola distributors at the Nairobi Bottlers Limited plant and the Basco Paints factory.

About 700 workers within the city's Export Promotion Zone (EPZ) were dismissed following strikes and demonstrations that rocked the establishment for two weeks. In Nakuru, over 3,000 workers of Spin Knit Limited and Sunny Auto Spares downed their tools early each morning, paralysing operations. Elsewhere in Kilifi, the Coast Province, 1,300 workers at Umoja Rubber Company also walked out.

Coke 'n' Pepsi: Vandalising the Himalayas

India

International soft-drink rivals Pepsi and Coke are spending millions of rupees on a marketing war in the mammoth Indian market. They have bought the biggest Hindi film stars into endorsing their products - and prominent cricketers have also been roped in. The Coke-Pepsi rivalry is such that nearly every shop, bus-stop stall and roadside eatery has been annexed into the one or the other's empire. Each humungo-national™ company marks its territory in either the bright red or the blue colour that is associated with the two brands.

Until last September, the two were dug in and pitted against each other in trench warfare all along the winding mountain road from Manali to the 4,000-metre-high Rohtang Pass in Himachal Pradesh, northern India. People stream up daily to see the ice-clad pass above the beautiful evergreen forests. With an average of 4 to 5 ads per kilometre either painted on rock faces or nailed onto trees on the mountainsides, the environmental impact of this war is becoming intolerable; the billboards have caused an eyesore along the entire 56km stretch.

Now, India's Supreme Court has put a stop to the advertising, and hauled up 41 companies, the most prominent being Coke, Pepsi, and a Delhi-based publishing house, for flouting India's Forest Conservation Act 1980. The intervention brought to the notice of the Supreme Court the painting of huge Pepsi and Coke logos on rocks that has "destroyed geological evidence dating back 45 million years." The Supreme Court ruling went on in suitably evocative style: "Geologists understand the geology of the area by studying and observing rocky outcrops. If the area has been painted over, they cannot do research. There is moss that grows on these rocks, then there are innumerable species of micro-organisms. All that is completely destroyed when the rock surface is painted."

Bolivia: Protests Rock Government

At least 20 people died in January, during clashes between protesters and the police that threatened to destabilise the six-month-old government of President Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada. Campesinos, labourers, transportation workers and pensioners staged protests throughout the country demanding a better quality of life.

58% of Bolivia's 8 million people live in poverty, and when the president took office last August, he promised to pull Bolivia out of the recession that has battered the economy since 1999. He also pledged to create thousands and thousands of jobs. After taking office, however, he called on Bolivians to unite against the economic crisis, and announced a program that would put unemployed Bolivians to work on public construction projects. He also announced the re-establishment of Bonosol, a monthly solidarity voucher of US$240 for people over 65, and universal health coverage for pregnant women and children under five. Good news? Not quite; in order to fund this move, he raided state-controlled workers' retirement funds.

The anarcho-syndicalist Bolivian Workers Central (COB), MAS and NFR appealed the decision to the Constitutional Tribunal, arguing that the government could not appropriate people's funds in this way. Despite the case being in progress, the government went ahead with their plan.

At the same time, a roadblock action was organised by coca growers to pressure the government to suspend the forced eradication of coca crops and expand the area for legal coca cultivation (for traditional, legal uses) from 12,000 to 30,000 hectares.

Meanwhile, about 300,000 bus drivers went on strike nationwide to protest about vehicle insurance increases. On the same day, about 7,000 soldiers, hundreds of police, tanks and helicopters moved into Chapare, while 6,000 pensioners gathered in the village of Patacamaya, 100 kilometres from La Paz, and began a march to the capital to protest against a law that pegs their pensions to inflation rather than to the US dollar. A few days later, the 10,000 marchers stopped in Calamarca, a two-day walk from La Paz, where they blocked the highway and threatened to launch a hunger strike. The next day, hundreds of coca producers began protests in Chapare, blocking the main highway between the departments of Cochabamba and Santa Cruz. Two civilians were killed in clashes between protesters and security forces.

Police then moved in to quell the pensioners' protest in Calamarca. Hundreds of police and soldiers tied the hands of several thousand demonstrators and loaded them onto 50 buses to remove them from the scene of the protests. Twelve pensioners died when one of the buses struck another vehicle head-on on the road to Oruro. When they heard that two of the accident victims had been at the Huanuni mine, workers from the mine decided to march to Oruro in solidarity. Government officials ordered soldiers and tanks to the mine, and one worker was killed in a clash between the soldiers and miners. At least five people were killed in other confrontations. Within days, the government agreed to peg pensions to the US dollar - at least for this year.

HEALTH & SAFETY

ENFORCEMENT
THE WEAKEST LINK

US: Work Kills

On February 1st, space shuttle Columbia disintegrated, and the media was full of mass grieving and the distraught families. It was indeed a sad occasion, but another 120 Americans died at work during the same week, and this figure does not include the 165 people who die every day of work-related disease. On average, 18 people die in the workplace every single day. Some never even seem to have names, because the names are withheld until the next-of-kin is notified, and by the time that happens, the media has lost interest.

A fund has been set up for the children of the astronauts. Here's a mention of some of the other people who died during the same week; the ones whose children won't get college funds, the ones who won't get a speech by the President, or even their picture in the local newspaper (see box).

Zarco's chest was crushed, as a result of operating heavy equipment at the plant.

Dwayne Fernandez, 33, of Hampton Bays, killed in a fall from a cell phone tower.

Mustafa Boyraz, 34, from Annandale, VA, crushed to death Jan 27 when a granite slab fell on him at a company in the Merrifield area of Fairfax County.

A mechanic was killed January 22, in Charlotte, NC, when a dump truck he was working on fell on him.

Two teenage Mexican brothers, Rigoberto and Moses Xaca Sandoval, 15 and 16 respectively, killed when an 8-foot deep trench they were working in collapsed.

George Wyrembelski, 49, from Brownstown, MI, killed at a steel plant in Ecorse after chunks of ice crashed through a roof and struck him.

John Black, a road worker from Wapanucka, OK, killed while co-workers were trying to pull his road grader out of a ditch.

Clyde Harmon, 23, of Cleveland, killed when he stepped into the propeller of a small plane idling at Burke Lakefront Airport.

Trinidad

Following a government announcement to force restructuring and job losses at the main sugar plant, a sea of red shirts and cane stalks gathered, as over 1,000 Caroni workers gathered outside Whitehall, Port of Spain. Rudy Indarsingh, a local trade union activist, declared; "The government has to understand the dynamics of the sugar industry and what it means to the people of South and Central Trinidad. If it is social chaos they want, then they'll get it. Today, there is a total shutdown of Caroni". Hundreds of Caroni workers made their way onto the grounds of the Queen's Park Savannah.

Brazil

Confectioners without Borders have struck again. This time, they chose a Worker's Party press conference in Porto Alegre: and it was a pie in the face for Jose Genoino, the president of the Workers' Party.

Here's what they had to say (translated): "We oppose the confusion promoted by the Workers' Party that wishes to make us believe that our movement can be incarnated in some sort of government. The wave that brings the Workers' Party electoral success is not the same wave that builds the movement against capitalist globalisation. Our movement is self-managed and self-reliant, without leaders or representatives.

The hope for change that we carry cannot be frustrated by politicians and political parties that wish to promote themselves at our expense. This time we are going to do things differently. In the spirit of Larry, Curly and Moe, we greet the politician Jose Genoino. A world without leaders is possible!"

Greece

15,000 people gathered for the march against the meeting of EU Labour Ministers in Nauplio in the last week in January. Amongst them, a sizeable libertarian (anarchist) block of some 600 people made themselves heard loud and clear.

http://istanbul.indymedia.org/news/2003/01/64.php for photos and info.

Ireland

On 29th January, Irish activist Mary Kelly entered Shannon airport and attacked a US navy war plane with a hatchet. She did over £500,000 worth of damage and the plane is now grounded, awaiting repairs. Mary is now in Limerick prison, as she refused to accept repressive bail conditions that would have banned her from County Clare. For more info and to follow Mary's case, visit www.indymedia.ie

This is the sixth successful direct action at Shannon in the last year and the second in which a US military plane was damaged. The largest event so far was back in last October, when 150 people broke down part of the perimeter fence and then entered the airfield.

See http://struggle.ws/wsm/news/2002/shannonOCT.html for reports & photos.

Nicaragua

Over the past 25 years, 103 former banana workers and their children have died, and 22,000 have become seriously ill following regular contact with DBCP (dibromochloropropane), also known as "Nemagon". Problems include high cancer rates, birth defects, sterility and skin diseases. In neighbouring Costa Rica, thousands of male workers have become infertile, and women have suffered sterility, birth defects, increased cases of spontaneous abortion, and breast and uterine cancer.

DBCP was banned in the US in 1977. However, its use continued in banana plantations throughout Central America during the 1980s. Legal battles are still being fought against the banana companies that used the substance – Dole, Chiquita and Del Monte – and the companies responsible for producing it – Dow, Shell and Occidental. Imposing the use of a banned toxic product on workers is a clear example of the flagrant abuse of human rights by multinational companies.

In Nicaragua, a judge has ordered three US companies (Dow Chemical, Shell Oil and Standard Fruit Company) to pay US$490 million to banana workers affected by the use of pesticide. This followed the application of the new Law 364, allowing those affected by the use of pesticides to sue multinationals. However, since the ruling, Dow Chemicals have released a statement saying they do not recognise Nicaraguan law. Dole have gone further, by directly threatening the affected workers and saying that no negotiations will take place unless Law 364 is entirely excluded. The battle for compensation will now continue through the US courts, where the multinationals are based. It may take several months to several years before the banana workers actually receive compensation.

You can write letters about the pending court cases, Nicaraguan Law 364, compensation for the affected workers, and the disgusting practice of using chemicals known to cause damage to workers' health:
For DOW, write to: William S. Stavropoulos, President, The Dow Chemical Company, 2030 Dow Center, Midland, Michigan 48642, US.
For DOLE, write to: CEO - David Murdock, The Dole Food Company Inc, Dole World Headquarters, 1 Dole Drive, Westlake Village 91361, California, US.
Please send a copy of your correspondence to: CAWN, c/o OWA, Bradley Close, White Lion St, London N1 9PF.
Email: cawn@gn.apc.org

South Africa

Thousands of poor people getting evicted from their homes; water and electricity supplies cut-off; live ammunition fired at the protesting poor … welcome to the new South Africa!

Poor people across the country are getting a brutal taste of neo-liberalism, as the ANC government continues to open up its economy to 'market forces'. This has seen public services being handed over to western multinationals that cut jobs and raise prices. One multinational, Suez Lyonnaise, is now the owner of South Africa's water utilities – and has hiked water rates for the urban poor. The ANC government once promised cheap water, electricity, housing, health care and education, but broken promises are all that is left after they sold off the country to western multinationals.

Now, South Africa's poor have erupted like a burst water pipe. Organisations such as the Anti-Privatisation Forum and the Anti-Evictions Campaign have sprung up in defence of the basic human right to water, warmth and shelter. Last year, 87 people from Soweto, including pensioners and children, were arrested on charges of public violence, malicious damage and assault. They had gone to the ANC Mayor of Johannesburg's house to show what it was like to have your water and electricity cut off. His bodyguard didn't reckon it was funny and shot at them with live bullets. The activists reacted badly, as one does when shot at.

At the trial of the 'Kensington 87' in January, the mayor's bodyguard was unable to explain how two protestors were wounded by his bullets, if he only fired warning shots into the air. Meanwhile, protests in Cape Town continue, with hundreds of residents, led by the Mandela Park Anti-Eviction Campaign, demanding free electricity.
More info. www.antieviction.org.za and www.southafrica.indymedia.org

El Salvador

In January, thousands of demonstrators began keeping a constant picket outside the cathedral in downtown San Salvador. 20 health care activists had locked themselves inside in a defiant act of protest against privatisation of El Salvador's health care system. The action is the latest in a series of protests against the privatisation of health care in El Salvador. One of the longest-running of these is the strike by doctors and health care workers that, as DA goes to press, is entering its 4th month.

Greece II

Over 500 people participated in the demonstration called by the Anarchists' Assembly against the Koridallos prison. Marching under the slogan "Freedom to all prisoners", the demo followed discussions on 29th and 30th January organised by Anarchists' Assembly at the Polytechnic School. Fired up after talking and film showings focusing on state terrorism, new repressive attacks and prison conditions, the people took to the streets.
See photos and poster at http://www.thessaloniki.indymedia.org/poreia_korudallou/ and http://www.geocities.com/anar_gr2/gr/af_2mero.htm

Czech Republic

Tram drivers in Prague went on strike for the first time ever at the beginning of February, demanding their wages be brought to the same level as those of bus and metro drivers. Their employer published a "study" bringing out the differences between driving trams and driving buses. The study highlighted the fact that tram drivers do not need a driving license to drive trams, so they are not drivers. Well, as they are not drivers, they couldn't drive the trams, and hence they went on strike on February 3rd. Tram stations were under the strikers' control and, although part-time drivers were called to work, only half the trams were moving through the streets of Prague.

The spat between the city's transportation company and its tram drivers cost the company Kc7 million (US$240,000), which would have covered the pay rises demanded by the drivers' union for almost two years. Instead, the company said it would sue the drivers for staging what it claimed was an 'illegal' strike(!) Meanwhile, the drivers are thinking of bringing assault charges after several were injured in scuffles with police and private security.
More strikes are likely to follow. Updates at http://www.labourstart.org/

Hollow Victories: Venezuela

As recent *DA* coverage shows, Latin America is bearing its 'fair' share of free market madness and modern imperialism. The more international capitalism strives for an ever tighter stranglehold over the global economy, the more the Latin American working class sinks into poverty. In *DA*24 we dealt with Plan Colombia, while *DA*25 covered the devastated Argentine economy.

Meanwhile, in Venezuela, the world's fifth largest oil producer, the regime of Hugo Chávez has recently survived a two-month long general strike called by an alliance of bosses, opposition politicians and CTV union bureaucrats. Here, we look behind these events from the point of view of the Venezuelan anarchist organisation *Comisión de Relaciones Anarquistas* (CRA), which has close links with the IWA. The CRA/***El Libertario*** web site (http://www.nodo50.org/ellibertario) reports on what is happening, far from the hysteria of both sides. Unlike much in the alternative media, including reports circulated on A-Infos and other anarchist lists, CRA does not unquestioningly support Chávez and his 'Bolivarian' movement. They rejected the strike called by the bosses and the CTV, but they do not support the Chávez regime, which they view as having committed the same crimes and mistakes that it claims to combat.

In Venezuela, upwards of two thirds of the population languish below the poverty line, while wealth from oil exports has lined the pockets of a corrupt elite throughout the last half of the last century. Then, in 1999, elections brought Chávez to power on the back of promises of wealth redistribution. But the reality is that little has changed. The much-vaunted Bolivarian 'Process', with political and judicial change, with a new constitution and new institutional structure supposedly leading to social and economic change, has failed. Instead, it soon gave way to the same old corruption, party-line sectarianism, blind obedience to leaders, and demagogic treatment of the masses. In socio-economic terms, little separates this regime from previous administrations – only now it is a different set of corrupt officials, for the most part Chávez' military colleagues, who benefit from the oil wealth. Contrary to claims of many on the left, this regime has not strayed from the dictates of the US Empire, a fact accepted by the IMF and World Bank, and demonstrated by the concession of one of the main natural gas reserves to a number of European and North American oil companies. In fact, the opposition has complained of the pro-Chávez approach of the last three American ambassadors.

This opposition to Chávez is a mixture of bosses' organisations (Fedecamaras), a coalition of neoliberal, social and christian democrat parties (Coordinadora Democrática), and CTV union bureaucrats worried about being replaced by government supporters. Among these groups are to be found former Chávez followers (some ideologically motivated, most wanting more spoils); the bourgeoisie excluded from the select group of a few civilians and many military officers who reap the oil profits, and a wide array of petty-bourgeoisie frightened by Chávez' pseudo-leftist discourse and the distorted picture portrayed by the media.

This alliance of bosses, opposition politicians and union bureaucrats, cut off by Chávez from the loot to be had from the oil revenue, has resorted to a fuzzy, racist rage against a brown skinned man who won't share with them, and who brags of his popularity among all the other, impoverished brown skinned folks. Their hysteria has resulted only in a second wave of support for Chávez, since many feel it's their duty to back anyone so hated by those who have always despised the rabble. As the opposition says, most people undoubtedly oppose the current administration, but government supporters reply (rightly) that even more people oppose going back to what went before. In fact, some of the opposition only want to replace Chávez with their own Messiah-in-a-uniform. Such a faction carried out the failed coup of April last year. However, the Army is happy to be the government's main life support as well as the main beneficiary from corruption.

Mass mistrust and the well-founded suspicion that there is little or no difference between the Chávez regime and its opponents has been exposed electorally ever since 1998. The government's victories have never represented more than 30% of the voters, while the opposition have barely managed to exceed 20%. Moreover, the recent demonstrations by both sides during the general strike showed no evidence of any significant change in these figures. Those such as the CRA who propose radical social change are confronted with the enormous task of mobilising this passive scepticism towards the creation of a new choice built upon freedom, equality and solidarity. Today's disillusionment stems from a rejection of would-be representatives. The challenge is to spread the idea that the community doesn't need representatives to make its own decisions and to build new structures for self-management and direct action.

At present, the anarchists are on the list of counterrevolutionaries that Chávez supporters have been circulating on the internet.

If the current situation were truly a revolution – even if only Marxist – there would be a need for a different anarchist approach... But what Venezuela has now is just more of the same corrupt, elitist and arrogant system there has always been.

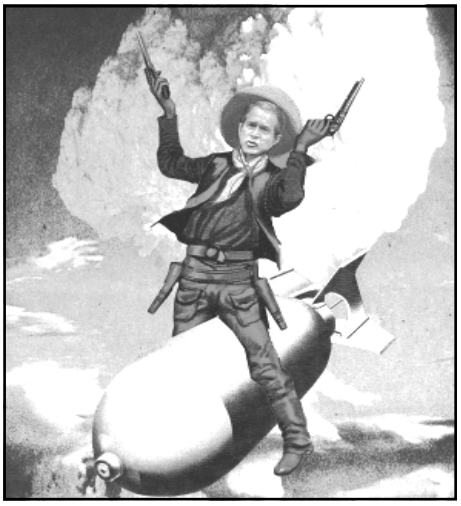
Nevertheless, CRA continues to try to forge links with various other groups who want to slowly but steadily build an alternative to both sides. Dissatisfaction with the regime is legitimate, but CRA urge against allowing that anger to be used by others for their own ends. They criticise the Chávez bureaucracy, but not the grassroots membership of the chavist movement, and argue for two values – autonomy and self-management.

After the coup last year, radical sections of 'Bolivarismo' believed that the time had come to radicalise the 'revolution', but they were stopped from doing so by orders from above. Most Chávez supporters want to see real change, but appear to believe the line that it's not possible because of the destabilisation promoted by the 'saboteurs behind the coup'. So they excuse the government's errors and, worse, they try to silence any criticism. The moderate sections of 'chavismo', the PPT, MAS and MVR parties, occupy all of the ministries, and meantime the grassroots sections continue to abandon their own demands in favour of the 'defence of the revolution'. However, many are already getting fed up with purely being government cannon fodder. For instance, the Chávez supporters at the university (Universidad Central de Venezuela), at one time very active in organising many occupations, were ordered to only carry out street actions defending Chávez. It is the same in local communities and elsewhere. With the grassroots, then, there is the possibility that when people begin to recognise what the state bureaucracy means, then anarchists can make some inroads. Already, there are documents circulating that are beginning to question the (Bolivarian) 'Process'.

Chavismo has never involved taking over the economy – for instance, there have been no factory occupations. On one hand, there's no union organisation that agitates for this and, on the other, Chávez has declared the 'inviolability of private property'. The 'chavist' movement contains those such as the 'Círculos Bolivarianos', who have the best of intentions, and who carry out much grassroots activity, but it also contains many more who see the so-called 'revolution' as a nice little earner. As for the trade unions, the CTV is a rotten organisation, but to substitute it requires short-, medium- and long-term strategies, to educate people about the vision of a different unionism, to organise alternative unions, and to spread a programme. But chavism only aims to overthrow the CTV leadership – and when they tried this by organising union elections, they lost.

With the likelihood of elections as a compromise way out of the current political problems, it is possible that the most radical sector of the chavist movement may go their own way. But they might also be seduced again with the call to 'defeat the coup with votes' and the promise to start afresh. If elections were held tomorrow, Chávez would very probably win again, firstly because the opposition doesn't have a reliable leader; secondly, their arguments do not connect with the people; thirdly, a notion shared by many people is that 'I prefer Chávez to going back to the past'.

CRA sees it as necessary to continue to build an alternative to the present system. If the current situation were truly a revolution – even if only a Marxist one – there would be a need for a different anarchist approach, one of criticism or confrontation, or even constructive engagement. But what Venezuela has now is just more of the same corrupt, elitist and arrogant system there has always been.



THE MADNESS O

MAD TO US, BUT HE HOPES A QUICK DEFEAT OF SADDAM WILL CUT THE UP A LOT OF EXPENSIVE WEAPONS, THUS BOOSTING THE ARMS I

There have been so many column inches in the mainstream and alternative media (including previous issues of DA) about the war and US imperialism, surely there is nothing else to add? In fact, much of the mainstream has become repetitive and boring in its war coverage. Deliberately or otherwise, this has resulted in stark realities being concealed. Here, short and direct, are original answers to 5 key questions.

Are Saddam's weapons really a major threat to 'global security'?

No-one seriously believes that the current war on Iraq is about combating terrorism and ending the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. No-one seriously believes that Saddam Hussein was behind the twin towers atrocity or poses any immediate threat to the US or Europe. The Iraq war is a lot about oil. Specifically, it is about ensuring, as Donald Rumsfield put it, that Iraqi oil is "liberated".

Iraq possesses the second largest proven oil reserves in the world after Saudi Arabia. It has proven reserves of 112 billion barrels; over a tenth of all known oil supplies. The control of Middle Eastern oil has been a strategic aim of western capitalism for the last 50 years – since oil is its lifeblood. With Russia out of the way, US military might is now setting about securing that aim. US control of Iraq will be the means by which the US will maintain long term control over Middle Eastern oil supplies.

Surely all this is not just about oil supplies to bottle-feed western capitalism?

The war is not just about the control of oil supplies; it is also about the straightforward profits to be gained from Iraqi oil. North Sea oil costs $3-4 per barrel to produce, whereas oil from Iraq costs as little as 97 cents per barrel. With oil selling at $30 a barrel, it all makes for a very (un)healthy profit margin. Although UN sanctions forbid foreigners from investing in oilfields, they have not stopped western oil companies lining up in the hope of exploiting the oil fields the minute sanctions are lifted.

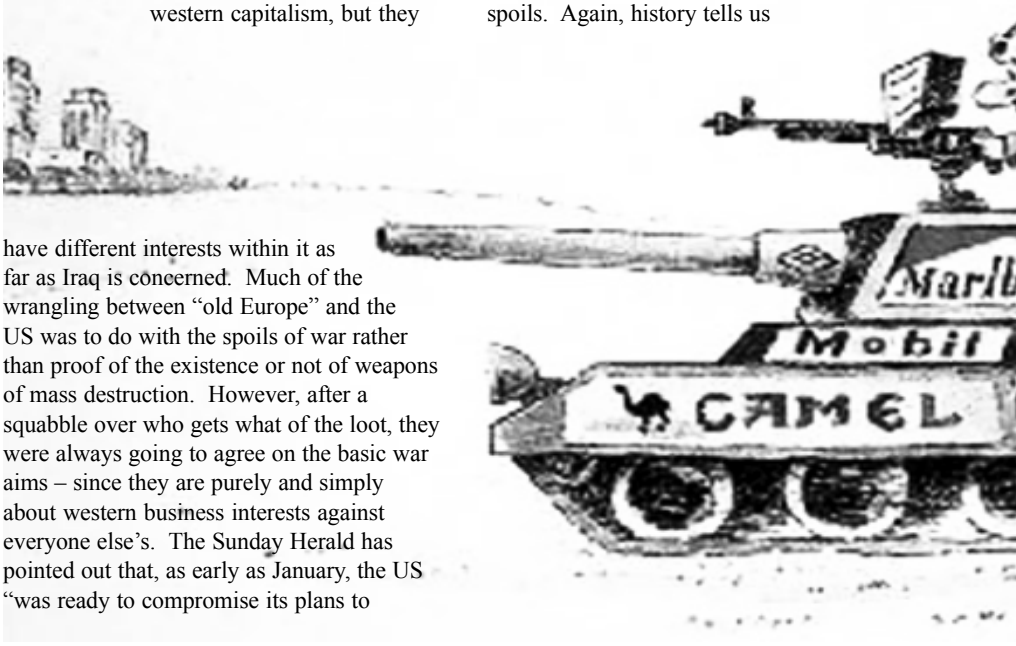
Oil companies from France, China and India have signed deals, as have firms from Russia. Lukoil, a Russian giant, has a holding of over 11 billion barrels, and plans to invest $4 billion over the lifetime of the fields. As "The Economist" remarks; "all this is bad news for those excluded from the party: the Americans." George Bush is an oil man like his daddy, as are many of his top advisers, including vice-president Dick Cheney. The thought of all those profits ending up in foreign oil companies bank accounts must have been enough to put George junior back on the black bottle. The best option, from the US oil multinationals' point of view, is to send in the troops and secure long term control and profits for them.

Why the wrangling between Europe and the US over what to do about Iraq?

Europe and the US both represent western capitalism, but they have different interests within it as far as Iraq is concerned. Much of the wrangling between "old Europe" and the US was to do with the spoils of war rather than proof of the existence or not of weapons of mass destruction. However, after a squabble over who gets what of the loot, they were always going to agree on the basic war aims – since they are purely and simply about western business interests against everyone else's. The Sunday Herald has pointed out that, as early as January, the US "was ready to compromise its plans to monopolise the post-war oil industry in Iraq using only US oil firms", and that it was looking increasingly likely that the US would "spread the spoils between US, French, Chinese and Russian companies".

It is understandable that George junior doesn't want to hand over some of the profits. After all, most of the $100 billion war bill has been footed by the US, so why shouldn't US oil companies steal all the proceeds? However, even this twisted logic does not explain why US society has to pay for the war through taxes, yet a few big US companies will get the rewards in oil. The double irony is that the US state is helping out US capitalism, both militarily and financially, through what is effectively massive state subsidy.

Throughout history, imperial powers have spent fortunes on wars of conquest and subjugation on behalf of the rich and powerful. It must stick in the throat of 'Dallas' George and his cronies that, after spending so much US taxpayers' money, they have to listen to Blair harping on about sharing out the spoils with ex-commies and pinko Europeans. Cometh the post-war peace, the US will be sorely tempted to renege on all its promises and keep the spoils. Again, history tells us



OF KING GEORGE

PRICE OF OIL AND KICKSTART THE GLOBAL ECONOMY. IT WILL ALSO USE
NDUSTRY - A MAJOR INPUT TO US AND UK ECONOMIC ACTIVITY.

such behaviour is the norm for imperial powers.

So it is all about oil, then?

Actually, there are wider gains to be had from the war as far as western big business is concerned. Not least, war can always be relied on to boost a flagging world economy. The war is just as much a strategy for economic recovery as it is a fight to secure western oil. It is hoped that a quick defeat of Saddam will cut the price of oil and kickstart the global economy. It will also use up a lot of expensive weapons, thus boosting the arms industry, which is a major input to US and UK economic activity. It will also boost the stock exchanges and stop the slide of the dollar, and thus help restore investor confidence. Perhaps most importantly for King George, this should be enough to re-affirm US supremacy as the world's top imperial power block.

The rift between "old Europe" and the US has a wider dimension than oil spoils; it is about the rapid expansion of US imperialism. In the early 1990s, Germany sought to expand the European Union (EU) eastwards. This might extend German power, shifting the epicentre of the EU into Germanic central European cities, especially Berlin. After the experience of the Second World War, France has always been fearful of German power, so, France only accepted EU enlargement in return for Germany diluting its sovereignty by accepting greater integration into a unified Europe.

What started out as a means by which France could control growing German power, quickly turned into a vision of the creation of a United States of Europe, capable of challenging the economic might of the US. The idea of a common currency was born, quickly followed by a common foreign and security policy, through which the new imperial power of Europe could pursue its interests.

The war in Iraq has exposed the weakness of this European dream, for though the expanding EU has the economic power to equal and probably outstrip the US, it has yet to develop the same military and political power. Faced with the military might of a rampant US, determined to pursue its interests, Europe has looked divided and weak. Further, the war with Iraq has exposed the alternative visions of European powers. Germany is keen to see the EU start to plough its own furrow and take on the US, while countries like France are more suspicious of German power and instead they look to the US, the country they see as liberating them from communist oppression. Their vision of Europe is that of junior partner to US military leadership. At the head of this group is the Blair government. Labour's Third Way is emerging as little more than a toned-down version of Thatcherism. As such, it hopes to extend the Bush-Britain 'special relationship' to the rest of Europe to create a new power-sharing US-EU economic block under the military control of NATO.

When will the war be over?

The Iraqi war has brought the new world order into ever-sharper focus. As capitalism adjusts to the post-Soviet world, the US is increasingly flexing its military muscle. Partly opposed to this are the imperial 'wannabes' of Europe. Although the war has exposed the weakness of European aspirations in the short term, in the longer term, it may have strengthened it. Given the opposition to the war across Europe and the arrogance of the Bush government, there is likely to be growing support for European independence from the US. This will favour future attempts at building independent European military capabilities.

We live in dangerous times, as post-Soviet global capitalism returns to its pre-Soviet era pattern of imperial brutalism and constant crisis. The new world order is based on military might as the means of enriching the powerful at the expense of the poor. The only way of overcoming such military power is through unleashing the economic power of the working class. The idea of the social general strike as a tool against capitalism is now more relevant than it has ever been, a fact reflected in the growing calls for strike action in the face of growing capitalist aggression. The 'Iraq war' is actually a battle, one being fought by western capitalism for western business interests. The war is about the continued existence of western capitalism itself; it will only end with the death of western capitalism. In other words, the war is on until we act and rid ourselves of it.

In Pursuit of Empire

The facts speak for themselves. In all the countless hours of "coverage" (i.e. propaganda) of the Bush administration's lies and deceit about Iraq, a simple and crucial fact is almost never addressed. For almost a century, US policy towards Iraq has been focused on taking control of its oil.

The roots of US intervention in Iraq lie in the aftermath of the First World War. Before this, it was the European powers that sought control over the region ruled by the Ottoman Empire. The discovery of oil at the end of the 19th Century made Iraq desirable. In 1904, when the British Navy shifted from coal to oil for its fleet, Britain sought direct control of the area. It already supplied 65% of the Mesopotamian market and controlled much of the trade in the region and, in March 1917, the British army took Baghdad. With the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in 1918, Arab lands were shared out among the Western powers – despite previous promises of independence after the war. Under the Sykes-Picot Agreement, the entire Middle East was carved up between France and Britain. France got Syria, Greater Lebanon and some of northern Iraq, while Britain got Iraq and Palestine.

The French and British argued over who would get Mosul province, in the north of present-day Iraq. According to the Sykes-Picot accord, it was part of the French "sphere of influence". However, the British were determined to add Mosul, this mainly Kurdish area, to its Iraq colony. Duly, the British army occupied Mosul four days after the Turkish surrender in October 1918. In 1921, the British decided to prevent Iraqi access to the Persian Gulf, so they simply drew a line across Southern Iraq, thus creating Kuwait.

Mass revolts broke out in the Mandated Territories, and the British brooked no dissent in their rule. Winston Churchill argued '*in favour of using poisoned gas against uncivilised tribes*' and, in 1925, they did just that, when planes dropped poison gas on the Kurdish town of Sulaimaniya in Iraq: the first time that gas was deployed in this way. In a counter-insurgency war against an emerging independence movement, whole villages were pulverised by artillery, suspected ringleaders shot without trial, and malicious weapons, such as phosphorus bombs, and metal crowsfeet, designed to maim livestock, were introduced.

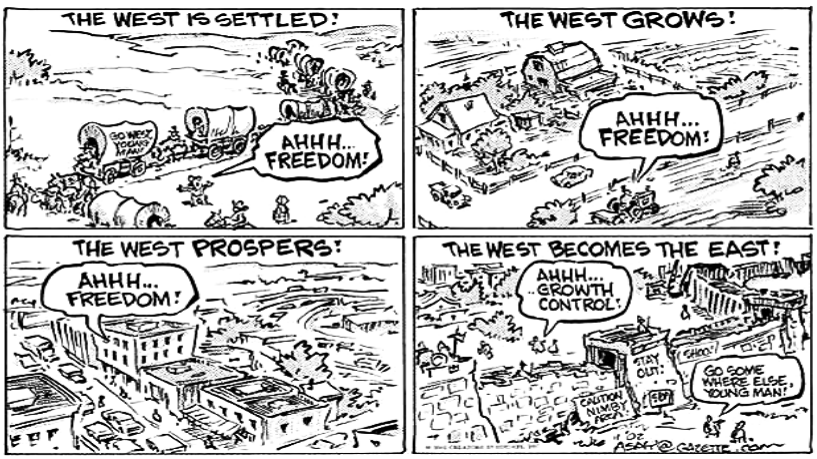
The US had not helped Britain and France in the First World War for nothing. Their conditions included various US post-war economic and political objectives, including access to new sources of raw materials, particularly oil. The importance of Mosul to the big powers was based on its known, but then largely undeveloped, oil resources. In the face of British-French domination of the region, the US first demanded an "Open Door" policy; i.e. that US oil companies should be allowed to freely negotiate contracts with the puppet monarchy of King Faisal, who was installed on the throne in 1921 by the British. The result of this was that Iraq's oil was split five ways: 23.75% each to Britain, France, Holland and the US, with the remaining 5% going to an oil baron named Caloste Gulbenkian, known as "Mr. Five-Percenter", who had helped negotiate the agreement.

In 1927, the huge deposits were confirmed in Mosul, and, within two years, the Iraqi Petroleum Company was set up, comprising of Anglo-Iranian (now called British Petroleum), Shell, Mobil and Standard Oil of New Jersey (Exxon). These went on to totally monopolise Iraqi oil production. During the same period, the al-Saud family, with Washington's backing, conquered much of the neighbouring Arabian Peninsula. Hence, Saudi Arabia came into being in the 1930s as a neo-colony of the US. The US embassy in Riyadh, the Saudi capital, was located in the ARAMCO (Arab American Oil Company) building.

In 1933, King Feisal I died and was succeeded by his son Ghazi I, whose nationalist sympathies made him the target of several attempted coups. In 1938, General Nuri al-Said seized power, aided by an army faction known as the Seven. The staunchly pro-British Nuri crushed all political dissent. In April 1939, Ghazi was killed in an automobile accident (some believe assassinated by the British), and was succeeded by his infant son Feisal II under a regent. In March 1940, the anti-British agitator Rashid al-Gilani became Prime Minister and saw a German victory in the Second World War as the way of ridding his country of British domination. On 28th April 1941, he signed a secret agreement with German and Italian forces in Baghdad. However, German support never materialised, and British troops soon reached Baghdad. Churchill cabled congratulations and noted that the '*immediate task is to get a friendly Government set up in Baghdad*' (some things don't change).

Churchill cabled congratulations and noted that the '*immediate task is to get a friendly Government set up in Baghdad*' (some things don't change).

Once again, post-war, the US wanted payback for its involvement, and the payback was the same as in the First World War; US economic and political objectives. This time, they wanted complete control of Middle East oil, and saw their chance, given the greatly weakened British Empire. In the latter stages of the Second World War, the Roosevelt and Truman administrations, dominated by big banking, oil and other corporate interests, had been planning a restructured post-war world to



ensure the dominant position of the United States. The key elements in their strategy were: 1) US military superiority in nuclear and conventional weaponry; 2) US-dominated corporate globalisation, using the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, created in 1944, and the establishment of the dollar as the world currency; and 3) Control of global resources and, particularly, oil. The US leaders were so intent on taking over Iran and Iraq that alarm bells rang in British ruling circles - but there was nothing they could do. Within a few years, the British ruling class had adapted to the new reality, and accepted its new role as the US's junior partner.

The US had made it clear that it would give substantial aid to any Middle Eastern state that would toe the US line. With the oil industry flourishing, profits were being invested in ambitious national projects. Iraq – like many Third World nations in the Cold War era – was forced to choose between Western powers and the Soviet Union. In 1953, following the CIA coup that put the Shah (king), in power, the US took control of Iran. By the mid-1950s, Iraq was jointly controlled by the US and Britain. Washington set up the Baghdad Pact in 1955, which included their client regimes in Pakistan, Iran, Turkey and Iraq, along with Britain. The Baghdad Pact, or CENTO-Central Treaty Organization, had two purposes; the main one being to oppose the rise of National liberation movements in the Middle East and south Asia. The second was to act as a military alliance, mirroring NATO, to oppose the Marxist regimes of Russia and China.

In 1958, King Feisal, his son, and General Nuri Al Said died in a coup led by the Iraqi army. Brigadier Abd al-Karim Kassem was named Prime Minister and Commander-in-Chief. 20,000 US Marines were immediately landed in Lebanon and 6,600 British paratroopers were dropped into Jordan. While another upheaval that took place just six months later in Cuba is better remembered today, Washington regarded the events in Iraq as far more threatening to its interests at the time. In 1963, Kassem himself fell victim to a military coup when he was shot and replaced by General Aref, who in turn was exiled in a bloodless coup in 1968 and replaced by General Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr. Open hostilities with the Kurds broke out in 1974, but the US, who provided them with weapons, failed to come to their aid when Iraq unleashed a massive attack.

In July 1979, the Ba'ath Party came to power, and Saddam Hussein became President. The continuing dispute in the south with Iran over the Shatt Al-Arab waterway led to the Iran-Iraq War. The US domination of Iran had been ended by the Islamic revolution in 1979, and both the US and the USSR assisted and armed Iraq. In reality though, the aim of the US in the Iran-Iraq war was to weaken both countries. Henry Kissinger revealed the real US attitude about the war when he stated, "*I hope they kill each other*." The Americans provided Iraq's air force with satellite photos of Iranian targets. At the same time, as the Iran-Contra scandal revealed, the US was sending anti-aircraft missiles to Iran. In a major atrocity, Iraq launched a poison gas attack on the Kurdish town of Halabja, in which 6,800 Kurds perished. It has been shown since that, although the US were fully aware that Iraq carried out the attack, they accused the Iranians of being responsible. More than a million people had died by the time the war ended in July 1988.

Iraq-Kuwait disputes over oil and land issues became increasingly tense, leading to the invasion of Kuwait by Iraqi forces and then the Gulf War. In July 1990, US Congress voted to impose sanctions against Iraq. An alliance of 33 nations launched a six-week long attack in which about 250,000 people died and much of Iraq's infrastructure was destroyed. Following this, there were uprisings among the Shi'a population in the south and the Kurds in the north, in the vain hope of Western military support. The Kurds were able to gain a UN-sanctioned 'safe haven' from Iraqi forces presided over by a US-enforced no-fly zone. The Shi'a revolt was brutally suppressed.

Twelve years of sanctions followed. More than a million deaths can be traced to their effects. The current US rhetoric is about "*weapons of mass destruction*" and "*human rights*." The reality is that Washington is neither concerned about Iraq's military capacity, which has actually been diminished, nor are they concerned about human rights anywhere in the world. What is moving US policy toward Iraq in 2002 is the same objective that motivated Washington 80 years ago - oil.

The US demanded to be allowed to negotiate contracts with the puppet King Faisal, who was installed on the throne in 1921 by the British.

The result of this was that Iraq's oil was split five ways: Britain, France, Holland and the US, with the remaining 5% going to an oil baron known as "Mr. Five-Percenter".

This article may seem a little negative, and maybe it is, but hey!, there are more positive ideas going on in this issue and, every now and then, it is okay to be a grumpy flump™. Freedom - the theme of this issue of DA is a much used and abused term. It's not just anarchosyndicalists, anarchists and assorted libertarians who look to freedom. Every political hue seems to have its own use for the term.

Abused beyond meaning?

The use and abuse of the f-word

It's a word that, let's face it, makes people sit up and say *'Sure! I want a bit of that'*, and assume that *'if they are for freedom, they can't be half bad, I'll give them my vote/subscription to the party/support'*. Now, here's the thing: if lots of people with widely varying positions are using the word, this creates a problem as to what they actually mean by 'freedom', and how the differing definitions relate to what anarchosyndicalists mean when we use the term.

Freedom from XY or Z

Part of the problem can be easily explained away (well, for the sake of this article, everyone is asked to at least assume it is easy). A common use of the word 'freedom' is its use as a positive against particular negatives: what is really meant is 'freedom *from* XY or Z'. In most cases, it is usually only the chosen self-defined 'decent' few who are going to be free from whatever is being constructed as a threat at any given time, be it burglary, drug addiction or bail hostels being opened next door to 'ordinary, law-abiding' people. Actually, the 'freedom from' usage is often more about defining those elements of society who are deemed by the chattering classes to be deserving or respectable against those who are not, than it is about 'freedom to'.

Example: Read Culpa - editor of a would-be middle market tabloid - will write an editorial about the absolutely appalling breakdown of decent, law abiding social values, and how decent upstanding nice people need freedom from the degeneracy they see all around them. What they mean is how horrible these people are, who are not like me/ I don't understand them/ don't want to understand them/am scared I may actually be like them/ why don't we ban/criminalise/ demonise them, and lock them all up?

The Tory (both Labour & Conservative varieties) cry for freedom - the freedom from fear of crime, is a fairly long standing stalwart of the authoritarian and the power/control hungry - whenever they need to appeal to the masses. Want someone to give you power? Promise to make their life safe from crime. No-one likes being burgled, mugged or worse, and very few people imagine that they would be the victim of a miscarriage of justice or a convenient scapegoat in a public relations exercise. So people are often happy, when politicians use scare tactics, to allow them to increase their power and the power of the state (e.g. recent Home Secretaries, Blunkett, Straw, Howard, Clarke, Baker, etc.).

The catch is, however, that in order to achieve freedom from fear of crime, the public have to agree to give up the right to silence, legal aid, disclosure of information by prosecutors, etc. If, as is currently popular with the Government, they replace crime with the word terrorism, then it seems we can waive any justification by the State for what it does, and neither do we have any protection from it. Now, there is no need to file charges, no need to provide contact with the outside, or advice, or legal representation, and no need for a pretence of justice, let alone getting a fair trial. When they get bored, they might release you, when they've hadthe fine media coverage for ensuring public security, and your innocence is yesterday's news and not remotely interesting.

Politicians talk about freedom from the nanny State. This is basically a ruse to allow themselves and their mates to make as much money as possible without anyone else coming in and imposing any humanity or other 'obstruction'.

Freedom from greed guilt

Another use/abuse of the term 'freedom' comes in disguise as a positive, when in fact it is just a variation of 'freedom from'. A lot of the time, politicians of right wing Tory tendencies talk about freedom from the nanny State. This is basically a ruse to allow themselves and their mates to make as much money as possible without anyone else coming in and imposing any humanity or other 'obstruction'. What they wish to be free from is anything that might interfere with their 'rights' to screw as much out of everything and everyone else as possible. Those who interfere with this process by asking for such unreasonable things such as not sacking people just because they are pregnant, have the temerity to ask for a tiny share in the profits they create in terms of a pay rise, become ill, want an occasional holiday, a safer working environment, reasonable flexibility in working hours, etc. are seen as an affront to the 'freedom' of market enterprise. Unsurprisingly, they never seem to see workers' rights to self-organisation as an essential freedom.

Freedom from any wits at all

Away from the party politicians seeking votes, others frequently look to the call of a freedom of some form or another. Even the openly authoritarian fascists, nazis and other far right thugs often seek what they call 'freedom'. Admittedly, the far right's idea of 'freedom' is usually freedom from whichever section of society they have decided is hampering them in some way. This is the section that they can lie about, spread misinformation about, and twist the truth about enough to scare people, and play on their worst prejudices, so that they - the 'freedom' fighters - can then come in as saviours and take over for the glorious future of whatever tin pot Führer they happen to be

For an anarcho-syndicalist construction of freedom, see SolFed's aims and principles, available from your friendly neighbourhood Local, or from; SF, PO Box 469, Preston PR1 8XF. Tel./Fax 01772 739724 Email; solfed@solfed.org.uk Check out writings on history and ideas of freedom in the History of Anarcho-syndicalism 24-unit course, downloadable at www.selfed.org.uk

following that month. The horrible part of it is, they are good at actually getting some people to swallow this bullshit – look at the demoralising successes of the BNP over the last months in neglected, deprived working class wards, where people are only too ready to be manipulated into believing that all of their problems are down to X, Y or Z.

Freedom from (bad) leaders

Moving on from the horror of the far right, groups on the left frequently also frequently slip the word 'freedom' into their everyday campaigns. Marxists, Leninists, Stalinists, Trotskyists and assorted leftists are big on freedom too, and again, it is usually freedom from some specific ill. Much like mainstream politicians, their chief solution appears to be to replace one set of leaders with another - usually themselves in the shape of The Party.

It is true to say that many of the aims of the left's 'freedom from' campaigns are laudable and frequently supported by anarchists with certain reservations. That is to say that the bit that is objectionable will be objectionable to both the parties and to the anarchist, and they will often come together to protest against such things. However, the solutions will usually be starkly different - it not being very libertarian to seek to replace one set of appalling leaders with a hopefully nominally nicer set. The many national liberation struggles, for example, were all prime examples of freedom from XY or Z campaigns, where anarchists have been and remain active in campaigns against dictatorships, but do not campaign to replace one dictatorship with another.

In addition to the usual use of the term 'freedom' by social democratic (and worse) politicians, many on the left see as their ultimate aim a form of libertarian communism similar to that envisaged by libertarians. In anarcho-syndicalism (and anarchism generally), the aims and means are integral; it is not possible to build a libertarian future by using authoritarian means. Quite how the hierarchical structures of the left parties and then the party state are supposed to lead to libertarian communism is never made clear by them, simply because it is a fallacy.

Those who tend to rise in hierarchical structures are those best at manipulating such structures for their own ends rather than for the social good - whatever their initial intentions. Thus, those who seek power will gain it ahead of those that do not. Moreover, those who seek power most ruthlessly and with least morals and scruples will be the most likely to gain it. So a party looking for power has to be ruthless and without morals to gain and maintain power (the goal being nothing, the movement everything). The structure becomes based on the gain and maintenance of power, and inconvenient things like ideals get forced out - ever wonder what all the New Labour types were learning in various lefty parties when younger? Importantly, the operation of political structures that are inherently hierarchical wipes out the possibility of them ever achieving the freedom represented by living in a peaceful, mutually respectful, co-operative and equally resourced society.

Freedom from responsibility

Amongst the libertarian current, there are as many interesting takes on 'freedom' as there are on 'anarchism'. Freedom to do whatever you like is one of the most frequently occurring *'s/he doesn't get it, does s/he?'* misunderstandings. The unrestricted freedom to do whatever you like whoever it affects is not freedom at all - it is a childish tantrum at being stopped from hitting the nice doggy with your stick. It is closely akin to the Tory ideal of being free from the 'restrictions' that force employers to treat workers as though they have rights. Human beings are social creatures; we live in societies where we interact with each other. If we are ever going to get along, it has to be recognised that doing whatever, whenever, without thought of the consequences to others, is going to lead to a break-down of any happy coexistence that can be found. An individualistic ideal of being free from all forms of societal constraints is the opposite of real freedom – and wipes out any chance of creating a better society.

Freedom from everything – *innit?*

'Freedom is just another word for nothing left to lose' – or so the song goes. Yes, believe it or not, there are those who really do believe that the ultimate freedom is lack of shelter, family, possessions and other necessities. There is a tendency – (no, really) - to romanticise about life on the streets. You've got no home, no job, so no worries, right? Well, if anybody who has ever claimed that homelessness is the ultimate freedom, I'm here to tell you that you couldn't be more wrong – finding food, shelter, getting health

(cont'd on page 25...)

***Freedom from life's basic needs? "Freedom is just another word for nothing left to lose"* – or so the song goes... There are those who really do believe that the ultimate freedom is lack of shelter, family, possessions and other necessities.**

Reclaim the words!

Democracy and freedom; the words have been abused for too long. We need to reclaim their true meaning. Too often, capitalism is disguised under a false cloak of 'democracy'. As if the pinnacle of democratic achievement is really having the choice between Tweedledee and Tweedledum as our elected masters every few years. Even if we take a closer look at just exactly what is on offer, there are so many holes in it that a child could argue it away (and they frequently do).

Britain has its parliamentary sham played out by actors dutifully reading their scripts, as they perform their parts with consummate ease, generation after generation. The practised lies and deceit are only partly hidden behind the painted-on smiles, sharp suits and expense account lifestyles, while the rest of us must get on and do as we're told, or else.

In today's mainstream media, capitalism and democracy are interchanged, as if they both mean much the same. Indeed, often, democracy is the word used when what is really meant is capitalism. This helps disguise capitalism's perpetual failure to achieve anything other than rich and poor, oppressed and oppressor, and the overfed and the starving. A politician's first function, as handmaiden to the capitalist system, is to ensure that capitalism survives and prospers and should be defended to the death, with all of our lives. At its grassroots, the party political system sucks in dissent, then smothers and suffocates it out of existence. For the truth is that capitalism cannot be voted away - if voting in this system changed anything, they would not let us do it! The slave of yesterday and the wage slave of today differ only in that we get to vote for our own personal oppressor, and we get to pay them for the privilege, as the government wins EVERY election. In short, the state controlled 'democracy' that we 'enjoy' is just a fake to draw us in and set us on the party political merry-go-round to nowhere. All the while, capitalism is set free to rampage where it will.

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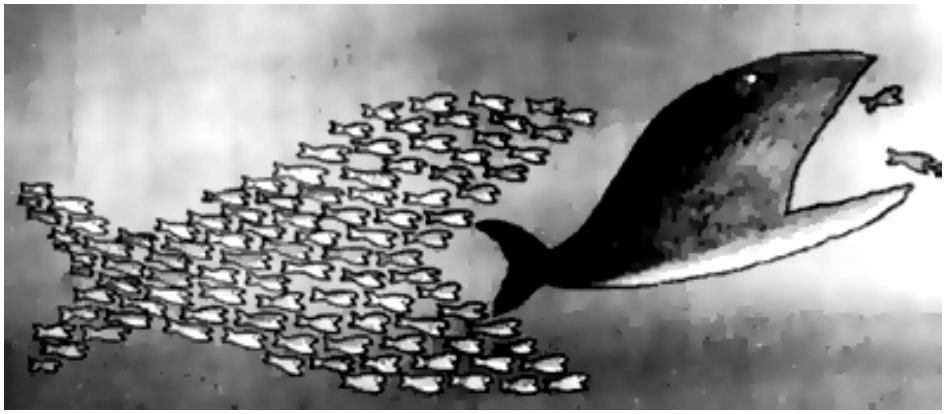
As Nicolas Walter says, in *About Anarchism:* 'Here the modern state resembles the medieval church. In the Middle Ages, the church was involved in all essential social activities, and it was difficult to believe that the activities were possible without it. Only the church could baptise, marry and bury people, and they had to learn that it did not actually control birth, love and death. Every public act needed an official religious blessing - many still have one - and people had to learn that the act was just as effective without the blessing. The church interfered in and often controlled those aspects of communal life, which are now dominated by the state. People have learnt to realise that the participation of the church is unnecessary and even harmful. What they now have to learn is that the domination of the state is equally pernicious and superfluous'.

The position of the political elite of today is ultimately guaranteed by the barrel of a gun. Sadly, these very guns are usually operated under orders by the working class. Anyway, the state's police, army and secret service (MI5, etc.) ensure that capital is always on top, and is never seriously challenged in any meaningful way. The whole fabric of today's society is interwoven with the sticky tentacles of the 'benevolent' sovereign 'democratic' state, which constantly looks to strangle effective dissent to capitalism. The notion that the 'democratic' state is somehow neutral is perpetuated at all times, although any scant reading of history will demolish this notion. Voting for them is to play their game, by their rules, which ensure that the government always gets in. So, what's the alternative?

electing corruption

When asked, "What is socialism?", an old socialist replied, "It's having your say". In reality, it should be having my say and having what I say taken into account; not only that, but it should be everyone else having their say taken into account. Electing someone to 'represent' me isn't good enough, for I need to understand the issues at hand for myself, so listening and discussion are a pre-requisite to deciding issues. Since we already have a 'representative' system, it is easy to observe how 'representatives' act. Once elected, my local MP, like the rest, basically just 'represents' themselves - all on the back of being 'democratically' elected.

Local councillors, and Members of various Parliaments claim to 'represent' me, on the basis that they are elected and I'm not. The fact that an election has been held seems clearly good enough for this disparate group of 'representatives', no matter how many bother to vote. "Democracy" is used to cover all sorts of fissures that appear in society. Time and again, mere use of the word effectively ends any further examination. The election itself is the very stick by which the whole



idea has been propped up and, by taking part, we help to ensure that nothing is going to change. Representatives who become our leaders thus become our enemies, for they operate to their interests, which do not coincide with ours. By not taking part in the state's attempt to cover itself with the flag of democracy, we ensure that we offer them no legitimacy. The more of us that ignore their elections, the more likely it is that the politicians will eventually start feeling exposed for the charlatans they are. Perhaps then, they'll realise it is not good enough, if all you can do is choose from a group of people who stand for the same anyway. All party political elections have been designed over generations to ensure that no effective change takes place and that those elected will play the capitalist game of subjugating the rest of us.

Poll Tax democracy

Back in 1990, people were clearly angry about the Poll Tax and wanted 'to have their say', so a few of us booked the local hall and printed off some leaflets calling a meeting. So many turned up that hundreds were left outside, and those inside were clearly up for something to happen. One of us stood up and explained that we had called the meeting so everyone could have their say. Many attempts were made by local party politicians to hi-jack proceedings, but it was eventually decided by everyone to march from one end of town to the other.

During the whole evening people freely had their say in the fraternal atmosphere that we all generated between us. Our collective anger became our collective determination to act for ourselves, because we had all been involved in some real democratic activity. The debate ranged wide as we all gained confidence from each other, not as a mob, but through a self belief that is all too often snuffed out in the working class as a consequence of constant passivity promoted by the current system.

When the Poll Tax march day arrived, it was a spectacle the like of which hadn't been seen in a long year. The place I live is an old Somerset pit village, so it surely has seen many a worker's boot in protest at poverty in the past. But, here were today's working class once again acting together, much to the absolute fear of the local bigs. Their response was predictable. Riot vans and police horses ensured that we had various fallen and injured amongst us by the end of the day. On the plus side, lots of townsfolk saw the 'heroes in blue' go berserk against us for having the cheek to get together and challenge their rule over us. We saw the fear in their eyes, and we saw the possibilties.

While the Poll Tax was defeated, of course, we didn't get a 'complete' victory. However, this example shows how we can operate democracy from us and for us, so that it is real, alive and meaningful. Decision-making can be difficult and time-consuming, but it is the important element of any democratic process. Without it, someone will become big brother one day. At our Poll Tax meeting everyone who wanted to, spoke; it was a long and very good-natured evening with a lot of opinions exchanged. The mass meeting's decision to march across town was eventually accepted by virtually every person, and it was clear to all that it was OUR decision, made by us all and after due deliberation.

Democracy is about more than just going to the voting booth every four or five years. It requires and deserves more attention. To do nothing is to allow the powerful to be powerful; being idle is a position in itself, so to have our say means some effort and responsibility is required. Our Poll Tax mass meeting brought together a large number of people who had at least three things in common; we all lived in the same town, we all hated the tax and we wanted to do something about it. That persistent feeling of powerlessness was shrugged off as we grasped at the potential power that a united group of people can generate. It was felt by the whole mass of people present. And to be present, even in these times of E-conferencing and Internet chat, is more important than ever. There is no substitute for face-to-face talk – it is true democracy in action.

Democracy is about more than just going to the voting booth every four or five years. It requires and deserves more attention. To do nothing is to allow the powerful to be powerful; being idle is a position in itself.

(cont'd from page 23...)

treatment and staying away from violence and threats are all pretty worrying, as anyone who has ever lived on the streets will tell you. Just because you have nothing that anyone could want from you, doesn't mean that there's nothing that can be taken from you - just ask the street children of various Latin American cities who are pursued by the State death squads. Having no material goods does not provide immunity from fear, hunger and ultimately, violent death – and certainly does not represent any recognisable definition of 'freedom' that I am familiar with.

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.

Obituary - Clem Turff

Sheffield SF member Clem Turff has died at home. As you may know, he had been having health problems. His funeral was on Tuesday 28th January, and comrades from Sheffield SF attended to pay respects and share memories with his family, friends and mutual activists. Clem was the first National Secretary of the DAM, and he remained a committed anarcho-syndicalist and IWA stalwart throughout.

In the 1980s and 1990s, he got involved in environmental campaigns and the Poll Tax (through which he was unfortunately brutalised by the police - an event which contributed to his illness in later life). He also was involved in local campaigns around Derby - he was a founder member of the Bass Rec Campaign and was a tireless supporter of other local campaigns, ranging from roads and quarries to casualisation. Clem was a keen ecologist, and started the wildlife survey on the Rec, which contributed towards info collected for the Derby City Bio-Diversity Report. This was passed on to the Natural History Section of Derby Museum. It was because of that survey that we were alerted to the presence of the European Crayfish in the Mill Fleam, which made the whole area so much more important in natural history terms and helped save it. He was the first to spot the kingfishers nesting there.

Throughout our friendship, his unflagging optimism bolstered us all, even in moments of despair, when times were hardest. As his friend Dorothy said, "He will be sorely missed, the miserable old anarchist."

Sheffield SF.

Another regime change is possible

Dear comrades,

I appreciated your analysis of SWP support for Palestinian State (DA24). 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, as well as the NSDAP. Our program, based on economic equality and its concomitant, an end to all privately owned motor transport, will liberate humanity from elitist meritocracies, racism, nationalism and all forms of economic differentials.

AR

Dear DA,

I'm really excited by George Bush's latest reason for bombing Iraq: he's run out of patience. And so have I! For some time now, I've been really pis*ed off with Mr Johnson, who lives a couple of doors down the street. I'm sure he is planning something nasty, but so far I haven't been able to discover what. I've been round to his place a few times to see what he's up to, but he's got everything well hidden. That's how devious he is. That's why I want to blow up Mr Johnson's garage and kill his wife and children. Strike first! That'll teach him a lesson, then he'll leave us in peace. Mr. Snip

Reclaiming our past

Dear Direct Action,

I'm starting a project on 'Anarchism in the north east of England, 1945-1995' for a North East Labour History Society project that will hopefully become a chapter in a book next autumn. If anyone can help me with this in any way, I'd like to hear from them: PO Box ITA, Newcastle NE99 ITA. Email: paletinyo@yahoo.co.uk

Obviously, before anything goes to the publishers, I'll anonymise contributions, etc., (if that's what contributors want). There is too little attention paid to the British anarchist movement by historians, especially in the post-war period, and I'd appreciate any help in an attempt to at least begin to rectify this. In solidarity, Lewis

Bakuninism or bullshit?

Dear DA,

It is a pity the author of the article *21st Century Bakuninism* (DA25) didn't confine the article to discussing what role, if any, violence should play within anti-globalisation. This would have contributed to the debate over the aims and tactics of the emerging movement. Instead, much of it warns of the dangers that Bakunin's ideas pose to anti-globalisation, especially his alleged advocacy of what the author calls "anti-social" violence. Sadly, it never gets around to explaining just what is meant by "anti-social", let alone what is meant by the "positive violence" favoured by the author.

Things get even more vague over what the author calls "Bakuninism", which seems to be all about supporting "anti-social" violence for political ends. Just how the ideas of Bakunin manage to cast their long shadow of violence over the anti-globalisation movement today is also unclear, given that in the same article, the author argues that he is a "forgotten man", even in anarchist circles. Further, the author argues that, although the anti-globalisation movement in Britain is rooted in anarchism, this is not "always , or even often acknowledged". To back up the assertion that anti-globalisation is rooted in anarchism, the article quotes some academic who argues that anarchism's flaws consist of "partial narrative, inchoate organisation, a naïve utopianism, micropolitics, and a preference for spectacle and gesture over long-term strategy". To what extent the globalisation movement is influenced by anarchism is open to debate - but if it is, let us hope it is not the 'anarchism' set out in this stereotypical hogwash.

The author's efforts would have been far better spent on putting forward arguments on why certain types of violence should be opposed. Instead, these ideas, undefined and under-developed, are used to trash "Bakuninism" – which also remains undefined. Certainly, Bakunin can be criticised – like all human beings he had plenty of faults, and he did write some rubbish. But "Bakuninism" is not another word for anarchism, and anarchism is not some sociological theory dreamed up by a single genius, but a movement of struggle that generates ideas which are taken on board only in so far as they are relevant to the present struggle.

In arguing that the ghost of Bakunin should not be welcome at the anti-globalisation street party, the author does the anti-globalisation movement no service. Bakunin at his best was articulating a developing anarchist movement that has much to offer the present anti-globalisation movement. It holds central to its beliefs the

Leech in the system

This article is a trimmed version of that by prisoner John Bowden, B4 1173, HMP Bristol. For a full version, contact DA.

Last September, Mark Leech, ex-prisoner and prison reform entrepreneur, was interviewed by the media concerning the transfer of Jeffery Archer from North Sea Camp open prison to inner city Lincoln jail. Asked about the sort of prisoners held at Lincoln, Leech described them as the "riffraff of the prison system", which seemed a rather incongruous remark by someone who has built a fairly lucrative career as a self-proclaimed supporter and representative of prisoners.

I was so intrigued, I asked *Insidetime*, a prison-wide newspaper produced by the prison reform charity Newbridge, to investigate exactly why Mr. Leech had apparently been so keen to please news editors with reactionary sound-bites, instead of using the opportunity to communicate prisoners' experience of life in an overcrowded hellhole such as Lincoln. What this revealed caused me to seriously worry about his integrity and honesty.

Leech has, since his release from prison in 1995, metamorphosed from a small-time criminal and litigious prisoner into a resourceful and media-savvy penal reform operator, whom the Prison Service now endorse as one of their most significant success stories. Since 1995, he has complied and edited The Prisoners' Handbook, now considered within prison circles as a standard text on British Prisons and their regimes. He has also founded two companies. Unlock, of which he was Chief Executive until 2002, describes itself as an organisation 'run by ex-offenders for ex-offenders' and seeks to assist them to 'successfully rebuild their lives'. It claims to work in partnership with the prison system, though maintains that it will 'not get under the covers with anyone'. In fact, Unlock was launched at a prison service event at Pentonville Prison, during which the Director General of the Prison Service publicly endorsed the organisation, and Judge Stephen Tumin was made its President. The organisation's slogan 'Working in partnership to leave crime behind' suggested that maybe crime reduction was its motivating purpose as opposed to supporting prisoner's rights and the rights of those freshly released from prison.

The Prisoners' Handbook describes its editor as having 'taken a journey from the strip cells and punishment blocks of prisons, to the point today where he meets every six weeks with the Home Secretary and Director General of Prisons to discuss policy'. Leech's second company, 'Mark Leech Associates', seems geared mainly towards accumulating capital from the publication of literature and media interviews. It's obvious that 'helping prisoners' has become an occupation and career for Mark Leech, and self-interest and aggrandisement now characterise much of his behaviour.

Insidetime, after persistent writing, telephoning and faxing, eventually managed to elicit a response from Mr. Leech concerning his "riffraff" remark. He flatly denied making it - an incredible denial to make, considering that his remark was filmed by the BBC and published in the Times. Unfortunately, *Insidetime*, who depend on the co-operation and goodwill of the Director General of Prisons to have its paper distributed to prisoners, decided to give Leech 'the benefit of the doubt' and say no more.

People involved in prison reform should be cautious of individuals like Mark Leech and understand that much of what he does, he does so out of self-interest and a desire for celebrity. He certainly doesn't speak on behalf of prisoners or ex-prisoners, many of whom now consider him a self-interested hireling of the system. He has yet to explain or apologise for the description of the prisoners at Lincoln and will obviously continue to speak in their name and further his career on their behalf.

Mark Barnsley Update

Since his release from prison last June (see previous DAs), Mark Barnsley has been campaigning over prison struggles and for effective prisoner support. Unfortunately, he broke his leg in November, which made travel almost impossible, but it is hoped he will be able to go ahead with a speaking tour this May/June. Help is needed to organise events in towns and cities around the country. After spending 8 years of unjust imprisonment, it is not surprising Mark knows his subject inside out, so if you would like to see Mark at a venue near you, why not help organise it?! Contact JfMB, PO Boc 381, Huddersfield HD1 3XX. barnsleycampaign@hotmail.com

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rejection of the parliamentary process, state control, and the handing over of power to any political parties, communist or otherwise. Anarchists have developed an alternative strategy based on direct action - not just as an effective means of democratic struggle, but as the main means by which a movement gains confidence, a sense of identity and ideas, and commences building a society based on human solidarity within the rotting shell of capitalism.

So, on the role of violence within the anti-globalisation movement, it is worth mentioning that the French pioneering anarcho-syndicalist union, the CGT, developed its ideas on direct action partly *as an alternative* to violent insurrection, around a century ago. Aware of the growing power of the centralised capitalist state, the CGT realised that, in a physical confrontation with the state, there was little chance of success. Instead, they developed the idea of using workers' economic strength to bring down capitalism. The CGT's rejection of violent insurrection attracted a large pacifist following. Although the brutal state repression that accompanied the spread of anarcho-syndicalist unions soon convinced workers that violence would be needed as a means of self-defence, the fact that real progress will be through direct action culminating in general strikes, not violent insurrection, has underpinned anarcho-syndicalism ever since.

My reading of history and my own experience of the state tells me violence as defence is sometimes unavoidable. Equally, my involvement in random, often brutal, and always futile violence in my youth has taught me that violence is nasty, cruel and de-humanising. I conclude, therefore, that if violence may sometimes be unavoidable, it is never "positive". The tendency of some to glorify violence, a tendency which, sadly, exists in most movements, including the anarchist movement, should be challenged and resisted. Violence is never glorious, no matter how noble the aim. In this, I suspect I am in broad agreement with the author of the article that appeared in DA. However, as I said at the beginning of this letter, it is a pity the author did not set down his/her ideas in relation to violence in the article, and in so doing save themselves and their readers considerable confusion. TC

In the Land of the Free

Three spoken word CDs on law enforcement, anti-radical politics, the civil rights movement and the prison industrial systems in the United States.

I started out trying to do 'full' reviews - looking at the points raised, trying to highlight the important issues, the interesting examples, the horrifying things that have been done. When I got to over two thousand words on 'In a Pig's Eye' alone, I gave up. Instead, I wrote this vastly condensed snippet of what these discs are about. In short, if you want to know about the history of suppression of radical and political voices and action inside the United States, then these four discs could give you enough starting points for years of further reading and listening.

Prisons on Fire is two half hour radio shows, one on the murder of George Jackson, a black prison activist, and the other on the Attica rebellion and state sanctioned slaughter that followed. **Doing Time** and **In a Pig's Eye** cover broadly similar areas from slightly differing angles. The former is a broad look at the history of imprisonment, the institutionalisation of social stratification through class and race barriers, and state control of effective unrest. The latter builds up an argument that in the west in general, and in the US in particular, the time to worry about the coming of a police state has past; there is already a police state.

Ward Churchill builds up a compelling argument around the 500-year war between the original occupants of North America and the European invaders. It examines the methods and effects of state oppression, violence, and surveillance, on those that won't wattle for their allocated slots, whether anarcho-syndicalists, anarchists or whatever. Other topics include the creation of the FBI, the charging of over 1,000 individuals for sedition, and mass deportation to Russia of all European immigrants suspected of being radical, regardless of where they were from.

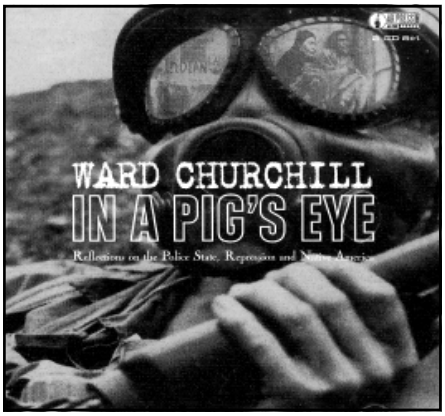
The US state effectively killed anarcho-syndicalism as a mass movement in the US, in particular, through suppression of the International Workers of the World (IWW). It also unleashed the communist witch-hunts of the '50s, and the obsessive, brutal and violent suppression of black activism from Marcus Garvey through to the Black Panthers. Space is also given to the suppression of the American Indians, the American Indian Movement, the events of Pine Ridge, and the case of Leonard Peltier. It ends with a plea for resistance, noting that the only way to release Peltier is to make it cost more to keep him in prison than they are willing to pay.

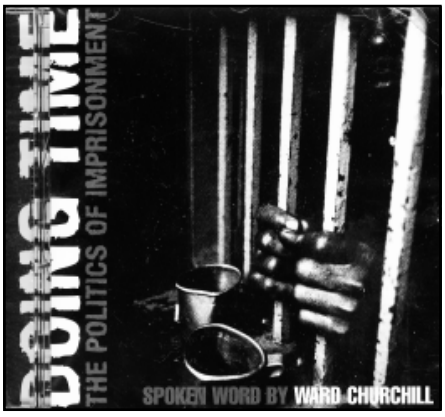
All in all, these CDs are informative and interesting and, with Ward Churchill, they do make available the work of a very effective speaker which would not be got from a book. There is a huge amount of information here; and it is guaranteed to make a big impression.

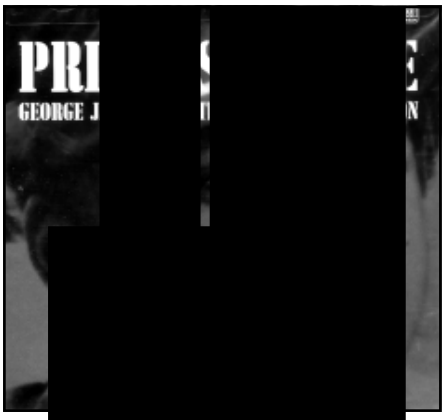
Ward Churchill, **"In a Pig's Eye: Reflections on the Police State, Repression and Native America"**
2002 AK Press/Alternative Tentacles Records - Spoken Word Double CD, www.akuk.com; www.alternativetentacles.com

Ward Churchill, **"Doing Time: The politics of imprisonment"**
2001 AK Press - Spoken Word CD, www.akuk.com

"Prisons on Fire: George Jackson & Attica and Black Liberation"
2002 AK Press/Alternative Tentacles Records - Spoken Word CD, www.akuk.com; www.alternativetentacles.com







Crimson/American Eye Aeroplanes

Drowning Dog/The Deletist

2002 AK Entartete Kunst 7" single
www.entartetekunst.info

Another release for Entartete Kunst, DA's favourite 'class-conscious worker-owned collective producing and distributing no-field electronica, radical literature, degenerate art & propaganda that promotes positive social change'. Both sides are rather excellent slices of leftfield electronic music which, unless you know what that means, is pretty hard to explain. Basically, no singing, nor any real instruments, nothing to really jump up and down to - but it is definitely not nodding off music. Those of you lucky enough to live in and around south east Manchester will have had the opportunity to hear both sides on the radical radio show 'Under the Pavement', www.underthepavement.org (according to the website, hopefully there will be a web cast of the show some time soon). If you missed it last time, send them an e-mail requesting it, and they might even play it again.

Whilst the record may not have lots of political lyrics, the sleeve contained two flyers on a Sheffield SolFed production on Israel/Palestine, and an introduction to the Anarchist Black Cross.

You must find it; if you can't, try AK Press (www.akuk.com).

Women on the frontline

Quiet Rumours: An anarcha-feminist reader. Texts collected by Dark Star.
AK Press £10.00 UK /$15.00 USA
Desire for change: Women on the frontline of global resistance.
PGA Women, c/o London Action Resource Centre (LARC), 62 Fieldgate Street, Whitechapel, London E1 1ES
Cheques £3.50 UK (including postage) payable to London International Solidarity

Inspirational is the way to summarise these two books.

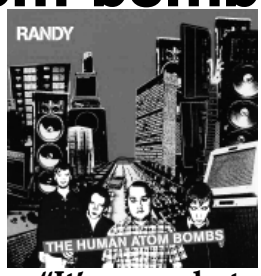
With both focusing on women's perspectives and experiences in political activism, these offerings are valuable anarchist resources. My plea to men who are reading this, is please don't imagine that just because these are for and about women, they are not for men, too. Everything in these books is relevant to activists both male and female, and although it is particularly inspiring for women (statistically rarer in anarchism still than men) to read about women's thoughts and actions in the struggle, the issues raised within them are just as relevant to men.

'Quiet Rumours' is an interesting collection of anarcha-feminist texts past and recent. For anyone in an anarchist group where men continue to outnumber women, and wondering why – Alice Nutter's excellent essay *Make Your Own Tea: Women's Realm and Other Recipes and Patterns,* culled from Class War, Final Issue 1997 – is fabulously sane, and induces winces and smiles in equal measure. There are just too many wicked quotables to choose from, but perhaps that is just as well, because reducing it to sound-bites would do an injustice to the insightful, no-easy-fixes take on capitalism, activism and sexism that it is. Some of the usual (historical) suspects turn up - it is no surprise to see two essays from Emma Goldman - but there are also included excerpts from less well-known libertarian women from the past, such as Voltairine de Cleyre, and Charlotte Wilson. Contributions drawn from the later 20th century debates features both Jo Freeman's much-quoted essay *The Tyranny of Structurelessness,* and Cathy Levine's reply to it; *The Tyranny of Tyranny.* The mixture of historical and contemporary here is deliberate – as Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz reasons in her introduction to the anthology; *Independent radical women often live lonely lives if they expect equality. Our task as anarcha-feminists can be nothing less than changing the world, and to do that, we need to consult our heroic predecessors.*

'Desire for change' comes in booklet format, and the main content is a series of interviews with twelve women who are anti-capitalist activists in their own countries, recorded at the Third International PGA conference in Cochabamba, Bolivia. The interviewers directed similar sets of questions at the women participating, with variations pertinent to issues that the women themselves raise, and the result is a series of fascinating insights into methods of direct action that take place around the world, and, importantly, the lived realities and experiences of the women themselves, and their communities. Many of the groups in the PGA network have driven global anti-capitalist mobilisations (for example, Seattle and Genoa), as well as agitating for change in their own countries. This is reflected in the way that the interviews are presented in the booklet, which includes information boxes offering explanations of historical and political background to the struggles in which the groups are involved, photographs of actions and protests, and quotes from a number of women who are active in the movements mentioned. It is jam-packed with information, accessible, interesting and moving, and highly recommended.

The human atom bombs

Randy
2001 AK Burning Heart Records distributed by Epitaph CD
www.burningheart.com



Apparently they've been around for ages, but the fact that this was released two years ago and is only just popping up in DA shows we somewhat overlooked them.

Punk, pop, rock'n'roll from Sweden – this CD is on the same label as chart-bothering and NME exciting The Hives – but this is political music; political music you can pogo to, jitterbug to, and possibly hand-jive to as well. Influences on their sleeves include first generation punks the Clash, the Damned, some more Clash, Ramones, possibly New York Doll and, most definitely, the people that influenced them - Little Richard and all those other rockers. This stuff is fun, the lyrics are not smooth poetry, nor are they carefully weighted ideological arguments – then again, it's rock'n'flippin'roll; get your brothel creepers on, your leather jacket and have some fun, but don't forget there is no pretend escapism from reality and, as they sing in Proletarian Hop (quote on right):

"It's a war between the classes, the privileged few against the masses, the Spanish Anarchists 'No Pasarán', I say we stick to that until the war is won".

Mobilize

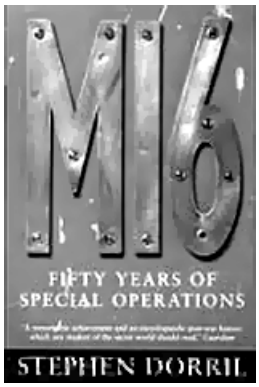
Anti-flag
2002 AK AF Records CD www.a-frecords.com

US metal punk with a political edge; 'Anti-flag' is purely and simply (though, judging by the additional 'hidden' tracks, not straight edge) hardcore style punk – nothing wrong with that.

This is quite fancy picking for a punk band, not exactly a jazz funk workout (phew), but more than two notes on one string. Vocals do very occasionally veer towards a Police era Sting, which this reviewer at least finds very occasionally too often. The fun starts with their personal response to the attack on the World Trade Centre '9-11', a song for Mumia Abu Jamal, stuff on how governments create enemies by character identification and then assassination of that character, calls for peace, unity and ending with the stomping 'Die for the Government'.

My version came with a free AF Records sampler, which is more fine punky stuff, worth a look, if you can ever track them down: Peace, love & unity back at you, Anti-Flag.

MI6 - 50 years of special operations



Stephen Dorril
Fourth Estate, 2001, 907 pages, £14.99, large paperback.

"We can no longer help you. We'll be sending you no physical or material help. All safe houses are blown. . . Destroy or keep radios and codes. This is our last message until better times. We will listen to you until 30th June. Thereafter, God help you."

This was the demoralising communication sent to eleven agents remaining in the Baltic in 1956, when it was decided to pull the plug on boat and parachute infiltration into Eastern Europe, following a series of naïve and disastrous attempts to instigate anti-Soviet revolution on the back of nationalist guerrilla operations after WW2. An estimated thirty five thousand Russian and Polish soldiers and police were killed in the Ukraine in the two years after the main conflict had ended. Peasants who refused to collaborate with the nationalists might have their arms cut off. When you consider what many of these nazi-fascists had done during the international war, this is not so surprising. The Soviet intelligence services infiltrated these national-fascist groups - helped by reports from the likes of Kim Philby - and as you would expect, their methods of dealing with these threats could be equally ruthless. The small groups of hapless agents meanwhile were turned or executed.

MI6 and CIA activities, utilising known war criminals and fascist military units (e.g. Stefan Bandera and his "Jews to the gallows" ilk; Baltic Waffen-SS combatants and other nazi-collaborators) had been continuing since the end of WW2. The Soviet regime and its successors continued as the perceived main threat up until the present - a necessary enemy. The anti-communist "Cold War" never really ended for some of these spooks.

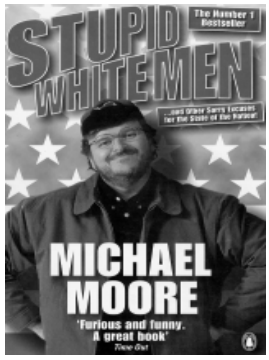
"Wet jobs" (assassination) were on the agenda as discussion of the possibilities of Soviet "roll-back" continued in White's (the club) and Whitehall among people such as David Stirling of SAS notoriety; always keen to put upstart minions in their place, and Julian Amery, the Tory MP. The SAS state-terrorists operated where necessary. Elements of the wartime Special Operations Executive were absorbed into MI6 and never lost the appetite for state-backed thuggery.

Middle East 'communist-inspired' militants (nationalists) were apt to be targeted ("wog-bashing"), and, when Nasser decided to nationalise the Suez Canal, the spooks' blood pressure went through the roof - threat to the Empire and all that, get rid of the fellow by any means possible (Nasser was "The Muslim Mussolini" according to Eden, who was often high on benzedrine due to serious health problems - some doubted his sanity at such times). Several attempts were tried, including poisoned chocolates, and £20,000 were offered to bribe Nasser's doctor to poison him. The use of nerve gas in a ventilation system was considered, as was a lethal cigarette pack that fired a poisoned dart a la 007. This method was tried on a sheep at Porton Down, and the spectacle of this dying animal's suffering sickened even Peter Wright ("Spycatcher"). It's almost laughable, almost.

The invasion to regain control of the canal showed British and allied imperialists in all their tawdry arrogance. Interestingly, there is a continuing campaign for a medal for British participants in this gunboat adventure. Small wonder the establishment has ignored it, and prefers to forget about this embarrassing episode. Control of the oilfields of the region was inevitably high on MI6-CIA agendas, deposing suspect rulers being par for the course (e.g. Mossadeq), the Iraqi tyrant Saddam Hussein being but the latest to top the list.

Stephen Dorril's book and his magazine "Lobster", his website and the works of Tom Bower et al are able to lift the lid of this can of worms a fraction, and we peer into a squirming mass of authoritarian, petty, career-dominated interests in which our concerns are irrelevant, as are the huffings and puffings of 'reforming' politicians - who are told what they expect to hear, and then parrot in public what MI6 wants them to. Ethics? Don't make me laugh.

Stupid White Men



Michael Moore
Penguin ISBN 0-141-01190-4 £7.99

Michael Moore, writer, activist, agitator, listener, speaker, film maker and more, uses direct action. His script is always brim-full of all sorts of info, some factual, some funny, some street commentary. He is more in touch with how people feel about stuff than the ones that should be.

His must-see film, "Bowling for Columbine", won "Best Documentary of the Year" from the US National Board of Review, and also from the Toronto Film Critics Association, the New York Society of Online Film Critics, the International Press Academy, and so on.

I don't enjoy reading just anything, but this book isn't just anything. It has been out for a while now, and many people have read it – I know because they tell each other about it, because they are impressed. So, if you haven't read it, get it, borrow it, etc., if only as an antidote to the media amnesia about things like BSE, how it came about (Corporate Greed Ink.), and how King George Bush and his family and friends decided they would take over the White House. Be prepared for its *unputdownability*.

There is nothing more damaging than apathy; the global dealers love the free reign that it gives them. Most of Moore's political comment is of your homespun variety, but it rings true, and it certainly 'ain't apathetic. *Stupid White Man* explains the party system as it is; a fight of the privileged for absolute power. Politicians just have to get elected, and it doesn't matter how few people do the voting. Once in power, they know they can sit back and say 'yes' to the corporate giants for a few years, without having to bother too much whether anyone cares that they do nothing about the things they promised.

As he says, it is a question of seeing through the politicians smiles … actually, they are not smiling, they are laughing at us. Of course, everything is so much bigger in the US, even the cheques that go to candidates for elections from the biggest companies and corporations in the world. Some companies pay all the major runners, just to make sure they will get their way when 'whoever' gets to power. This is the game that capitalism calls democracy and free competition. So the system works like this: Pay for future favours; elected; compromise, compromise; keep things as they are/grow profits; corruption, corruption, corruption; kill, kill, kill the evil doers…

The market is anything but free

Capitalism is not about to collapse. But no amount of papering over the cracks seems to be able to hide the current crisis. Yet, Labour persists in promoting the illusion that the market is the solution, not the problem. DA probes the dark underbelly of 2nd term Labour rhetoric and reality with a case study on health care.

Free market dogma is on the wane. The idea that the market delivers both freedom and prosperity to all is now increasingly challenged. After the collapse of the Soviet empire, various western leaders proclaimed we had reached the "end of history". The way was now clear for free market capitalism and western style 'democracy' to spread across the world, bringing with it a new utopia, where market forces would vanquish poverty and freedom would prevail. Then reality kicked in.

In 2003 reality, Africa is trapped in dire poverty, virtually excluded from the world economy. Russia languishes in another poverty, ruled by corrupt leaders and gangsters. South America staggers from crisis to crisis, trapped within a vicious circle of free market meltdown and reform, where widespread malnutrition is beginning to emerge for the first time in a generation. Japan stagnates in a deflationary spiral which no amount of Keynesian public spending programmes have been able to halt, as it inevitably drags much of the Asian economy down with it. This leaves the US and European economies keeping the world economy afloat, but even these are teetering on the brink of deepening recession.

No doubt there are links between the current crisis and the conjuring up of the new enemy; Islam. The "Cold War" has been replaced with the very hot "War on Terrorism", which threatens to terrorise, destabilise and ensnare much of the world's population in yet more misery. A crisis to conceal a crisis? It almost doesn't matter; no-one believes the free market will bring the end of history anymore.

Far from market forces bringing prosperity and freedom, globalisation has brought increasing poverty and inequality everywhere it has visited. In the name of market 'freedom', globalisation has wrecked the domestic economies of developing nations in order to open them up to western dominance. The only encouraging sign amongst this misery is that having experienced the "freedom and prosperity" offered by the free market, people in the developing world have rejected globalisation, and, in response, are increasingly turning to direct action as the means to defend themselves (for example, see *Globalfocus* on Venezuela, pp.16-17).

There is hope too here in the developed world. Although privatisation has spread from Britain across Europe, attempts at further deregulation are being met with increasing resistance, and moves to further anglicise the mainland European economy have stalled. And as in the developing world, harsh experience of the 'free' market over the last twenty years have generated a vigorous anti-globalisation movement that may yet reinvigorate European resistance after decades of stagnation under Marxist-Leninist dominance. The possibilities of such a movement are reflected in the opposition to the war against Iraq.

Attempts by Bush and Blair to dress up the war in free market liberation theory by casting the west as "freedom loving people", sacrificing themselves in order to sweep away the tyranny of Saddam and set up a western free market democracy are treated with outright derision. Even the mainstream media is refusing to peddle such nonsense. Twenty years ago, they thought it possible to portray the free market as the force that would liberate the Russian people; today, such talk is recognised as a thin cover story for grabbing Middle Eastern oil. Increasingly, deep suspicion towards anyone using the terminology of free market orthodoxy peddled by Britain and the US is turning to hostility.

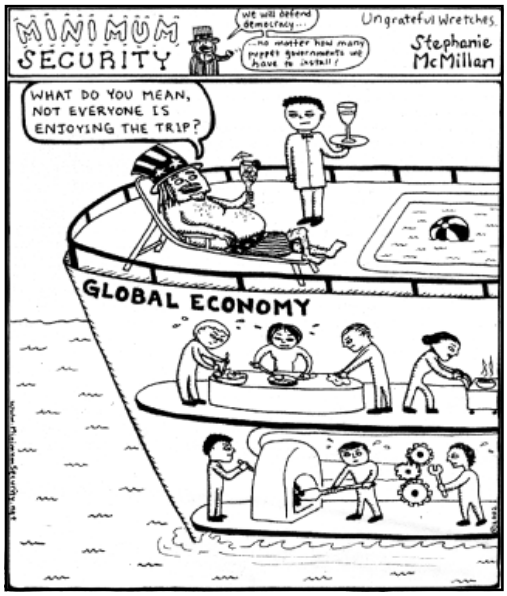
reasons to be cheerful?

Even here in Britain, there is room for hope. The privatisation that dominated the Thatcher era and has continued under Labour is now recognised as a blatant means of making huge profits for bosses/investors at the expense of the workforce, while providing an inefficient and often dangerous service. Popular capitalism is not quite so popular. The Tory pioneers of the free market revolution are in disarray and threatening to implode (go ahead – *ed.*). The root cause of their predicament is their vision of society as a load of individuals driven by pure self interest at the expense of others. This has been rejected as the impact of growing inequality and widespread poverty and its effect on wider British society (anti-social crime, unemployment, instability, etc., etc.) hits home.

There is a growing realisation that in areas that matter most - health, education, transport and welfare - the market simply cannot deliver. Such essential services cannot simply be mass-produced like washing machines, because they form part of the basic fabric of society. As such, they reflect the nature of society, so the more unequal the society, the more unequal the health service, and the more brutal the society, the more brutal the education system. A society based on narrow self-interest is reflected in the nature of its institutions and its individuals. We have all witnessed first hand the kind of society the Thatcherite vision has produced, and we find it revolting. If there is a reason to be cheerful, it is the hope that self-interest is giving way to common interest and the notion that a decent society is not founded on individual greed, but on humanity.

The "Third Way" is simply a continuation of the vicious free market dogma of the Tories, but this time with scatter cushions and chill-out music...

The truth is that Labour is just as transfixed as the Tories were by free market ideology, and Tony Blair has the same disdain for the 'nanny state' as Thatcher did.



However, even if free market orthodoxy is on the wane, the effects of the past thirty years on society cannot be simply wished away. Even in the face of growing rejection of privatisation, the decades of neglect of our public services have left them in a sorry state. Given this, although collectively, people may prefer social provision; as the decline continues, those who can afford it are pushed towards the private sector in increasing numbers. If schools, hospitals and public transport are not working, it is inevitable that those who can afford private alternatives will. Hence, although people have rejected it, the privatisation process may continue by default.

There is a truism about Britain hanging on the US' apron strings. We have turned away from Thatcherism, but unless there is a radical expansion of public provision, the private sector will continue to expand, causing the public sector to contract until social provision is abandoned by the majority and becomes merely a safety net for the poor in a 2-tier system. Thus, a decade on, we may find ourselves landed with a US-style system, even though collectively as a society we oppose it. What makes this privatised future more likely is not just that we may drift there by default, but that there are powerful forces at work here too. Not least, the US medical and insurance industry sees Britain as rich pickings and as a stepping stone into the wider European market.

Labouring under illusions

Back in 1997, people were so desperate to reject Thatcherism that they elected a Labour government. Maybe it wasn't all stick and no carrot. Maybe some were seduced by the compassionate noises coming from New Labour, and the pledges to save public service such as health and education from the Tory wreckers. Maybe even now, some still hope against hope that this is the direction that Labour will take, despite all the evidence to the contrary so far. Unfortunately for us all, the "Third Way" is simply a continuation of the vicious free market dogma of the Tories, but this time with scatter cushions and chill-out music.

By trading on its history and continuously pledging its support to public provision and increased public spending, Labour has attempted to conceal the fact that it is engaged in a privatisation programme every bit as radical as Thatcher's sell-offs in the 1980s. It has presented the age-old 'magic' option by claiming that Britain's depleted public services can be rebuilt with virtually no increases in taxes. However, it stands to reason that any real shift back to public provision would have to be paid for. The truth is that Labour is just as transfixed as the Tories were by free market ideology, and Tony Blair has the same disdain for the 'nanny state' as Thatcher did.

Realising that British society now prefers a shift to social provision, Labour's ideological zeal has gone into public sector reforms which can but lead to more private sector provision. The political calculation is that enough of society will benefit from expensive, privatised public services (i.e. 'middle England') to sustain them in power. The poor will have no-one to vote for, but then, they don't in the US either, and what's good enough for Bush must be good enough for Blair.

So, in December, the Labour government announced that BUPA has been invited to bid to take over the running of NHS hospitals. This announcement was quickly followed by another; eleven companies have been invited to run new publicly-funded fast-track surgeries which will perform routine operations. Using public money to pay the private sector to carry out NHS operations was originally supposed to be only a temporary measure to cut waiting lists – it is now a permanent fixture. Such measures reinforce the idea that the state sector is failing, and must be rescued by the private sector. Hence, they underpin the key government message that the private sector is vibrant, modern, efficient and necessary. Images of grateful patients being treated in luxurious private rooms helps break down the negative (true) images of private health companies profiting from carrying out NHS duties.

PFI: Profits For Investors

NHS purchases of private operations are merely a softening-up exercise designed to get the public used to the idea of private sector involvement. If we step back and look at the bigger picture, by far the biggest threat to public health care provision is the dramatic increase in the use of Private Finance Initiatives (PFIs). Labour's argument for these is that they are the only way of providing funds for large scale public projects that the state cannot afford. The biggest push has been in building new hospitals, and Blair has gone to great effort to point out shiny new PFI hospitals and persuade us that, as long as health care remains free at the point of delivery, we shouldn't care how it is provided.

However, this is a bogus argument. Through the PFI, the government is taking out public loans from the private sector at a much higher rate of interest than normal government borrowing. Using government borrowing to finance public sector projects is far more cost effective, as studies (such as Professor Allyson Pollock's) have shown. The high payments will inevitably take income away from public sector building of schools, hospitals and services for the next 20-30 years – the lifetime of the loans. This

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will inevitably lead to a steadily declining public sector, with more 'failing' schools and hospitals – and these will be increasingly handed over to the private sector.

If that is not bad enough, the government has now announced the setting up of Foundation hospitals. The idea was first thought up by the Tories, but dropped as too controversial. The result will be that more successful hospitals get 'rewarded' with greater government funds, thus leading to greater inequality, with Foundation hospitals attracting funds away from less successful hospitals. Rich hospitals will get richer, while poorer hospitals (inevitably in working class areas) will become "sink hospitals", starved of funds and on a downward spiral to 'failing' status and privatisation.

Foundation hospitals are to be allowed to run independent of central government, so they will have the power to borrow on the capital markets. But how will they pay for this borrowing? Inevitably, they will have to increase their private patients lists as a means of generating revenue. Hence, they will lead to yet more health inequality and the injection of yet more private provision. Moreover, we are not talking about one or two Foundation hospitals, to be developed as showpieces. The New Economics Foundation, who advised ministers on the scheme, predicated that 40% of hospitals would take Foundation status within five years; "ushering a style of social enterprise that would spread through schools and local government".

As if this were not enough, there is growing concern that Foundation hospitals will be able to levy charges on NHS patients. Labour has already put forward the first step towards charging in its NHS plan, which creates a new category of "intermediate care". Patients will be allowed a certain amount of free care, after which they will be means tested and charged for what is called "personal care". There can be no doubt that Foundation hospitals will raise ever-larger personal care charges to fund their capital loans repayments, while non-Foundation hospitals, starved of funds, will have to resort to charges merely to keep going.

not in our name

Behind all the Labour's "public ethos, private delivery" babble lies the clear intention to dismantle universal social provision and to keep this practice under wraps for as long as possible. Slow, steady change is not as dramatic as Thatcher's floatation's, but it is less noticeable and will end up being at least as fundamental. Labour's strategy is to chip away at social provision while talking of defending it, using smoke and mirrors to conceal ever greater private provision and charging, resulting in the demise of the public health system funded by ability to pay through taxation and delivered according to need by being free at the point of delivery.

As opposition to the free market grows both at home and abroad, New Labour represents its gentler, more devious and more intellectual face. By repackaging market orthodoxy into the so-called Third Way, they have had some success in overcoming growing resistance to privatisation in Britain. The hope of the private health companies is that they will export their Third Way policies across Europe. Hence, lies and non-delivery on endless targets may be the least of our worries; in the long run, they may yet achieve what Thatcher could only dream of at the height of her popularity and power; the dismantling of the post-war welfare state.

At present, there seems little resistance to Labour. Along with the rest of the social democratic left, the unions are unable to come to terms with its free market orthodoxy and, with a few exceptions, still haven't woken up and smelt the coffee. Blinded by their long ties to Labour and fearful of damaging it and letting the Tory union-bashers back in, they remain transfixed, as they watch them betray the very core of their principles, forlornly hoping that the real (old) Labour will soon re-emerge. They seem unable to believe or comprehend that the party they cherish has finally eclipsed the Tory party - only to promptly become it.

The only force capable of mounting resistance to Labour is the growing anti-capitalist movement. Born out of the rejection of globalisation, the movement has expanded into exposing and attacking the growing imperialism of western capitalism. However, though disdainful of Labour, much of the resistance has yet to openly attack and expose the dangers that Labour's free market orthodoxy poses to British society. If the anti-capitalist movement is going to develop further in Britain, it must begin to link the struggle against capitalism internationally to the struggle against capitalism in Britain. A good place to start is with the current juxtaposition of Labour and global corporations; for behind the government's attempts to privatise the public sector in Britain are the very same multi-nationals who are driving globalisation overseas – by using the power of western states to open up public sectors across the developing world and privatising them.

For further information about issues raised in this or other close-up articles, contact: da@direct-action.org.uk; DA, PO Box 1095, Sheffield S2 4YR, UK.

SF Contact Point:

SF, PO Box 469, Preston PR1 8XF.
Answerphone 07984 675 281
Email; solfed@solfed.org.uk

www.solfed.org.uk

Networks - make contact with others in your type of work-

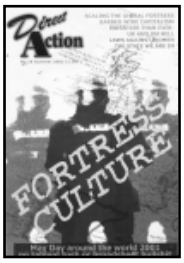
Education Workers' Network, PO Box 469, Preston PR1 8XF.
Public Service Workers' Network, Box 43, 82 Colston St, Bristol BS1 5BB.
Communication Workers' Network, PO Box 29, SW PDO, Manchester M15 5HW.

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. www.southwestsolidarity.org.uk
South Herts SF, PO Box 493, St Albans AL1 5TW. Tel. 01727 862814.
Lancashire SF, PO Box 469, Preston PR1 8XF. Tel/fax 01772 734130 solfed@solfed.org.uk http://mysite.freeserve.com/LancashireSF/index.jhtml
Manchester SF, PO Box 29, SW PDO, Manchester M15 5HW. Tel. 07984 675281. www.manchestersf.org.uk
Sheffield SF, PO Box 1095, Sheffield S2 4YR. solfed@solfed.org.uk
West Yorks Solidarity Federation, PO Box 77, Leeds, LS8 3XX.

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

Direct Action - delivered



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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.

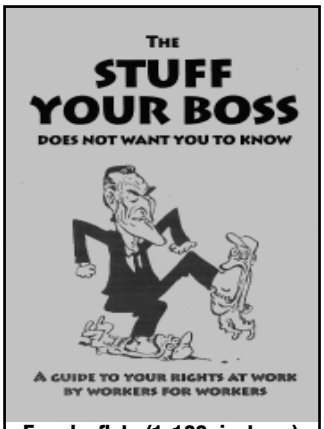
It is not like joining a club, union or political party – rather, it is an opportunity to channel your efforts for change and, at the same time, benefit yourself from the experience.

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

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Catalyst, PO Box 29, SW PDO, Manchester M15 5HW.
Tel. 07984 675281. Email; manchestersf@manchestersf.org.uk

SF **Manchester SolFed** SF

Discussion - info. - solidarity - support

Spring-Summer 2003 discussions:
Weds 2nd April - Oil Wars
Weds 7th May - Iraq & the Middle East
Weds 4th June - Globalisation & the New World Order

All meetings first Wednesday of the month, 8.30pm. All sessions open & free at; Hare & Hounds, Shude Hill, Manchester.

Any queries, contact Manchester SF (address in contacts, p.34).
www.manchestersf.org.uk www.solfed.org.uk

Friends and Neighbours

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

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.

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.

SchNEWS ANNUAL 2003
SchNEWS are after articles, pics, cartoons, photos, subverts, and stuff from April 2002 onwards. News of stuff you've been part of globally or locally - send it in. SchNEWS distribution help also needed.

Cultureshop
Online shop for independent/radical/political issue-based videos. Recent films include; Black and Gold (based on the Latin King and Queen Nation in NY); The Summit (filmed during the Earth Summit in Johannesburg); Zapatista! (first-hand account of the Chiapas struggle; Mark Thomas Live in Brighton (recorded after campaigners successfully stopped the Turkish Ilisu Dam), Devonport Nuclear Safety Lecture (exposure by John Large, nuclear consultant). http://www.cultureshop.org

Belgian Alternative Bookfair
29th March, 10am to 8pm Intercultureel Centrum De Centrale, Kraankindersstraat 2, 9000 Gent Belgium – admission free to the Third International @lternative Bookfair. Stalls from Belgium, France, Germany, Great Britain, Holland plus lectures, debates, video, performances, exposition - video - vegetarian/vegan food and soup - bar - creche - gig. www.aboekenbeurs.be

Networking Newsletter
Networking in Greater Manchester working for positive social change. Tel: 0161 226 9321. www.networkingnewsletter.org.uk

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

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

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

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

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

Carnival at BP AGM
April 24th, Royal Festival Hall, South Bank, London. Info. email london@risingtide.org.uk www.burningplanet.net

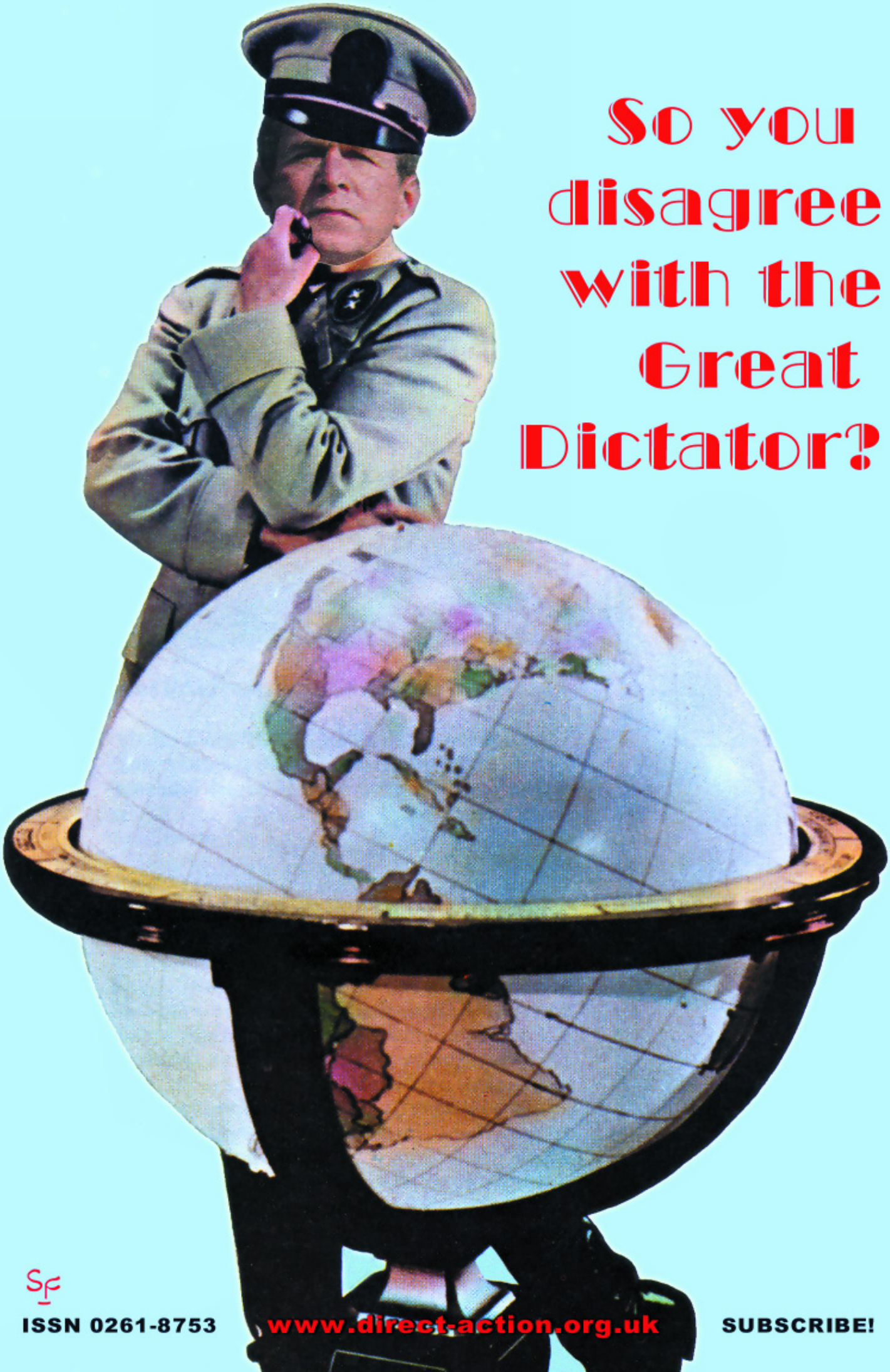
Shortcutz
Students fighting for social change thru' direct action. 07754 880382 shortcutz@yahoo.co.uk

Manchester Anarchist Youth
Organising group, meetings every other Sunday, Cafe Pop, Oldham St. 07816 420391 manchester@anarchistyouth.net

The price of freedom

In case you haven't noticed, the cover price of Direct Action has gone up. This is the first price rise since its launch in Autumn 1996, and it will hopefully allow us to reach more outlets and improve the mag. The good news is that the £5 basic annual sub (4 issues) stays the same, so it makes even more sense to get it delivered to your door (the form is on page 34). Meanwhile, for previous issue(s) of DA, simply send us a quid for each one you want, or pick 8 for a fiver. DA, PO Box 1095, Sheffield S2 4YR.

DA Back issue	Theme	Highlights (all have direct actions, international news, etc. too)
1. Autumn '96	Bullying&Violence	Anarchism, Blaired Vision, bullying at work, child labour and prostitution.
2. Spring '97	BreakingBarriers	The fight to be human, Liverpool Dockers, GB; old empires, national identity.
3. Summer '97	Surveillance	Preventing crime or taking liberties? Power and social control, Sex and genes.
4. Autumn '97	Work to live	Does work make you sick? Health and Safety and problems with work.
5. Winter '97-8	Greenworld	From car culture to utopia.
6. Spring '98	ManagingConsent	From management to globalisation.
7. Summer '98	Nationstates	Nationalism, Ireland, EMU, freedom.
8. Autumn '98	PersonaLife	Laddism, political parenting, youth, sexuality.
9. Winter '98-9	MediaBites	Media Corpse; from moguls to state propaganda.
10. Spring '99	2Worlds	Who ate all the pies? Africa, capitalism, colonialism, and re-inv
11. Summer '99	Them&Us	Equality, discrimination, language, racism, sexism.
12. Autumn '99	Education	Learning to live/Teaching to fail, Free-ed alternatives interviews
13. Winter '00	counterCULTure	Nine O'clock service; NOI – Charmed & Dangerous; plus faith,
14. Spring '00	DirectAction	Dare to dream: then do it, GM, violence, anti-capitalism, new L
15. Summer '00	aGendas	Gender Agendas, HIV/AIDS, feminism and postmodernism, dec
16. Autumn '00	Mismanagement	Inhuman Resources, teamwork talk, asylum seekers, Anarchisr
17. Winter '00-1	BlairedVision	The Ditch Blair Project, education, corporate killing, Britishness
18. Spring '01	The party's over	Socialist Alliance; New Old Labour, voting, UKplc on the slide.
19. Summer '01	Fortress Culture	Barbed Wire Capitalism; immigration and human rights, the sta
20. Autumn '01	Casual Slavery	Casualisation, privatisation and debt.
21. Winter '01-2	Clearfutures	Apocalypse Soon, Rogue states, beyond capitalism, spirit of a
22. Spring '02	Safe+Healthy	Fun, risk and living dangerously; Health privatisation; Health ar
23. Summer '02	Culturejams	Pop Culture, Punk, irony and apathy, racism rising, DIY alt.cult
24. Autumn '02	Warmakers	War, terrorism and not-so-hidden agendas, Rape in wartime, Ma
25. Winter '03	Consumption	Is shopping a human right? Sense and Sustainability, Consump



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