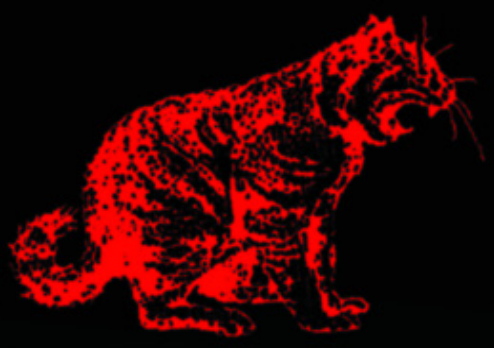
Direct Action

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social democracy & other myths



Labour pains
Retina cheques
Dis-Connexions
Biting the hand we feed
No peace in La Paz

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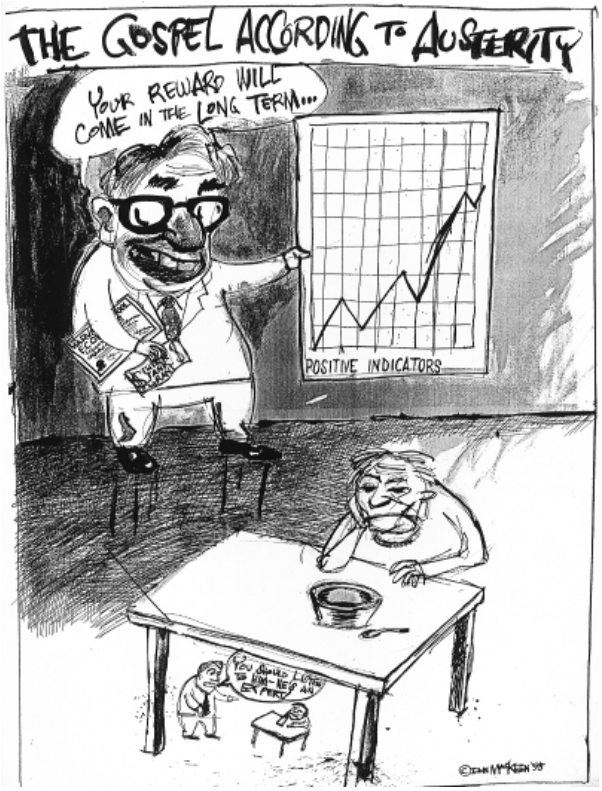
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From Labour pains to lassez fairyland

Well on the way to 2 terms in, and Labour is still apparently in the process of giving birth to our long-promised new caring capitalist Britain.

But, what's this? The SWP and a thousand other splinter Left groups are pointing out that the Labour government is no longer social democratic, that the Labour socialist project has all gone Blair-shaped. Britain is more drenched in lassez fair, undiluted, full-strength, free market misery under Labour than it was under Thatcher. And, they say, there is no way back for Labour, ever - it's all buggered up now.

Could they be right? It is true that libertarian capitalism looks in control. Workers' rights have been attacked (e.g. see DA28) in the name of 'the market'. Distinctly ideological and political decisions are given authority by referring to a neutral arbiter on high - a god if you like - called 'the market'. Compassion has disappeared; minority groups, the powerless, and young people *(Dis-Connexions, p.22)* are attacked for causing the decay of moral society and drug problems, while greed is good. As Bush attempts to 'defend' the occupation of Iraq while thousands who know he's a liar demonstrate across London, we need look no further than the US's distribution of the spoils of victory to its favourite Republican-donating corporations.



Whilst US troops are wishing they could get out of Iraq, US corporations are queuing up to get in. Halliburton Oil have turned their books around by half a billion dollars in six months on the back of their slice of the action so far. Protesters attended a carve-up conference representing McDonalds, Nestle, Bechtel and Motorola, among others, and bid for Iraq's services and resources including water, electricity, education and health sectors. Would be funny if it wasn't actually happening. As one protester put it; "The US and Britain, having illegally invaded and occupied Iraq, are now forcing their free-market ideology on the country whilst selling its assets to the highest bidder."

BP engineers in Kuwait taught combat troops how to run the oil fields in southern Iraq before the invasion. After it, BP took possession of its reward - one of the first tankers of oil from Southern Iraq. BP, Shell, Chevron and 7 other oil giants, have cleaned up the victors contracts for Basra Light crude. Russian and French companies, who have the local expertise from their former contracts with Saddam Hussein, have got sod-all, and the Russians are a bit pissed of that a 23-year long contract signed in 1997 for the West Qurna field will now be ripped up by the US-led administration. However, to cover himself, Bush has signed Executive order number 13303, saying; "any attachment, judgment, decree, execution, garnishment, or other judicial process is prohibited, and shall be deemed null and void", with respect to "all Iraqi petroleum and petroleum products, and interests therein." So, no come-backs… welcome to the logical, fair, free market future according to Bush.

So, the Left groups, er, actually, yes, they are right, except for the fact that Labour was never social democratic, it just happened to have governed in social democratic times – as the Tories did way back too. The world has moved on, and western capitalism doesn't need to pay for expensive welfare programmes any more, now it has stuffed the unions, unleashed globalisation, and seen the end of the soviet threat *(Social Democracy – Dead or Alive?, p.18).*

The worst thing about the Left's analysis is its proposed solution – we should all vote for some Lefty clique because they will bring about true socialism, hold the city and global capitalism to ransom, and drag Britain back to social democracy – and beyond, to Left-led socialist nirvana. Er, that was roughly what Labour was saying about a hundred years ago – are you seriously suggesting we go around another 100-year loop and end up in the same cul-de-sac? Sounds like we are being invited from lassez fairyland frying pan into Left 'leave it to us' fire *(Not the alternative, p.6; Biting the hand we feed, p.31).*

So, should we just accept lassez fairyland reality, GM crops *(p.7)*, ID cards *(p.8)*, crazy housing policies *(p.21)* and what not? Far from it, even away from the massive anti-war/occupation and anti-Bush activity, there are signs of real resistance. Over 30,000 people joined student protests in late October over government plans to let universities triple tuition fees to £3,000 a year. Firefighters across the country took unofficial industrial action after employers tried reneging on the agreed pay deal following the last strike. Wildcat strikes by thousands of post office workers across the country ended in victory – as Schnews put it, a victory that everyone who has to go out and earn a living should be celebrating. As one postie explained; "We have got a reputation for standing up for ourselves and they don't like that." Post Office Chief Executive Adam Crozier certainly looks after himself, raking in £500,000 a year, not to mention his other 'jobs'. I like long walks, especially when they are taken by people who annoy me.

So, all these Labour pains, and we are left with the still-born reality that waiting/voting for social democracy under Labour or any 'alternative' is like waiting for Godot. Freedom is not something you can vote for, any more than you can buy it at the travel agent. DA



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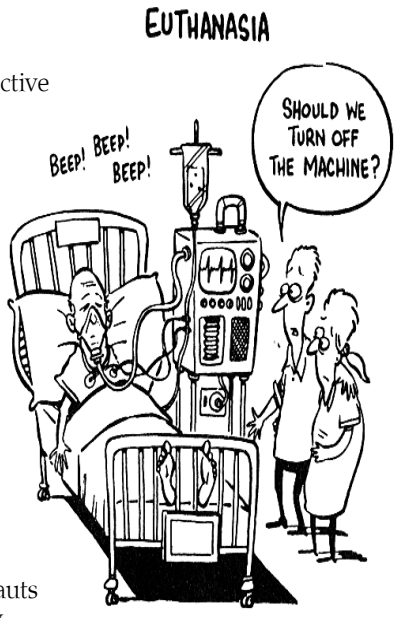
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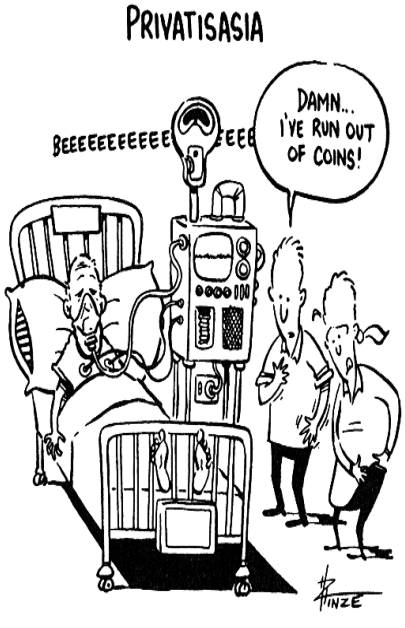
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Democracy & violence: 2004 update

Boys in blue and other not-so-friendly faces of modern western democracy, UK-style.

Some time ago, *Direct Action* looked at the myths and realities of anarchist political violence. That article made mention that even the mythical violence associated with libertarian politics pales into inconsequence when compared to the actual violence practised by states. As another year looms, it seems fitting to turn now to the political violence of liberal democracy. So, at a time when the leading 'democracies' of the world are waging a war of terror against terrorism, let's take a look at the mindset of state terrorism.

It is an old joke that any country that puts democratic in its name isn't. Look no further than the former East Germany, or the current Democratic Republic of the Congo. Similarly, when governments act in the name of democracy and/or freedom, it can be safely assumed they are acting neither democratically or in ways which increase any freedom, except the state's freedom to interfere with the life of its citizens (or if you live in the UK, 'its subjects').

Whilst it might be hypothetically possible to imagine a state in which everyone agrees to be subjected to the rule of a few, such a hypothesis also seems to be even more utopian than the most far-out dreams of the libertarian left. The democracy of the old soviet style democracies (much simplified) was that everything was done in the people's name, and, if they wanted to, they could rise up and put a stop to it - which they eventually did. In absolute monarchies and dictatorships, rule of the monarch was through the power of heredity, tradition, conquest and divine appointment. If you didn't like it, they had gangs, knights, armies, secret services, spooks, 'intelligence' services and police forces (oh, and their church) to persuade you otherwise.

In social democracies (as is expanded on elsewhere in this issue of DA) the stated idea is to tame capitalism on behalf of the populace, and surely, there are people out there who believe that is what they are doing. But in order to tame – get some concessions from – capitalism, what they need to do is tame/control the populace, or at least, that bit of the populace that does least well out of capitalism whilst contributing most to it: the working class. In a modern western state, this control is achieved through various methods of assuasion and persuasion that it really is the best available system, by use of media, spin, and numerous politicians, pundits and other chancers. One method is to compare and contrast with less subtle examples of state control around the world. "Rock the boat and this is what you're going to get", is what we are told, directly or implicitly.

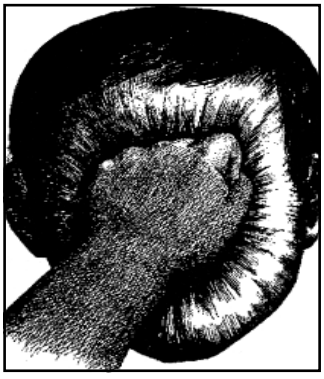
It is not normally pointed out that these very despots, tyrants, mass murderers and other ogres are there due to the direct influence of western countries. For example, they may allow corporations to exploit their working class or their natural resources for the benefit of the rich world - places where social democrats have a little leeway and liberal democracy can be afforded. However, even in these liberal democracies, the veneer of participation and freedom of voice and action are barely tolerated, and when the paranoid state decides, then the various methods of violent repression come to the fore.

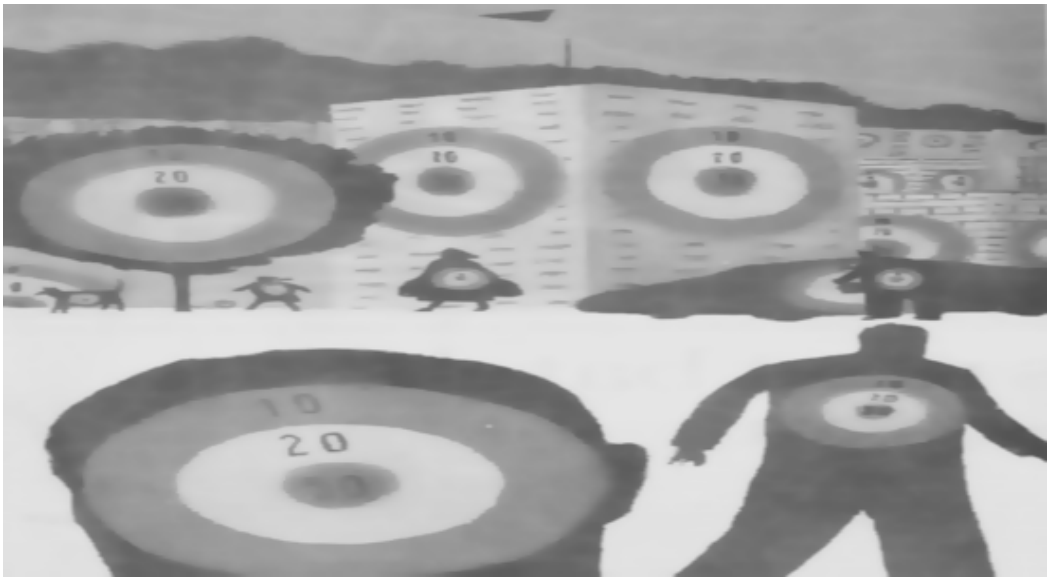
The modern state has a whole host of less-than-subtle methods of control ready for when the ungrateful people who are ruled for their own good fail to be fully appreciative of this fact. Obviously, the first line of attack is the police force - which becomes increasingly paramilitary with each passing Home Secretary. The police are there to protect the loyal subjects of her majesty from all those nasty criminals and terrorists. However, their main job is to use the many laws at their disposal to stop militant working class self-organisation, collective action and protest.

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Now, nicking 'criminals' and 'terrorists' is unlikely to need massive numbers of armed and trained riotplods. Even in the 'good old days' (sic), the early bobbies were actually armed and armoured, just not as overtly as today. A strong helmet and a very heavy and solid lump of wood (a truncheon is a mean weapon) would do for day to day bashing of miscreants round the head. Such deviants could always be separated up and talked to in privacy later on. The understanding was that when there was serious civil disobedience involving large numbers of people, either it would be contained in a working class area, or more usually, the troops, as they had done for centuries, would come in and sort it all out.

Rulers have always seen a need for minders and security forces in real numbers for the more important day-to-day task of mass social control. Before the police, there was the army, and before that, any paid band of mercenaries or desperadoes would do. As the 20th century developed and the army being called in started to seem a bit excessive (well, until Thatcher briefly re-popularised it), the overt use of troops to suppress protest and mass disobedience became a little unsightly. Hence,





coppers started playing more of a role, and the day-to-day bobby began to get more and more kit, more and more training, and began to be well up for it.

The cops also learned one or two lessons. If all they had were lumps of wood and funny-shaped helmets, then they were more or less on a par with the people they were seeking to control, and when there were more of them than police, they lost ground. So off they went and got some new kit. Now half a dozen people cannot get together without a white van of fully armoured riotplods being parked just round the corner. This is serious preparation for violence, looking like some cross between a goth convention and knights in armour - dressed in sexy dark colours and big boots, thick overalls with leg armour, body armour, and armour on their arms, hands and shoulders, all topped off with a big helmet and a shiny shield. They now carry night sticks, pepper and gas sprays, and can always call on the baton-wielding cavalry.

Not only are they going about prepared with malice of forethought to enact violence, they are doing so in a provocative manner designed to intimidate. The clear message is "don't push it sonny", by megaphone, radio, video cameras scattered about our towns and cities, helicopters, and who knows what other Big Brother kit. The important point here is that violence is not just there in direct confrontation; it is most often felt in terms of intimidation.

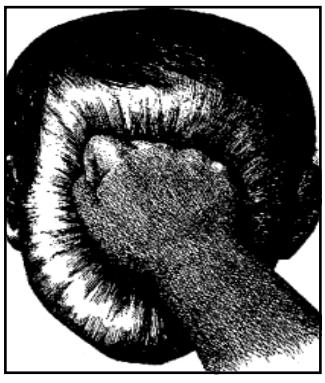
Through its police arm, the state can lock people up by force for suspicion of breaking laws the state itself defines. By criminalising dissent, for example, labelling those who question any aspect of the state's behaviour as terrorists, they can remove activists by force, isolating them from others and sending a very clear message to others, "don't even think about messing with us, we are bigger, stronger, better organised and have far less scruples". The whole development of ID cards (see also page 8) has very little to do with anti-terrorist activities. 'Real' terrorists or insurgents tend to be honest about who they are, although they may hide their intentions (which won't be written on any ID card anyway). Equally, it may make a limited amount of financial fraud harder, but the average criminal isn't going to be worried about having an ID card. ID cards are really about shouting to the population as a whole that they are part of the state; the state knows who they are and where they are, and any messing about will mean that they will be 'dealt with'.

While the new-look police 'take care' of things at home, the official standing armies are now mainly sent around the world to kill and be killed in the support of capitalist interests overseas. They are kept busy and trained in empire building. They also help to inflate politicians' egos, as they see themselves as statesmen (sic), striding the world stage against a uniformed backdrop. However, the army also acts as a domestic insurance policy, which can easily be brought back to control - or at least keep contained - a wayward populace, as they have been doing for decades in northern Ireland.

Without getting all paranoid and conspiracy-obsessed, behind all this overt use of violence and threat of violence, there is also the secret, unknown world of the intelligence communities. They are there to spy and prey upon the people. Functioning outside the normal legal niceties, their role is occasionally brought into the light of day, when one of the pet spooks, no doubt upset about their pension arrangements, decides to leak what exactly they have been up to. Such 'insights' only serve to confirm state paranoia, with supposed grown-ups running around spying on left-wing groups, infiltrating trade unions and generally hyping things in a bid to justify their existence. Also, of course, their activities are not restricted to surveillance, infiltration, propaganda, acting as agent provocateurs – there is a more hands-on side to their activities.

This may all make for a gloomy outlook for 2004, but the twist in the tail is that paranoid leaders always end up overstepping the mark, and people turn around *en masse* and say 'we've had enough'. Sexy S&M gear or not, the modern police are overstepping big time, and more and more people have had enough. DA

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Not the alternative

Social Democracy & the Myth of the Left

Just before the Labour Party Conference, it was announced that some Left Labour MPs (sic), a few of the "awkward squad" new Trade Union leaders and a mish-mash of others, were proposing a 'Labour Representation Committee' to recapture Labour for the Left. Leaving aside the fact that the Left has never really controlled the Labour Party, this shows how difficult it is to wean some people off the bad idea that change can happen through the capturing of power by a social democratic party. →

The original Labour Representation Committee was set up in 1900 to give the working class a voice in parliament. It finally helped to establish the present Labour Party and was supported by most Marxists at the time. After the Great War, Lenin urged the new Communist Party to affiliate. Ever since, some Marxist-Leninists and Trotskyist groups have sought to find a foothold within the Labour Party. Others have tailored their whole agenda and approach to the various manoeuvrings inside it.

Some erstwhile supporters have now finally realised that the Labour Party is a lost cause and have sought to set up an alternative. In Scotland, this has manifested itself as the Scottish Socialist Party (SSP), in England & Wales, the Socialist Alliance (SA).

Marxist party methods mirror the very social order they seek to replace. In doing so, they have become part of the problem instead of part of the solution.

Due to proportional representation for the Scottish Parliament, the SSP has had some limited success but, underneath, the tensions between the various factions bubble away. The SA, on the other hand, has stumbled from crisis to crisis as the Socialist Workers Party has gained control.

Originally, the SA was the brainwave of the Socialist Party (ex-Militant) and various other Marxist grouplets. Then, the SWP had one of its regular changes of direction and decided it wanted to get involved. Of course the SWP never just get involved in anything, they have to control things. The result, as predicted in these pages, was for the Socialist Party to withdraw, followed by others causing the SA to shrink to a SWP front organisation.

The SWP is the largest group on the Left but, in many ways, it resembles the party it has coat-tailed for decades and eventually seeks to replace Labour. It tries to be all things to all people. On the one hand, you have their slogan "One solution - revolution!" trotted out to students at 'Freshers Fayres' every October. Then, they attempt to get into bed with the old Communist Party (CPG), mainly because it has access to pots of money, and the Muslim Association of Britain (MAB), mainly to get disaffected anti-war votes, all to forge an electoral alliance slightly to the left of New Labour.



After having thrown most of its efforts into the anti-war movement, finding itself addressing huge anti-war rallies and claiming the credit for any successes, the SWP has been traumatised by its failure to recruit from the campaign. Nevertheless, it still hopes to tap into this anti-Blair sentiment by attempting to build (their favourite word) a movement to win seats at local and maybe even European elections.

In order to do this, they have to put on an even more moderate face. They have been standing in parliamentary elections through their Socialist Alliance guise. However, this is not working, so they are currently attempting to put another twist into the plot by pushing their "Peace & Justice" campaign-come-party with the MAB and the CPG. It also means quietly sidelining certain issues to appease some sections of the alliance, namely gay and women's rights. These were described by a leading light of the SWP as "shibboleths"; in other words, these principles are expendable.

There has been a manifestation of this in Lancashire. Here, they were buoyed up by electoral success in Preston, where they got a Socialist Alliance councillor through an anti-war alliance with local Imams. The result is a new 'paper' for "the social and labour movements", *Alliance*, launched in September. It pretends to be a broad based paper pursuing no particular party line. A quick look at the editorial board reveals that the majority are SWP activists.

Meanwhile, in another corner of the left-liberal quagmire, George Monbiot, darling of the Guardian reading Left, has put forward his own proposals to "unite socialist parties, anti-globalisation campaigners, peace activists and faith groups, including Muslims", in a new electoral alliance. Monbiot is also favoured by the SWP, and it doesn't take a great leap of the imagination to see connections between the two ideas, especially as both include Salma Yaqoob, chair of Birmingham Stop the War Coalition, who has been linked with the 'peace and justice' scheme.

This twisting and turning and changes of direction should come as no surprise to anyone who knows anything about the history of the SWP. They adhere to the Leninist maxim of 'bending the stick' to adapt their policies to the latest prevailing conditions and depending on which audience they are addressing. This enables them to hold a number of contradictory positions at the same time.

As fast as they recruit new members, they shed them at the other end. This constant influx means it's easy to change track and issue new instructions to the membership. The SWP's 'democratic centralism' roughly translates as 'doing what the Central Committee says because they have the greatest understanding of Marxist theory and how to apply it'.

The other myriad Marxist parties operate along similar lines, from the most extremely authoritarian to a more libertarian non-Leninist approach. The one thing that unites them all and differentiates them from anarchist groups is their underlying principle of the seizure of state power by the party in the name of the working class. To achieve this goal, they believe that the building of their party is of prime importance. They build the same authoritarian structures in their parties that capitalism and the state have to keep

GM crop failure - government ploughs on



Scientists have pronounced the government's field scale trials of genetically modified (GM) crops to be a resounding failure. Over the three years of the trials, problems were found with all three experimental crops. On the one hand, because the weedkiller used in the GM maize trial is banned by the European Union, that trial has been invalidated. On the other hand, GM sugar beet and GM oil seed rape were found to reduce farmland wildlife even more than conventional crops, and scientists recommend that they should not be grown in the UK.

Despite these reports, Blair still appears bent on doing the bidding of the GM corporations. Following the trial reports, pro-GM interests were quick off the mark. Referring to 'misleading' reports in the press, 114 not-so-independent scientists wrote to the prime minister. Being for the most part consultants with the GM corporations or working at research institutions which receive massive funding from the GM industry, these scientists most definitely had an axe to grind.

Questioned about his response, Blair acknowledged 'problems for wildlife', but claimed the science of genetics to be vital to Britain's industry, that it is 'the most important science of the 21st century' and that it should be allowed to develop. This doesn't square with his claims that the government has no interest in the matter one way or the other. Furthermore, it directly contradicts a report in July by his own Cabinet Office which concluded there were no economic benefits to Britain from current modified crops. Blair, as it happens, is unable – or unwilling – to distinguish between the biotechnology industry as a whole and the relatively tiny proportion of it devoted to GM agriculture, which employs little more than 1,000 people in Britain.

If the government does give the green light to GM crops, then direct action is set to spread. Already we have seen the destruction of all of this year's seed list trials (where new strains are tested). Now, more than 1,500 people have joined the pledge to pull up GM crops. With 93% of respondents to the 'GM Nation' consultation believing that GM technology is driven more by profiteering than by public interest, we can expect more and more people to take direct action if New Labour decides to ignore public and scientific opinion. (To sign the pledge, contact 01865 727972 or www.greengloves.org.) Perhaps it is the willingness on the part of anti-GM protestors to take direct action that led to two high court judges recently overturning the defence of acting to protect the environment. It was just such a defence that saw the acquittal at Sherborne, near Yeovil, of four activists on trespass charges after they had shackled themselves to tractors during a demonstration in Dorset.

Meanwhile, as the debate wends its weary way across the media, only the scientific aspects of the technology are being emphasised. However, during a five venue tour in November, Canadian farmers shifted the focus to other aspects. Some Canadian farmers have stopped growing GM crops because they are unprofitable and uncontrollable. Often, it is only the chemical companies who charge farmers a licence fee that see any profit.

On top of this, it is impossible to segregate the GM crops from other fields because seeds cling to hard-to-reach places on equipment. According to the Canadian farmers' union, 'GM crops have become a threat to the Canadian farming economy, rather than the miracle they were once hailed as'. Similar stories are emerging elsewhere too. While the UK field trials didn't look at cross-contamination by GM crops, in Mexico, contamination of traditional maize varieties by genetically modified maize crops were found in 24% of samples, with some showing the presence of up to four different GM types. Similar results have been found in Spain, where Europe's only GM crop is grown, including the first case of an organic farmer losing their organic status due to GM contamination.

GM crops are about control of the seed supply and the inexorable lust for profit by US and European corporations. This technology is unnecessary. It will not feed the world any more than pleas by ageing rock stars. For that, we need a revolution in attitude – so collectively we control what goes into the fields, the groundwater supply and into our bellies. This, and a desire to organise together to do something about it. DA

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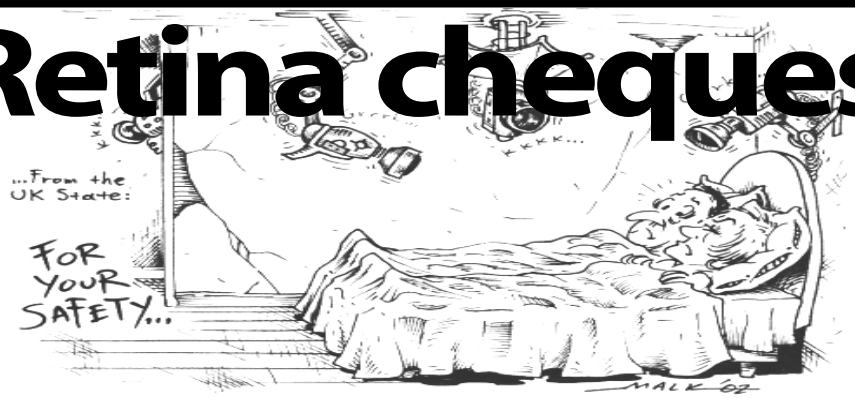


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control. Marxist party methods mirror the very social order they seek to replace. In doing so, they have become part of the problem instead of part of the solution.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the emerging anarcho-syndicalist movement argued against the unions tying themselves to the Labour Party, and pushed for independence and direct action instead. Now, 100 years on, we are still arguing for unions independent of all political parties (no matter how revolutionary they may seem). Faced with an authoritarian hierarchical society, we must organise and act in a libertarian, non-hierarchical way. Using such methods may make for a long struggle, but if we are to succeed in bringing about a social revolution, we need to start somewhere solid. DA

Retina cheques



Not a single Capita executive or those of their compatriot private-public service companies can have failed to rub their hands at the news. Millions of people in Britain will start receiving their compulsory national identity cards in four years time under the detailed plans unveiled recently by Home Secretary David Blunkett.

Blunkett proudly bragged to the House of Commons about how he is going to start by rounding up all the foreigners and forcing them to act as guinea pigs for the new scheme.

Under the January 2004 legislation, the five million people who apply each year for a passport or driving licence will automatically be issued with an identity card and their personal details stored on a new national identity computer database. They will also have to undergo electronic retina and fingerprint scans so that unique body information is locked into the new combined ID card/passport or driving licence.

The identity card will also be compulsory from 2007 for a further 4.6 million foreign nationals living in Britain. Blunkett predicts that within a further five years, more than 80% of the population will have their own personal ID cards – and their own personal databases, with all sorts of detailed information held electronically for the state to access at the click of a mouse.

Tony Blair is Blunkett's biggest supporter over his power-crazed move to ride roughshod over any last vestiges of personal liberties. As Blunkett proudly bragged to the House of Commons about how he is going to start by rounding up all the foreigners and forcing them to act as guinea pigs for the new scheme, Blair stepped forward and pitched in his brazenly, fixed-grin tuppence-worth: "If we are going to have the right security and the right systems within our public services for the future, we do need to contemplate things that maybe, a few decades ago, we wouldn't."

So, it's the terrorists fault, all those people harbouring weapons of mass destruction; we have to blow them away before they might do something. We all have to give up our civil liberties because of the terrorists – it is nothing to do with paranoid Labour governments. Anyway, all law-abiding citizens have nothing to fear from being tracked, taped and followed. As long as you don't stick out, speak up, or deviate from being intensely normal and law-abiding, you'll be OK. Big Brother is there to look after you and weed out the dissenters.

The ID card scheme will be one of the largest technology projects ever attempted by the government. It will eventually entail a national database of 60 million people (Britons at home and living overseas), including electronically scanned images of their eyes and fingerprints. Launching the plan, Blunkett said: "I know some people believe there is a sinister motive behind the cards, that they will be part of a Big Brother state. This is wrong." Oh, that's OK then, after all, this government never attempts to spin the truth slightly by peddling the exact opposite of reality. After all, Saddam definitely had those WMDs – we got a dossier to prove it.

To add insult to injury, the passport/ID card, which will come in from 2007, is likely to cost £77, with a plain ID card costing £35. Meanwhile, Ministers are to press ahead with plans to ensure that communications companies retain the records of every telephone, internet and email user, in the face of determined opposition from industry and civil liberties groups. The Home Office has demanded that phone companies and internet service providers stockpile customer records for up to 12 months, so that they can be accessed by law enforcement and other state machinery bodies. The data includes names and addresses of subscribers, calls made and received, internet sites visited, sources and destinations of emails, and mobile phone data which can pinpoint the user's whereabouts to within a few hundred metres. Every local council in the UK will get subscriber data access, while everyone from the UK atomic energy constabulary to the financial services authority and the radiocommunications agency will join the police in having full access to the monster database.

The Government has a splendid record for spectacular cock-ups in just about every big IT contract it has been involved in, from passports to immigration. But what the hell, so much data, so many private-public contracts to be doled out to (mis)handle, so much public cash to be made. This ID card fiasco is going to be just like Iraq all over again, a cash bonanza provided from state funds - the spoils to the commercial friends of the victors.

There is only one chink of light for the rest of us to go at. Remember over a decade ago, another crazy government scheme launched in a blaze of certainty, which bit the dust and took a prime minister with it? ID cards 'aint happened yet, and we have a few short years to use all our direct action methods of persuasion to make it unworkable, just like we did the Poll Tax.



To take action - Defy ID is an adhoc network for active resistance to increasing surveillance and the introduction of ID or 'entitlement' cards in the uk: www.defy-id.org.uk

Heavy metal workers

The Social Democratic green government and the Christian Democrat opposition in Germany have recently agreed to slash health care spending by 23 billion euros from 2007. Workers will have to pay higher insurance contributions.

Patients will have to pay 10 euros to visit the doctor, and more for drugs. It is aimed at lowering labour and other costs for business and increasing 'efficiency' in the health care sector. The first reforms will be implemented from January 2004.

Top Social Democrat Gerhard Shroeder has also won support from the majority of the Social Democrat Party to push through legislation to further deregulate the labour market. Sounds familiar to those of us in Britain? Schroeder seems to be following the new Labour "Third Way" to the letter. To make Germany more 'competitive', he plans to lower labour costs and cut welfare. How long before he starts cutting income tax to further benefit the rich?

Of course, this all has a certain logic to it if you accept there is no alternative to capitalism and the free market. Germany has to compete with other countries, all of whom are cutting their workers conditions to the bone. So, it is German workers which have to pay the price. Not surprisingly, the German labour unions oppose the plans, especially the metal workers' union, IG Metall, electing a so-called left-wing leader, Jurgen Peters.

As we have seen in Britain, everything Germany does will make the rich richer and widen the already outrageous inequality gap. In the short to medium term, German workers will need to form a united front against the bosses and politicians, who are all united against them. This needs to be a class front, since it is opposing the onslaught of the upper classes, and their collaborators in the working/middle classes.

From our experiences in Britain, from Thatcher, Major and Blair, it seems likely that the bosses/politicians will try to pick off groups of workers one at a time – remember the steelworkers, printworkers, and then, of course, the miners in the 1980s. Thatcher did most of the dirty work before her greatest admirer, Tony Blair, got in on the act.

As soon as one group of German workers is attacked, all the other groups need to back them up to stop the rot. It may sound like old ideas, but an injury to one is really and truly an injury to all, and unified action such as a general strike is the only effective defence. All German workers need to occupy their workplaces to stop bosses and scabs taking them over, and keep state forces such as the police at bay. It sounds like a tall order, and one we failed at in Britain, but it is the only option.

Of course, such actions would scare off union leaders, who will want to come to some sort of accommodation with the bosses and politicians, thus giving them legitimacy as union bosses. But give any boss an inch, and they'll take a mile.

From hard experience, we can let German workers know what mistakes we workers have made in Britain, i.e. fighting (or not) individually, and from this, come up with more ways of taking them on and defending ourselves more effectively.

If Schroeder can't get his reforms through, it is likely his government will fall, and a right-wing Christian democrat 'alternative' will get elected. They will have to be fought just as hard. Whether Christian democrat, social democrat, or even fascist or Marxist, they are all the same – they represent the bosses against us, the workers, and we have to stand and defend ourselves against them or they will crush us. DA

Menwith Hill



October 11th - This was the fourth year running that the Campaign Against American Bases (CAAB - and this year with Yorkshire CND), organised the Menwith Hill for 'Keep Space for Peace' week Menwith Hill - crucial with Fylingdales to the American Missile Defense System.

It was a beautiful warm autumn day. The Yorkshire Dales looked stunning - but rudely interrupted by the perimeter fence, coils of barbed wire, CTTV cameras, radomes and an excess of police and police horses. Welcome to Menwith Hill - the reality of the US militarism of the Dales.

ON THE EDGE

Labour-tories

Immigration minister Beverley Hughes has bought a Lakeland cottage - prompting calls for council tax hikes on second homes. The MP for Stretford and Urmston declined to comment this week on the fact she and her family have bought a £201,000 property in picturesque Finsthwaite, near Newby Bridge, claiming it was "a private matter". Don't ya luv these New Labour tories?

Rubbish wasters

England's rubbish position near the bottom of the European recycling league is set to change after a new law requiring councils to provide every home with a doorstep recycling collection passed its final Parliamentary hurdle in the House of Lords. Importantly for many local anti-incineration campaigns, the new law will also help stave off the threat of dozens of new rubbish incinerators across England.

At present, over 40% of councils don't do doorstep collections, and most of the rest only collect paper. In contrast, Daventry Council is the UK's top recycler and already collects 8 different materials from the doorstep of every one of its 30,000 households.

Beyond shameful

The average fine for a health and safety offence conviction dropped 21% over the last year. This exposes the grubby reality behind the government's spin about promoting a safer workplace. Mick Holder of the London Hazards Centre said; "Employers are getting away with killing, disabling and injuring their workers at the expense of a paltry fine…Nothing will change until errant employers face real sanctions, such as prison and much higher fines that reflect the seriousness of the crimes."

Asda was fined £4,000 recently after Brian Costin, 42, a warehouse worker was crushed to death at one of its Yorkshire stores in July 2000. Graham Naden, who trades under the name Roof Build was fined £2,500 after worker Terence Severs died and Huyton magistrates heard that his life could have been saved if £100 safety scaffolding had been used.

www.simonjones.org.uk

ON THE EDGE

Letters from hometown soldiers

Letters from hometown soldiers describing their successes rebuilding Iraq have been appearing in newspapers across the US as public opinion on the mission sours. And all the letters are the same.

Researchers found identical letters from different soldiers with the 2nd Battalion of the 503rd Airborne Infantry Regiment, also known as "The Rock," in 11 different newspapers across the US. The five-paragraph letter talks about the soldiers' efforts to re-establish police and fire departments, and build water and sewer plants in the northern Iraqi city of Kirkuk, where the unit is based.

"The quality of life and security for the citizens has been largely restored, and we are a large part of why that has happened," the letter reads. It then goes on to describe people waving at passing troops and children running up to shake their hands and say 'thank you.' It seems the soldiers are being told to sign the letters, but in some cases, their names were used without their knowledge. One soldier didn't know about the letter until his father congratulated him for getting it published in the local newspaper.

Of course, spokesmen for the occupation forces deny all knowledge or claim that it has been done on the initiative of one soldier.

No matter how President Bush and the Pentagon try and dress it up, it is clear as the death toll continues to rise and Americans see the body bags coming home that the US have bitten off more than they can chew in Iraq. Of course, throughout these reports of American casualties, there continues to be little mention of the number of Iraqis killed every day.

Meanwhile, Stephen Funk, a US Marine, has been jailed for "refusing to deploy with his unit because of his opposition to the war". Charged with desertion and thrown in prison for six months; he is becoming the focal point for a 'refusenik' campaign in the US military. Write to: Corp Base Brig; Attn: Stephen Funk Bldg 1041 PSC 20140 Camp Lejeune, NC. 28542-0140, USA.
Or sign the on-line petition; www.join-snafu.org

Hurricane DAN

It was like a hurricane - warnings were made over the tannoy, signs covered and security put on standby. Yes, DAN - the disabled people's Direct Action Network - were back in town, rattling the big disability charities and sending their staff of mainly non-disabled people scuttling inside. October really is the hurricane season.

Hurricane DAN was creating a big stir on the streets of central London with a series of direct action demos, while over at Westminster, the winds of protest were blowing at a more leisurely pace. A lobby in support of the Disabled Peoples' Rights and Freedoms Bill was taking place at Parliament on Wednesday, organised by BCODP - the British Council of Disabled People. The lobby took place as the three-day street protest by DAN members ended in central London.

Among the charities 'hit' in the direct action demonstrations were Scope, RNIB and Mencap. The message to each of the big charities was blunt and sometimes even rude: "Move over and let us talk for ourselves."

A DAN spokesperson said, "These charities should shut up and shut up shop. They are not run by us and not controlled by us, yet they claim to speak for us." The message to charities on DAN stickers was even more blunt, saying; "Fuck off and stay fucked off".

"We say to them that despite the messages they put out about disabled people being powerless and needing their help, we are powerful and it's time for them to go. Charities have become the major stumbling block to disabled peoples' freedom, running many of the institutions that segregate us from mainstream society."

In spite of the strong and sometimes abusive language, the spokesperson stressed that DAN was a non-violent organisation. "We base our methods on tried and trusted civil disobedience methods - from Gandhi and the black civil rights movement onwards."

Not surprisingly, the protest was not well received within organisations such as the RNIB, although inside the building, some staff were said to be puzzled by the demo. "I was trying to find out what we had done to warrant this," said one staff member. Another said that people inside had not even heard of DAN.

In addition to objections about the work they do, a major criticism aimed at charities like Scope, Mencap and RNIB is the number of disabled people they employ. The big charities have a poor record in this area: the RNIB recently followed others in announcing the appointment of a non-disabled CEO, Lesley-Anne Alexander, on 2nd October this year.

An employment survey in Disability Now (published by Scope) earlier this year revealed that Scope had a tiny number of senior managers with disabilities (0.9% of staff earning more than £30,000 p.a.) When it came to staff overall, Scope did little better, with just 3.5% being disabled employees - lagging significantly behind groups like GLAD (Greater London Action on Disability) and Arthritis Care.

Mencap (2.8% of staff disabled) and Leonard Cheshire (over 2%) were also mentioned as "lagging behind". The journalist who wrote the text accompanying the survey admitted there are "gaping differences" in how far the big charities practice what they preach.

"Can charities change?", asked the headline accompanying her feature. The answer from DAN is loud and clear: "No, they can't."

DAN are highlighting some of the attitudes of the major charities to their workforce. It's not surprising that disabled workers get short shrift from the charities when they often treat all their workers like shit.

Disabled People's Direct Action Network; http://dspace.dial.pipex.com/town/square/de95/m_civrgt.htm



September - Massive demo against the Arms Fair, DSEI in London.

Mad Pride

Mad Pride is an idea which came out of the 1997 Gay Pride Festival in London. A few survivors of the mental health system said, "we could do with a festival like this". And so, a motley collection of individuals got together and slowly started organising themselves so as to put on events. These Mad Pridesters did some research on the Name and Aims of the thing. Then, they set about forming a non-profit-distributing company to develop MAD PRIDE. In 1999, they organised a series of gigs and concerts.

Mad Pride is a not-for-profit organisation and sees itself as part of the civil rights movement. The objects for which it was established are to:

- promote positive images of mental health;
- counteract discrimination and prejudice towards people who have experienced mental distress;
- educate the public in mental health issues;
- campaign for better mental health provision;
- campaign for less oppressive and more enabling legislation and practice guidelines;
- promote economic, social, environmental and cultural integration of user/survivors into mainstream society and our active participation and integration into community life.

At the 1999 MIND Conference in Blackpool, there was quite an extensive debate about the use of the word "mad", and we realised that there was still a significant proportion of user/survivors in the UK who were uncomfortable with the word.

Dr Rachel Perkins - a clinical director of rehab at Pathways Mental Health Trust (SW London) said famously while chairing a Plenary of perhaps 900 people; "I am proud to be Mad. I am a Mad Dyke!" But people have written to Mad Pride, saying that they are not proud of mental distress; "I am not proud of having been mentally ill," writes one. Now, that is not what we mean at all. The word "mad" is basically a term of abuse. Remember, so once was the word "black".

But people reclaimed the word and used it as a proud badge to be worn along the long march to freedom. There was Black Power. There is Black Pride.

So the committee at their October 99 meeting has agreed to model the word more closely along the lines of the Black struggle and to encourage the use of the word "mad", but to capitalise it! Therefore, it is always to be written "Mad" to distinguish it as a deadly serious political word - a constant reminder of how we were treated by others, how we are treated by others, but sending out a message that the day has now arrived when we are not going to be treated like this any more.

Another criticism is that because we often deal with pop music and popular culture, we are being lightweight and frivolous. We need to campaign and campaign hard!!! Well, we do not agree that pop music and culture is frivolous. The UK is very good at this line of activity and, what's more, there are many user/survivors working in the field. One of our aims is to leave the psychiatric ghetto and begin to get a bit mainstream.

In a sense, what Mad Pride does, rather than what it says, is the campaign.

www.madpride.org.uk/





ON THE EDGE

Who needs spelling?

"Aoccdrnig to a rserchear at an Elingsh uinervtisy, it deosn't mttaer in waht oredr the ltteers in a wrod are, the olny iprmoatnt tighn is taht the frist and lsat ltteers are in the rghit pclae. Teh rset can be a toatl mses and you can sitll raed it wouthit a porbelm. Tihs is bcuseae we do not raed ervey lteter by itslef but the wrod as a wlohe." (The Teacher, November 2003).

Bent coppers

Avon and Somerset Police have prosecuted only one of more than 400 officers caught speeding since January. A total of 419 police vehicles have been issued with speeding notices over the last nine months. One officer got a £60 fine and three penalty points, but the remaining 418 have not been prosecuted. The Association of British Drivers (ABD) said "Speed cameras, and the way speed is being enforced, are criminalising everybody, but the police's own people are let off". Well, what d'you expect, bent copper is an oxymoron.

Asylum appeal

Section 55 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act deprives asylum seekers of accommodation or money unless they claim "as soon as is reasonably practicable" (i.e. within 24 hours) after their arrival in the UK. With winter setting in and many already sleeping rough, Home Secretary David Blunkett has announced that the government will be putting asylum seeker families, including children, out on the street. Using an amnesty for some to cover for this brutality, he said that families whose asylum claim has been turned down will be denied support unless they agree to be "voluntarily" sent back to the countries they have had to flee.

The Crossroads Coalition for Justice for Asylum Seekers (Tel: 0207 482 2496, Fax: 0207 209 4761) is defending asylum seekers, and includes:

The African Liberation Support Campaign: nkexplo@yahoo.co.uk

The Eritrean Women's Group,

Legal Action for Women: law@crossroadswomen.net

Payday, a network of men: payday@paydaynet.org

Soap & eyewash

Does Unilever really wash whiter - or is it a total whitewash?



India

The World Bank's Water and Sanitation Program estimated that in India, a quarter of people in urban areas and three quarters of the people in rural areas do not use soap every day. The immediate corporate response was two international aid projects in as many years, telling them to use soap.

First came the Kerala 'Health in Your Hands' project, launched by Hindustan Lever Limited, subsidiary of multinational giant Unilever (the world's largest soaps and detergents company), along with the World Bank, the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM), and the Kerala Government.

The whole idea was more about selling soap than improving sanitation, and the blatant soap marketing led to angry protests until the Kerala Government opted out of the project. Then came the WASH project, launched in summer 2003 – another public private 'partnership' which is more about corporates selling soap than actually improving sanitation conditions.

At any one time, more than half the poor of the developing world are ill from causes related to poor hygiene, sanitation and water supply. Diarrheal disease alone kills 6,000 children every day. The majority of illnesses in the world are caused by faecal matter. One gram of faecal matter can contain 10 million viruses, one million bacteria, 1,000 parasite cysts, and 100 worm eggs. In most developing countries, only about 1-2% of the government spending goes to low cost water and sanitation.

Had the Kerala project gone as planned, extending the initiative to four states over three years would have cost an estimated US$41 million. But why Kerala for a pilot program on washing hands for hygiene? With the lowest childhood mortality, highest female literacy, hygiene standards and access to safe water, Kerala is a role model, not an ailing test ground. It is simply a ploy by the multinational soap companies to market their products and snuff out competition from local soap companies. There are already several Indian soap manufacturers competing for the same market, including small scale and cottage industries, soap production schemes initiated by women's micro-credit groups and village-level home industries.

The market for soap products is largely mature in developed markets, but the growth potential in developing countries is huge. A study by the Kerala Sashtra Sahitya Parishad (People's Science Forum) says the annual profit of Hindustan Lever Ltd alone for a tiny state like Kerala is about Rs12000 million (US $250 million). Their aggressive marketing strategy has systematically destroyed a vibrant and locally self-sufficient small-scale detergent and soap industry that had come about after independence and was meeting the needs of the local populace in many parts of the country.

The real reason for the sanitation gap is basic inequality. One flush of the toilet uses more water than an average person in the developing world uses for the whole day's washing, cleaning, cooking and drinking. An average person in the developing world uses 10 litres of water a day, while an average person in the United Kingdom uses 135 litres of water every day.

Uganda

The future of a World Bank-sponsored dam scheme at Bujagali Falls on the Victoria Nile in eastern Uganda has been thrown into question with the withdrawal of energy giant AES Corporation from the project. Virginia-based AES, the world's largest independent energy producer, is currently under investigation by the Ugandan Inspectorate of Government and the US Justice Department for alleged bribery. The company, which owns and operates power generation and distribution facilities in 28 countries, is currently pulling out of a number of its operations world-wide and plans to write off the $75 million it invested in the AES Nile Power Bujagali project.

The $530 million Bujagali dam project has been overshadowed by controversy from its inception in the mid-1990s, when AES won the contract from the Ugandan government without a competitive bidding process, and the agreement between the two parties remained secret. AES maintained that Bujagali Dam would help pull Uganda out of poverty, but, in reality, it is a costly white elephant that would increase the nation's debt load, and produce electricity that few Ugandans could afford.

The World Bank in particular has drawn heavy fire for its backing of the Bujagali hydropower project. The dam has been the centrepiece of the Bank's plan for privatising Uganda's energy sector and is part of a broad agenda by the World Bank to promote massive hydroelectric projects as a means of shifting energy production into the private sector in developing countries.

This international news could not have been brought to you without the following excellent WebSources:
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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

Belize

Plans for a devastating dam in the Macal River Valley in Belize are moving ahead. A little over a year after environmentalists managed to block construction, Fortis, Inc., of Canada has contracted a Chinese construction company to begin building. Non-governmental organisations working to prevent construction of the Chalillo Dam are now increasing pressure on Fortis by readying another legal challenge. They are also pressing AMEC, the giant engineering company brokering the deal between Fortis and the Chinese builder, to end its involvement in the project.

UK-based AMEC presents itself as 'green'; keeping a low profile about its support for the nuclear industry, and emphasising its support for wind energy. It conducted what it said was an independent environmental assessment of the dam, which many consider to be flawed. The dam would flood the upper Macal River Valley, erasing 57 square kilometres of the last intact rainforest in northern Central America. It would destroy a habitat for rare jaguars, tapirs, crocodiles and a subspecies of the scarlet macaw, of which only 1,000 remain in the wild, 200 of them in Belize.

Sign the petition to stop Fortis: http://petition.stopfortis.org and tell AMEC what you think:
AMEC Plc, Northwich, Cheshire 65, Carter Lane, London CW8 2YA.
Tel: +44 (0)20 7574 3999 / 75395800
Fax: +44 (0)20 7574 3199
Website: www.amec.co.uk
Email: AmecLondon@amec.com

US

Levi-Strauss, that all-American brand, has announced the closure of its remaining factories in the US and Canada. Almost 2,000 jobs will be lost as the company transfers its manufacturing operations offshore.

In Costa Rica, Levi workers earn in a day what their US counterparts earn in an hour. Levi's claim that it "is committed to ensuring that individuals making its products anywhere in the world do so in safe and healthy working conditions and are treated with dignity and respect" is a marked contrast to CEO and President, Philip Marineau's surprisingly candid acknowledgement that "the apparel industry is chasing low-cost labour."

It is such "low-cost labour" that led to immigrant workers in Saipan's garment industry to file a lawsuit in 1999 alleging that they were falsely lured to the US territory by promises of high pay. On arrival, they were forced to endure the country's minimum wage of $3.05, "donate" time after their shift was over and live with the threat of being fired and deported. As a US Commonwealth, Saipan is exempt from American labour, immigration and customs laws, thus allowing clothing to be stamped with "Made in the USA" tags and avoiding the complex system of quotas that limits US imports from foreign nations. Twenty-six companies agreed to a settlement involving the establishment of an independent monitoring system to prevent future abuses and the creation of a $20 million fund to pay for back wages. The twenty-seventh company, Levi's, is still refusing.

US/Scotland

Attorneys in a major Silicon Valley cancer cluster lawsuit against IBM have uncovered a "corporate mortality file" in which IBM tracked the deaths of more than 30,000 workers - and the lawyers claim the company knew its electronics workers were dying of cancer more often than normal. The IBM death records were reviewed by a medical expert hired by former IBM workers ahead of a court case starting this week. The analysis by Boston University epidemiologist Richard Clapp concludes: 'By 1975, IBM must have known their manufacturing employees had significantly increased death rates due to cancer and must have known that through the next two decades.' He says data suggest that IBM workers were much more likely to die from cancers of the breast, blood and lymph than the general population.

The case is being followed closely by campaigners in Scotland's Silicon Glen, where there has also been concern about cancer and other risks. The HSE launched a special investigation of the semiconductor industry after it found raised cancer rates among women who worked at the National Semiconductor plant at Greenock. It served 12 legal notices forcing other companies in Scotland to remedy breaches found by inspectors.

For more information on safety campaigns in Silicon Glen, visit http://www.hazards.org/haz76/natsemi.htm

The pie flies when you are having fun

In October, Regina Vargo, Chief US Trade Negotiator for the Central American Free Trade Area, got her just desserts in the form of a banana cream pie delivered to her from an anti-CAFTA activist in Houston. Bananas were chosen to signify the agricultural products of Latin America. Ms. Vargo was in Houston for the eighth round of negotiations on CAFTA, which is due to be passed by the end of this year. The pieing took place at the Westin Galleria Hotel, during the reception following the opening ceremonies. When the activist pied her, they declared "No More NAFTAs!"; "Free trade is slave trade!"

CAFTA will be the first trade agreement passed by the United States since the passage of NAFTA almost a decade ago. A lot of pressure is being placed on Central American countries to wrap up the CAFTA negotiation quickly after the walkout of the "G-22" countries at the WTO meeting in Cancun. This action came in the midst of a busy week of direct action against the CAFTA talks in Houston, including several large banner drops (one was dropped from the 23rd story of the hotel where the meetings are taking place), meeting disruptions, white overall blocks, marches and culture jamming.



Correction

Last issue (DA28), there was an article on David's Jade Palace, in which the union affiliation was mistakenly reported. Local 318 is independent of all other unions, and is not affiliated to the IWW.

Burning & bombing

South Korea

In Seoul, labour activists hurled rocks at riot police in a violent protest, following a warning that the government would take strong action against labour unrest. The three ministers in charge of justice, labour and police issued a joint statement calling for stern measures against illegal strikes or collective actions.

Labour groups have threatened strikes in the coming months to protest against planned new laws aimed at curbing union power and giving employers more freedom to hire and fire. The government promised to curb labour militancy and strikes, which have apparently alarmed foreign investors. Companies want tighter restrictions on strike pay and greater freedom to use replacement workers during strikes, arguing that South Korea's competitiveness is suffering because of high labour costs.

South Korea II

Six days a week, up to 16 hours a day, the skies above the tiny fishing village of Maehyang-Ri fill with F-15, F-16 and A-10 fighter jets that hurl bombs at a small island less than a mile away. The planes are from US military bases across the Pacific, and they have been coming since 1951, when US troops took the area from North Korea during the Korean War and then set up their practice bombing range without consulting the South Korean government.

Five years ago, the bombing range was privatised and its management turned over the multinational weapons contractor Lockheed Martin. Then, in July, the bombing range changed hands when an Alaska-based company called Arctic Slope World Service took over the contract.

When Arctic Slope won the contract for Maehyang-Ri, it had already managed American military installations, including maintaining the Army's AH-64 Apache, UH-60 Black Hawk, and UH-1 Huey helicopters at Godman Army Airfield, Fort Knox, Kentucky, and running the 600 unit housing complex at McConnell Air Force Base near Witchita, Kansas. The company's first act at Maehyang-ri was to fire all the workers and make them reapply for their old jobs. More than a quarter of the Korean employees weren't hired back. There's no union for the workers at Maehyang-ri and Arctic Slope has made clear it doesn't want one. Under the agreement that governs relations between the U.S. military and South Korea, American military contractors are not required to follow local labour laws.

Arctic Slope's history dates back to 1971, when Congress passed a law turning over some of Alaska's land to companies nominally owned by Inupiat Eskimos. At the same time, the government bypassed recognised tribal governments. As a result, native claims to almost all of Alaska were extinguished. The Arctic Slope Regional Corporation (ASRC) represents eight villages above the Alaskan Arctic Circle and the company website claims that: "By adhering to the traditional values of protecting the land, the environment and the culture of the Inupiat, ASRC has successfully adapted and prospered in an ever changing economic climate."

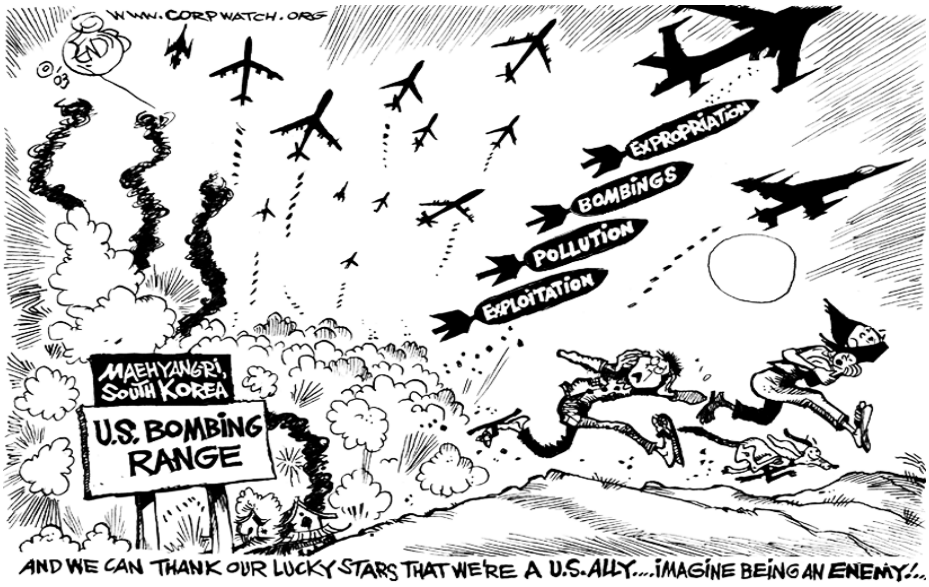
Meanwhile, the targets for the bombs are islands in the beautiful bay, not far from where the community derives its livelihoods by fishing. One entire island has already been wiped out, while another two mile long island has been reduced to two-thirds its original size. A study of Maehyang-ri shell-fish found toxic levels of cadmium and copper and 145 times normal levels of lead. Not all the bombs hit the islands - thousands can be found in the hillsides surrounding the village, and people's homes have often been struck. At least 12 people have been killed and numerous others wounded by bombs that went astray.

Local residents have protested many times and in many ways, including occupations of the bombing range, demands for compensation, and flying kites to distract the low flying pilots.

Visit URL: http://www.corpwatch.org for more information.



Some 2,000 protesters scuffle with riot police after a South Korean labour activist burned himself during an anti-government rally in Seoul on 26 October.



Australia

Pressure is mounting on the New South Wales state government to introduce industrial manslaughter legislation. An estimated 10,000 workers chanted "Jail bosses that kill" as they marched through Sydney and rallied in from Parliament House to protest at workplace deaths.

The secretary of the NSW Labour Council, John Robertson, said the state's labour government was re-elected on a policy of being tough on crime. "The biggest crime in this state is industrial manslaughter," he said. The minister for industrial relations, John Della Bosca, insisted the law is already sufficient, but the state government was willing to add an offence dealing with "breach of duty resulting in death" that would include a maximum penalty of imprisonment. Della Bosca said the government would introduce 'fine tuning' legislation early next year.

Deaths are just not treated seriously by the courts - no employer has ever been jailed to date for safety crimes, and 75% of workplace deaths attract less than 20 per cent of the maximum fine.

For more on industrial manslaughter campaigns world-wide, visit http://www.hazards.org/deadlybusiness

France

McDonalds employees in Paris have been on strike for 6 months and counting. Not only are they on strike, they're also occupying the restaurant 24/7, shutting it down and turning it into a giant banner for their cause. Check out;

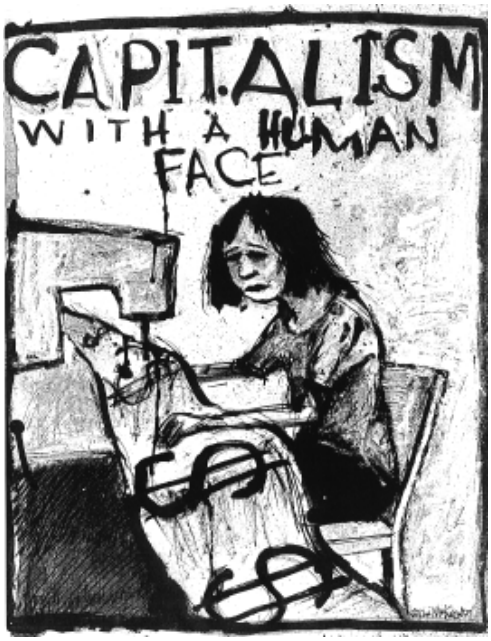
http://advaloreminternational.com/videos/mcdo.html

Nigeria

74 child slaves, some as young as 4 and none older than 15, have been rescued after being forced to smash granite in a Nigerian quarry for a year. The youngsters are receiving food, clothes and medical care in Benin after being rescued by Nigerian police from the traffickers who sold them into heavy labour. The children have told their rescuers that at least 13 of their young companions had died in the past three months, worn out by smashing and carrying rocks, and sleeping in the open without adequate food. Child labour and cross-border labour-trafficking is common across west Africa, while such mass operations to recover child labourers are extremely rare.

US III

WalMart's attempts to slash workers' health coverage signals a new race to the bottom in job-based health care for America's working families. Low wages combined with high costs make Wal-Mart's health coverage unaffordable for 46 percent of its low-paid workers. In 2001, Wal-Mart workers had to pay between 41 percent and 47 percent of the total cost of the company health plan, while similar employees at other large companies paid 16 percent of the total premium for single coverage, and 25 percent for family coverage.



If Wal-Mart can kill health care in southern California, then all employers will feel that they can get away with eliminating benefits, and it was this fear that led to Wal-Mart workers striking in October. They want to make the point that this is an extremely important struggle, not only for union members, but for people and their communities - by taking on their workers, these big, profitable companies are taking on the whole country.

Bangladesh

One garment worker named Kamal was killed and more than 200 injured in clashes between police and workers at BSCIC industrial park in Fatulla, Narayangoang, near Dhaka city in November. More than a dozen police were also injured, and several garment factories, their vehicles and offices were damaged.

The trouble flared after months of non-payments and withholding of wages by sweatshop factory bosses. When talks between union and bosses failed, the police arrested a labour activist, and the workers had had enough.

The National Garment Workers' Federation (NGWF) has subsequently demanded compensation for the murdered workers' families, better treatment of all injured workers, unconditional release of 20 arrested workers, and fulfilment of the factory workers' demands. It also co-ordinated garment workers' demonstrations across all garment industrial areas in the country.

BAT out of Burma!

British American Tobacco (BAT) has been in Burma since 1993, when the Singapore-based subsidiary of Rothmans International set up a joint venture with the Union of Myanmar Economic Holding Co. Ltd. UMEH is an investment company whose majority shareholder is the Directorate of Procurement of the Ministry of Defence. The BAT cigarette factory, which began production in 1995, is therefore directly and unambiguously involved with the ruling military dictatorship as joint venture partner, distributor and landlord.

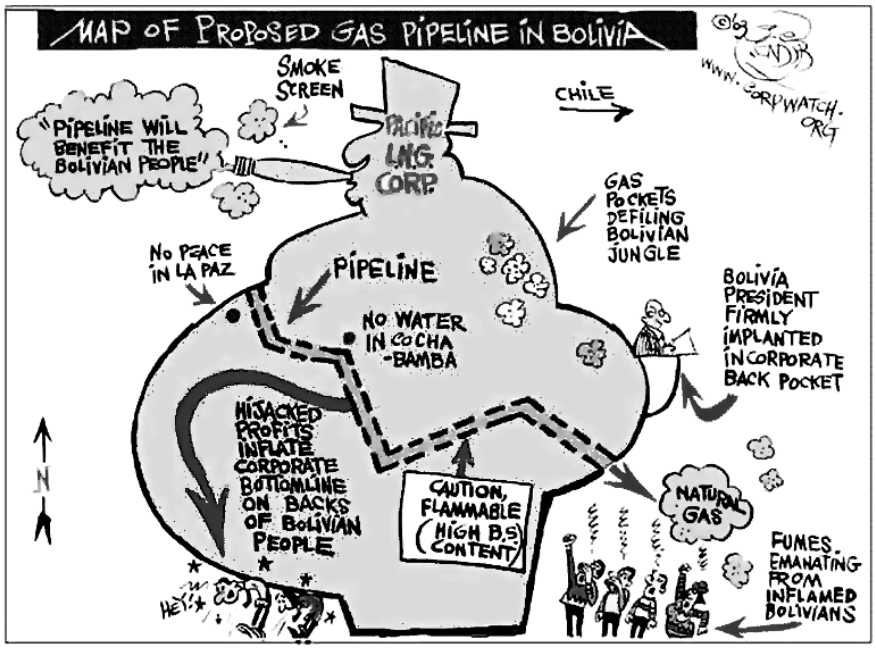
BAT has been insisting for years that its joint venture with the dictatorship has been "defining, demonstrating and setting an example for corporate social responsibility in Myanmar." Under the current conditions in Burma, however, transnational investment in the country can only fund the ongoing repression which has been going on since the military ousted the elected government and imposed brutal martial rule.

Fortunately, thousands of people have been sending messages to BAT, demanding they follow the example of other transnationals who have withdrawn from Burma in recognition of the fact that investment in repression is irreprehensible and will not be tolerated. Finally, BAT have got the message, and they have decided to pull out of Burma. They would never had chosen to do this, since they have not a shred of ethics and care only for profits. Nevertheless, at least the campaign made them get the message in the only language they understand - get out or else!

Visit http://www.iuf.org for more information.

No peace in La Paz

Direct actions across South America have featured in several recent issues of DA. Judging by recent events, 2004 is going to be another hot year for the continent, as, from Argentina to Guatemala via Bolivia and Colombia, people take to the streets to take on the corporate fat cats. and their political brown-noses.



Bolivia's capital city La Paz means 'peace' in Spanish, but this seems inappropriate after weeks drenched in tear gas and dead bodies. With tens of thousands of people flooding into the streets, setting up burning barricades and hurling sticks of dynamite at a murderous military, the country has been teetering on the brink of full-blown revolution.

Over 70 people were killed by the army in demonstrations that flared up after the government announced plans to sell its natural gas to the US and Mexico, a deal imposed by the IMF (International Monetary Fund) to bail out the economy. The protesters pointed out that Bolivia would only get 18% of the deal and that even these crumbs wouldn't reach the mouths of the poor (under the terms of the agreement with the Bolivian government, Pacific LNG would invest $5 billion to build the project, while the Bolivian government would receive royalties of 18%).

Repression reached its peak when 25 protesters were killed and nearly 100 injured in one day in El Alto, near La Paz. Many injured couldn't be recovered because police and military were shooting at anything that moved, and further 28 protesters were murdered during the following days. Protesters began demanding the resignation of President Sanchez de Lozada, and underlined their request by digging up roads with picks and barricading highways to block traffic. Although de Lozada relented and shelved the gas sell-off plan, protesters have now demanded "resignation or nothing" from a president who 'enjoys' 8% popularity.

As De Lozada's grip on power weakens, the country's social movement is growing stronger. In El Alto, despite martial law, more than 90% of the town remained under the control of neighbourhood assemblies, market vendors, university students and the Regional Workers' Central. In total, 1.5 million residents of La Paz and El Alto paralysed any semblance of 'normal' state control.



Mexico

Previous WTO negotiations were always characterised by the US and the EU isolating poorer countries and forcing through one-sided agreements that benefit western investment and corporations. But this time, the G22 (a group of African, Asian and South American countries), in coalition with an African bloc, stood firm, refusing to budge until the question of the West's unfair agricultural subsidies was dealt with. Nearly seventy other nations also refused to sign the final US and EU-written accord in Cancun. When the WTO tried to talk investment and competition instead of agriculture, it was the final straw and the talks collapsed.

Outside of the WTO fortress, the thousands ripping down fences, running the eco-village, holding alternative conferences and spreading the news were also playing their part. The four metre wide three metre high metal barrier separating the protesters from the WTO delegates finally gave way and, for the second time in four days, the barricades were breached. The team made up of hardened Mexican students, campesinos from Chiapas and black bloc anarchists was organised and led by Korean farmers. Meanwhile, hundreds of women methodically hammered their way through other sections of the fence, and news filtered through that members of Korean Civil Society succeeded in entering the ministerial conference centre. Despite all the deceptive words and oppressive security, a few thousand protesters took part in a flood of guerrilla actions and demonstrations over the four day arms fair.

Colombia

After being abducted from her home and bundled into a taxi, Esperanza Amaris Miranda was murdered in cold blood and her body abandoned in the street in Barrancabermeja.

Esperanza was a member of the Popular Women's Organisation (OFP) and a women's rights activist. The OPF, which for over 30 years has defended and promoted women's rights in Barrancabermeja (Santander) and the surrounding areas, had been declared a "military target" by paramilitary groups following the organisation's refusal to collaborate with them. Its members are constantly being issued with death threats, which is why the organisation's leader, Yolanda Becerra, had already asked the authorities to provide protection, so that the organisation could continue with its work.

For more info/messages of support, contact the ICFTU (International Confederation of Free Trade Unions), Boulevard du Roi Albert II 5, B1, B-1210 Brussels, Belgium. Tel.: +32 (2) 224 0232 Email: press@icftu.org

Mexico II

After workers at Tarrant México, a garment manufacturing plant in Ajalpan, Puebla, had a three-day strike to demand payment of owed benefits and end forced overtime and verbal and sexual harassment by management, 750 of the 1,100 employees formed the Independent Union of Tarrant México Company Workers (SUITTAR). Four days later, eight organisers were fired, and during recent months, Tarrant management has fired over 250 more SUITTAR supporters.

The Ajalpan plant produces denim products for clients such as Levi's (Levi's Strauss Signature jeans for exclusive distribution at Wal-Mart), Tommy Hilfiger, Charming Shoppes (Venezia and L.A. Blues jeans) and Limited Brands (Express jeans), and is just one of 11 denim factories in the region owned by Los Angeles-based Tarrant Apparel Group (TAG).

Urgent, immediate pressure is required to influence TAG's major international clients to force Tarrant to respect their Codes of Conduct and Mexican law, and urgent help is needed to donate to the Dismissed Workers Fund!

For more information, visit: www.nosweat.org.uk







Guatemala

When multinational Del Monte decided to move from a north east Guatemala plantation to cut costs in 1999, it fired over 900 members of the 4,000-strong Izabal Banana Workers Union. The move violated the company's contract with its labourers. Dismissed workers who refused to move from the Del Monte-owned plots found the land sold from under them to cattle farming thugs - *ganaderos* - gunmen commonly used to control dissent in the Izabal region.

The result of Del Monte turning its back on its former workers was predictable; the *ganaderos* have since shot and killed eight of the former Del Monte workers who stayed on the land. The focus is now switching from the Guatemala fields to the US courts - a lawsuit alleges that the $2 billion (£1.2bn) multinational conspired to kidnap, torture, and unlawfully detain union leaders. The US government is attempting to frustrate the court proceedings.

For more information and updates on the campaign, visit http://www.rightsaction.org http://www.usleap.org/Banana/bananatemp.html http://www.bananalink.org.uk/companies/companies.htm



Social Democracy >>

Free markets -

Free market mania has crossed the Atlantic to make inroads into social democratic Europe. In Britain, the Thatcher-Blair era has brought us the joys of a cheap, disorganised and deregulated labour market. Gone is the trade unions' role in running the economy as a 'social partner' in consultation with the bosses and the government. It looks like social democracy is dead. Looks like – but don't let appearances fool you.

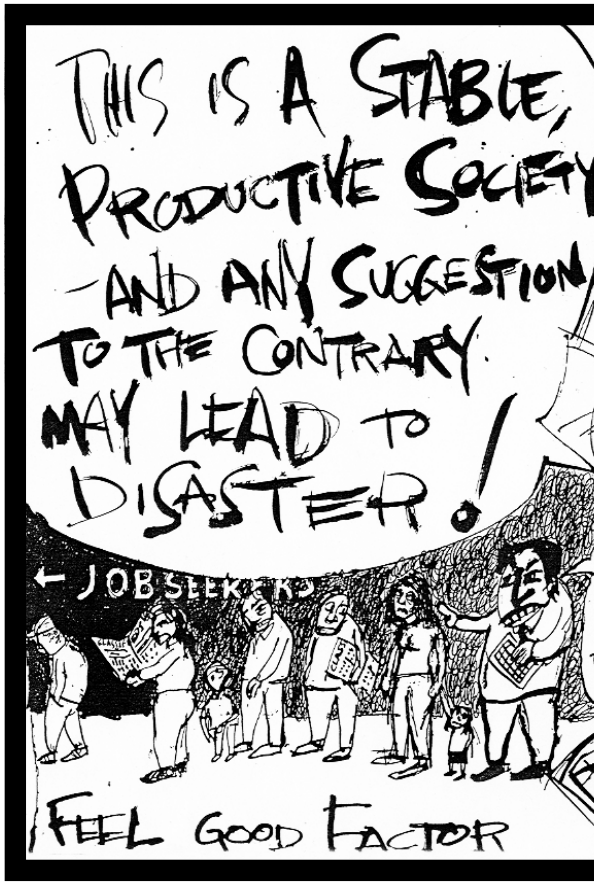
Social democrats and marxist-leninists share the patronising belief that the working class cannot act for itself; that change can come only through handing leadership to the party.



The terms 'social democracy', 'social democrat', etc. go back a long way – in fact, to the days of the First International (1860s). From that time up until the period of the Russian Revolution (1917) and the founding of the Bolshevik-inspired Third International (1919), it generally meant the same as 'socialism', especially the Marxist form of socialism. The ranks of the Second (or Socialist) International (1889 until the present) included, on the one hand, parties and organisations who advocated the overthrow of capitalism and, on the other, those who advocated reforming capitalism to improve working class life. Such was the contradictory nature of the Second International that it was deeply split, for instance, with one faction supporting World War One and the other faction opposing it.

The split came to a head with the Russian Revolution, when those advocating the revolutionary road formed the Third (or Communist) International (ComIntern – 1919 until the present). With the latter describing themselves as 'communist', 'social democratic' was increasingly associated with the reformist politics of those left behind in the Second International. This international still exists and counts among its member organisations our own beloved Labour Party and parties who have, at one time or another, been in power all across western Europe, as well as in much of the rest of the world; parties who have never shrunk from betraying the working class, whether in power or out of it.

The Marxist origins of social democracy should be lost on no-one. Certainly, social democrats and marxist-leninists share the patronising belief that the working class cannot act for itself; that change can come only through handing leadership to the party. With the collapse of the inefficient Soviet economic system, marxist-leninism offers no real vision of a revolutionary society. Instead, it increasingly occupies a position on the left wing of social democracy and, just like the social democrats before them, increasingly accommodates the



capitalist electoral system. It would be wishful thinking to expect the likes of Socialist Alliance, the Socialist Labour Party, the Scottish Socialist Party and others to bury their differences, fully embrace electoralism and leave the revolutionary pitch to those who mean it.

A social democratic system is one in which state, bosses and unions – the social partners – cooperate in the running of the economy. The unions' side of the deal is to protect profits by keeping the lid on working class resistance. In return, there are reforms in terms of welfarism and wealth distribution softening the harshest effects of capitalism on working class life. Social democracy, in its own terms, was so

>Dead Or Alive?

enslaved world





successful, that in many countries it was the basis of consensus right across 'mainstream' politics. Thus, in post-World War Two Britain, there was little real difference between Conservative and Labour governments.

Although the golden era for social democracy in Britain spanned the four decades between the 1940s and 1970s, union officials had already proved their worth to capitalism time and time again. Even before their coming together in 1900, most groups that formed the Labour Party had already made their peace with capitalism. It is little surprise then to find that by the time of the 'Syndicalist Revolt', trade union leaders were already well versed in stabbing workers in the back. The dockers and railway workers in 1911, the miners in 1912, the building workers in 1913..., all experienced bitter betrayal by union leaders bent on saving capitalism from revolution.

Such service in the cause of capitalism brought the reward of seats for Labour in Lloyd George's wartime coalitions. And soon, the need to subvert wartime militancy, especially in the armaments industry, brought one of the clearest examples yet of the 'social democratic' approach in action. The Munitions Act outlawed strikes in war-related industries, introducing a system of compulsory arbitration, and designated such workplaces as 'controlled' establishments where wages and discipline were directly controlled by the government. The union officials and Labour politicians took part in the local munitions tribunals, joint union/company production committees and the National Labour Advisory Committee set up under the Act. As a Labour Party conference report put it, they came to occupy 'a place in the affairs of the country', and union officialism was fast becoming a profession like never before, one that was growing further and further apart from rank and file workers.

However, it wasn't until the next war that the social democratic dream really began to take off in earnest. Bevan, the TGWU leader, became Minister of Labour in Churchill's coalition government, and the whole trade union leadership became so completely integrated into the state machinery that the TUC annual report, according to one account, 'began to read like the record of some special government department responsible for coordinating policy in the social and industrial sphere'. The unions' side of the bargain, as always, was to keep the lid firmly on workplace militancy. This included blind acceptance of a new draconian Emergency Powers Act which outlawed strikes and brought in binding arbitration in disputes. The union leaders' complete bankruptcy was fully demonstrated (not for the first time) in their

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Social democracy well and truly rolled back the revolutionary threat to capitalism and, with it, whole generations of working class consciousness.





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attitude towards striking miners. Mine owners used the emergency conditions as a cover to get around safety requirements, increase production, pocket greater profits and maim and kill miners. By 1944, two thirds of all days lost to strike action were in the coalfields prompting the media, government, Communist Party, and trade union leaders to launch a massive propaganda offensive against the miners.

After the war, in reaction to the pre-war depression, a new economic orthodoxy took hold. Social democracy also became a buffer against Soviet Communism, which was riding high on the strength of Stalin's contribution to the war. US money in the form of the Marshall Plan allowed state-aided capitalism to spread across western Europe, Japan and beyond. In Britain, Labour and Tories alike were committed to the new version of capitalism. Full-blown social democracy meant socialism and workers' control could be put firmly off the agenda.

So, the late 1940s and '50s saw the sham of nationalisation, with the state taking over failing, unprofitable industries, reinstalling the same old management and letting wages lag behind the private sector. More than ever, the links between the short-term economic struggle and long-term revolutionary change were forgotten. Social democracy well and truly rolled back the revolutionary threat to capitalism and, with it, whole generations of working class consciousness.

The result was predictable. Come the worldwide economic recession of the 1970s, and the need to pose a real revolutionary alternative to capitalism in crisis, there was little trace left of this tradition. The widespread wage militancy of the 1960s had accepted capitalism so it could not be re-directed against the very existence of capitalism itself.

In the face of no real opposition, the captains of capital took the opportunity to shore up profits, and launched an all-out offensive on working class living standards in the 1980s. The social democratic consensus unravelled, blown apart by the Thatcherite free market demolition of union power. As group after group of workers was picked off, as unemployment grew and benefit levels dwindled, and as nationalised industries were fattened up and sold off to the Tories' friends in the city of London, all the trade unions and the Labour Party could hold out for was the useless hope of a Labour victory at the next election. Union leaders continued doing what they have always done best – diverting militancy and betraying their members.

The promised Labour victory never came - not until New Labour had ditched its social democratic past and embraced the free market god. If the unions can't get back into social partnership under a Labour government, then surely we have already seen the final nail in the coffin of social democracy.

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is social democracy dead?

Certainly, as a system of economic management, social democracy no longer exists in Britain and appears to be on its way out in Europe. Nevertheless, social democratic union leaders are still in control of hundreds of thousands of workers, still remain wedded to the capitalist system, and still willingly sabotage workplace militancy. We need look no further than recent events in the Royal Mail and Fire Brigade.

Although the RMT union in Scotland has recently withdrawn funding from the Labour Party – and it is probable that others have and will continue to follow suit – reformist unions will continue to cast around for someone willing to offer a social democratic share of power. Whether that means waiting for Labour to change direction again; or going with some future breakaway from Labour; or even throwing their lot in with the host of budding social democrats out there – the likes of the Scottish Socialist Party, Socialist Alliance, or some other SWP inspired electoral wheeze – one stark fact remains; that is, social democrats retain their unerring ability to divert working class resistance down the futile road of electoralism. Only when working class consciousness is rebuilt and widened, only when a revolutionary vision once again informs our everyday struggles, only when our class relies on itself instead of allowing others to act on its behalf, only then can we safely say that social democracy is dead. DA

Castles, homes & Englishfolk



Home ownership in Britain is now pushing 70% - amongst the highest in Europe. This is generally portrayed in a positive light as the realisation of the 'property owning democracy' to which we all allegedly aspire. According to popular folklore, if it weren't for the poor and troublesome minority who are holding us back, we would soon be in housing nirvana.

Of course, like most crude capitalist propaganda, this nonsense does not stand up to the briefest of examinations. Most private homes are not owned by the people who live in them, but by the banks, building societies and property companies that financed them. Neither do we live in a democracy in the sense of people having a say in their day to day lives (see DA issues 1-29, all pages).

However, it is not enough to simply reject capitalist lies. What are the real reasons behind British housing policy, and how has it shaped how and where we live?

Pushing home ownership to its limits has generally been considered to be a Tory policy, but, in reality, it is an ideal which all the main political parties have aspired to. The Wilson-led Labour administration of mid- to late-60s referred to owner occupation as the 'normal' tenure. Investment in public housing was only necessary to meet 'exceptional needs' for which the market could not cater. Such 'exceptional needs' have included Revolution (1919), stimulating a slumping economy, and housing workers near to industrial centres to ensure a ready supply of labour.

Throughout the 20th century, housing policy reflected the slow realisation that a 'modern' capitalist economy cannot function efficiently while a large section of its workforce is living in unhygienic slums. However, whenever the market is in a position to exploit workers (e.g. during high unemployment or low worker resistance), then investment in public housing is cut, and the drive for more and more home ownership intensifies.

There are a number of aspects to the policy of home ownership that present social problems. The fundamental anarchist view that property is theft is well aired, although perhaps often misunderstood. The core of the problem is that policies for home ownership are individualist, so they break up collective interest and push the politics of competition.

Home ownership also changes the role of the state. It absolves it of responsibility (for example, housing benefit is not payable on mortgage payments), whilst strengthening its powers of control (for example, through the management of interest rates and lending/borrowing in conjunction with the Bank of England and the City). Placed in such a vulnerable financial position, many householders are fearful for their security. The implication this has on workers' willingness to stand up for themselves in general and at work is clear and deliberate.

Capitalists and their administrators, the banks and building societies, make a lucrative industry from housing debt. They push and cajole us into taking 'easy' loans and mortgages beyond the limits of what we can afford. As interest rates inevitably rise, they make more out of our misery, through both repossessions and repayments. Whether we survive or not, they win. UK debt is now at record levels, and the only means used to control it is the punishment of higher interest rates, which call in that debt and, at the same time, raise it. It is hardly surprising that mortgage payers constantly feel like someone is moving the goal posts – they are.

Having said this, let us get down to practicalities. A cursory glance at the rented sectors is sufficient to understand why home ownership is the preferred option for those who can afford it. The rights of the private sector tenants have been persistently attacked to the point where landlords can now, without reason, automatically serve notice after only four months of tenancy. Rents are now extortionate in much of the country and the state generally restricts benefits rather than rents. Those that can afford to live in half-decent, albeit largely unregulated accommodation, pay a large chunk of their income for the privilege. Those that cannot afford it are forced into the worst kind of rented accommodation, substandard, insecure, and vulnerable to harassment and exploitation by scum landlords and their agents.

Social housing is now generally reserved for the most desperate. The sector has been deliberately run down for years and is no longer a positive option, or in fact an option at all for many. Local authorities have been forced to bribe their tenants into agreeing to privatisation by buying their council house or another of its various guises, once again eroding people's rights and further absolving the state of obligation.

Unless you live in a cave, then the vulnerabilities and insecurities caused by the housing situation just outlined will probably sound grimly familiar, whatever your housing arrangements. For many of us, our struggle to find suitable accommodation and afford the rent or mortgage epitomises the general battle to cope with daily life. Through coercion and manipulation, the British State delivers us few and hard choices. These very deliberate housing policies have little to do with providing for our needs and everything to do with asserting power and demanding compliance with the capitalist agenda. DA

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Dis-Connexions

New Labour's Connexions scheme aims to improve young people's opportunities...

...by monitoring people's behaviour and eliminating their ability to express collective dissent.

Kids as young as 13 are responsible for understanding that their data will be collected and held for up to seven years and that their actions will be monitored when they sign up for the Connexions card.



Beverly came to England from Nigeria at 15 escaping family. After almost two more years of abuse in the UK, she was given temporary accommodation by her local authority, and she came to rely on adult service providers to help her navigate the complicated system in her new country. She came to me, a Connexions personal advisor (PA), for help when she had no identification, having left it all behind when she fled domestic violence. After months of waiting for a reply from the Home Office and several failed attempts at obtaining a bank account where Beverly could get her education maintenance allowance (EMA) paid, the PA in her school helped her apply for a Connexions card, which she received in a few days.

For young people under extraordinary circumstances like Beverly, the Connexions service appears as the only source of help and understanding when facing the uphill battle that punishes and restricts immigrants from gaining access to benefits, national insurance numbers and bank accounts. Unfortunately, the Connexions card can't actually help young people access the most basic financial assistance. In fact, it can only serve as a way to punish Beverly if she has to wait around at the homeless person's unit on a school day to secure her temporary accommodation by tracking her attendance at college and informing the local authority monitoring the provision of EMAs. But at least somebody believes who she is, right?

The Connexions strategy is an expansive, New Labour concept with designs to improve the achievement of all young people aged 13-19. PAs work in schools, the careers service, youth offending teams and as specialist advisors throughout the voluntary sector to provide a comprehensive service for young people. Breaking down the barriers between service providers, especially between the statutory and voluntary sectors would, in essence, benefit both young people and those wishing to help them. But the way Connexions is managing this is not through greater respect and communication between professionals, but through centralised and computerised information sharing about young people.

PAs are required to gather personalised data about each young person they see, including what they have sought advice on and the outcome of that advice, and then share this with Connexions. The main device Connexions are using to obtain even more information about young people, including their consumer habits, is the Connexions Card.

keeping young people on track

Throughout the Connexions website, it is repeatedly stressed that using the service is completely voluntary. Effectively, kids as young as 13 are responsible for understanding that their data will be collected and held for up to seven years and that their actions will be monitored when they sign up for the Connexions card. A look at the application form for the card reveals a full A4 sheet of fine print to understand what a few tick boxes mean, one of which is to give their details in order to receive information about products and services. Anyone who works with young people knows that most will fill out forms and tick boxes without paying much attention to the fine print. One colleague who works with learning disabled young people created her own pictorial representation of the information gathering procedure to help her clients understand what their consent to this really meant and was reprimanded for not using official Connexions materials or getting permission to redesign them first.

The website provides a CV building service that young people again have to register for if they don't have a Connexions card. The minimum requirements that the online form asks for are name, date of birth and email address. But they are shuffled around with postal address, phone number, mobile number and information about ethnic origin. The only thing differentiating the two types of information is an asterisk with no explanation of its meaning, something with which only someone with experience of filling out online forms would be familiar. In answer to the question "what should



I do if my details change?", the website states that it's really important to update them online as they might want to send, email or text information, further giving the impression that this information is necessary in the first place.

To a generation that sees CCTV warnings everywhere they turn and who's only understanding of Big Brother is a group of boring people sitting in a hot tub, the concept of surveillance is incredibly confusing - or perhaps just so commonplace that they accept it without question. A not-so-conspiratorial conclusion to come to is that Connexions is relying on this lack of real understanding by young people to gather information and pass it on to their various business partners.

The degree to which business is involved with the Connexions card doesn't ease these fears. It is another example of New Labour's promotion of the concept of public private partnership that has gone unquestioned simply because, this time, it only affects young people - and those who are poor and working class in particular. Like Beverly, young people living alone or in a household with a low income are entitled to EMA in pilot areas to supplement income while they attend full-time education. The Connexions card is used to monitor their school attendance by swiping as they arrive and leave, and this information is passed on to their local education authority.

The administration of the Connexions card is contracted out to Capita Business Services, the same company that has been given (and subsequently utterly lost) control of housing and council tax benefit in four London boroughs (formerly known as CSL). Many local authorities have privatised their benefits administration with disastrous results, including huge delays or non-payment, illegal recovery from benefits, court action against individuals and evictions. There is every chance that the same thing will happen to young people who depend on their EMA if and when Capita maladministers the information gathered from the Connexions card regarding school attendance. But beyond that, if the unchecked power of Connexions in UK schools means young people will have their benefits cut for missing a lesson, how can we expect them to protest the next unjust war with spontaneous school walkouts?

The other question to ask is whether Capita, a private company with investors and a profit margin of £98.2m in 2002, can be trusted to have even the same integrity as the government in respecting the privacy of the young people who are convinced enough to provide their personal details?

What entices young people to provide this information in the first place? For Beverly, it was simple - she desperately needed some identification, and Connexions was the only organisation willing to give it to her. For other relatively less vulnerable young people, the impetus is the rewards and discounts they receive at high street shops. Cards are actually scanned in like credit cards to record each purchase and attach it to a specific young person and record when that young person went shopping.

At a Connexions conference, PAs were shown a video made by young people to promote the card. As someone who has done participation work with young people, including video production, it was blindingly obvious that the young people on screen were reading from a script, running off the 'benefits' of the card. All of these had to do with shopping and consumerism. The discounts young people can receive at shops are as little as 10%, mostly off of luxury items like clothing, bicycles, hair and beauty treatments and mobile phones. The Connexions card serves to encourage the out-of-control debt problem more and more young

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What entices young people to provide this information in the first place? For Beverly, it was simple - she desperately needed some identification, and Connexions was the only organisation willing to give it to her.



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people are facing under the guise of rewards and savings.

Just as concerning though is the fact that none of the products in the promotion can actually help them achieve their highest potential in life: the supposed *raison d'etre* for Connexions. I searched the website for discounts on books - something that could actually help promote young people's achievements in further education - in the UK's largest cities, and only found one bookstore in Leeds and one in Nottingham.

The bottom line is that there is absolutely no incentive to choose things like books over other consumer goods. A card holder receives 100 points for a full week of attendance at their learning institution which can be used to purchase goods directly from the Connexions card website. A young person can spend 2000 points on a vegetarian cookbook or 50 points on a FCUK T-shirt.

It is true that the government has invested lots of money into making all 13 to 19-year-olds be accounted for and Connexions won't go away anytime soon, but there are still things we can do to resist it.

branding young people

The pervasiveness of brand culture is a hot topic, especially concerning the way young people are marketed and their youth culture sold back to them. Naomi Klein's No Logo and Alissa Quart's Branded both deal with this phenomenon in North America and the backlash provided by the anti-capitalist movement, in which young people are well represented. None of this is deterring Connexions from using overt language about branding on their promotional website. One of the first things young people will notice on the website is the big Jelly Belly's logo enticing them to win a year's supply of the sweets. Connexions have managed to go beyond what even youth services provide by recognising the plurality that exists in teenage culture. While youth clubs offer DJ mixing and music production sessions centred almost completely around garage and hip-hop, Connexions offers discounts to both JD Sports and on skateboarding shoes by Vans, discounts at both Burger King and Café Nero, hairdressing at Toni & Guy and a vegan starter pack. All these young people with different identities will feel recognised and then want to take advantage of the minimal discounts to reiterate their personalities - to the benefit of Connexions' business partners.

Marketing the service as a brand is strongly embraced by Connexions. They encourage people to purchase their stationery so complaint letters will carry more weight, and they hold promotional launches in London nightclubs. They had a float at this year's Notting Hill carnival, where they got young people involved in their summer activities to hand out fortune cookies that contained information about the service.

It's all eerily similar to the peer-to-peer marketing Quart writes about in Branded, where attractive young people are hired by clothing companies to wear their clothes so other young people will follow their lead and buy. But instead of being a sinister guerrilla marketing technique that is kept secret in the corporate boardroom by the old white men, Connexions puts it all out for the public to read on their website as if it is something to celebrate, as if it is empirical proof that young people believe in their service and don't just want the opportunity to be on a float at carnival.

here to stay?

Though most of the other people I have talked to appear to view Connexions with cynicism or outright distrust, they seem to see it as an inevitability we have to tolerate in the youth services, whether statutory or voluntary. Even the location of Connexions magnet centres (like the one in the centre of Bristol flanked by the armed forces recruitment centres) hasn't been enough to make people object to the blatant attempt to control and track young people.

It is true that the government has invested lots of money into making all 13 to 19-year-olds be accounted for and Connexions won't go away anytime soon, but there are still things we can do to resist it. Young people can do their own guerrilla peer-to-peer marketing by warning other young people about where their information is really going. If they already have a card, tell them to go online and make sure they are not inadvertently consenting to give their details out to other companies. Youth workers and resistant PAs can take the time to explain to young people exactly what information will be held on them and reassure them that they can refuse to share this information. Discourage all young people from signing up for the Connexions card and refuse to put publicity materials in your youth club or advice centre.

Parents can discourage their daughters and sons from giving out any personal information. They can also kick up a fuss and complain to the local education authority that they were not properly informed about what the service entailed before it was enforced in their child's school. PAs in the voluntary sector can also resist having the card reader in their advice or youth centre or, if it's there, refuse to use it.

Connexions and the card may be backed by huge government investment, and some of us in the youth service may even be dependent on Connexions funding, but we should be fighting the invasive monitoring of young people here in the UK as strongly as we fight against the exploitation of children in Nike factories throughout the developing world. The insidious gathering of information, combined with the shameless promotion of consumerism and inevitable debt, makes Connexions as worthy a target for our disgust as McDonalds or the International Monetary Fund. DA

Inside English supermax

Robbie Stewart points out that the Close Supervision Centres have never been a success and never will.

The use of control units in England has changed from one failed thing to another. The CSC (Close Supervision Centres) were introduced in 1998, replacing the old CRC (Control Review Committee) and CAS (Continuous Assessment Scheme). This change followed what is known as the Spurr Report, which provided a blueprint copy of the US-style 'supermax' units, right down to every last detail, including the pink rooms.

The CSC consists of GA and GB at Woodhill, G and I Wings at Durham, F Wing at Wakefield, and designated cells at segregation units at Full Sutton, Whitemoor, Frankland and Belmarsh. The Spurr report remains unpublished – only the bureaucrats see it.

In its first 30 months of operation, there were no less than 8 prisoners refusing to co-operate with the new system at any one time. They actively and repeatedly protested and resisted their selection for the CSC. They won. They were too disruptive for a unit designed for disruptive prisoners, and most were returned to the mainstream prison system.

The CSC attempted a 'nice' approach – calling prisoners by their first names, etc., with the idea of breaking the most hardcore anti-authoritarians into believing something like "I've misunderstood screws for a while; they really are nice guys". It failed miserably. So, what next?

A Home Office research study conducted by Emma Clare and Keith Bottomly states that "if an inmate's attitude upon reception suggests he is unlikely to co-operate, and subsequent attempts to make him co-operate fail, he should be returned to the dispersal system." So, the CSC supposedly hides the most disruptive and dangerous men in the country, but if you do not want to co-operate, you go back to dispersal. It is the equivalent of being too disruptive for the prison and refusing to do courses, so they let you go free.

In May 2002, the then head of CSC, Richard Vince, was awarded a Turnaround Manager of the Year award. In the prison Service Annual Report and Accounts 2002-3, the Director of high security prisons, Peter Atherton, states: "I am delighted to report that (Richard) was also runner-up for the overall Public Servant of the Year award. The award publicly recognises the personal leadership Richard has provided to the CSC unit at Woodhill over the past 2 years. It has been transformed into a model for the effective management and treatment of the most dangerous men in our custody." And later: "The rate of assaults on staff has reduced from 5-6 a day to 3 this year (2002). To achieve this positive outcome and to sustain a level of professionalism, humanity and care towards extremely dangerous prisoners is extraordinary work done extraordinarily well, for which society owes a huge debt."

This is laughable when you check reality. In the pre-Dick Vince era ('98-2000), there was an average 25-30 men at Woodhill CSC. It is now less than half that. Also, there is a large number of mentally ill men now in the unit, where control is maintained by large doses of drugs such as Cargactyl. Who cares about their needs as long as they are not assaulting staff? 'If he cuts himself, well, it is better than him slashing an officer', is the clear philosophy. This is how Dick made his marvellous achievement. Put people who resist it outside the CSC and fill it with people who can no longer resist it because they are drugged. Simple, really.

There are now 12 at Woodhill, at the time of writing; only 4 are on no medication. Those on medication - that is all they get, nothing else. On a brief inspection, the Chief Inspector of prisons' report states that "control still dominated proceedings and personal development opportunities are relegated to the margins". There is a Governor who replaced Dick Vince, but we never see her. One inmate arrived at the CSC 3 months ago and has yet to meet her. The only way to see her is by doing something wrong, and ending up on an adjudication. The men in the CSC have no hope and no future. Let's see if anyone can do a real turnaround. The current governor has shown so little interest (unless it involves punishment)...

There are too many prisoners who should be handled elsewhere. It is ironic that I Wing at Durham's function is to provide therapy and treatment for prisoners with a history of disturbed psychiatric needs. Woodhill CSC doesn't and never has provided therapy or treatment for mentally ill men, yet it has plenty of mentally disturbed men. The fact that 3 have been to special hospitals, one for 8½ years, is a bit of a give-away. Yet, in the whole of 2002-3, only two have gone to I Wing. That is how you win Turnaround of the Year award.

Robbie Stewart has recently been moved from Woodhill Prison. He can now be contacted at: DH4408 Robbie Stewart, HMP Full Sutton, Moor Lane, York YO41 1PS.



Over the past ten years the prison population in England and Wales has risen rapidly to a point where it is now being described as having reached epidemic proportions. Private companies are funding prisons as sources of cheap labour. Against prison slavery has staged a number of pickets around the country. againstprisonslavery@mail.com

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.

Intro to the future

Dear DA,

Great to get an SF Intro '98 – Durruti's statement is highly inspiring. So how do we develop the programme for workers' control of the means of production? Cities are built by the working class to virtually any specification, designed by the capitalist/imperialist cliques and their bourgeois/privileged worker lackeys. So how come they aren't under syndicalist workers' control? First of all, no system based on humanity would ever design such cities, and the polluted agro-industry that feeds them. What would the world of an anarcho-syndicalist community be like? I refrain from using the phrase 'workers state' because anarchists don't seem to like either word. However, my assumption is as follows. The iron, steel, coal, copper, nickel, zinc, oil, rail, fishing, transport, medical, health, housing, clothing, etc. industries would remain in the hands of the workers, who would sustain them on the basis of mutual aid and organised co-operative practices, with flexibility of choice as regards change of employment and conditions.

All privately owned motor vehicles would be collectivised, and the surplus smelted to primary metals for storage and future use. A return to trolley buses and electric trains for city and inter-city travel – a programme of labour-intensive return to organic farming, to learn from Poland's methods, using horses and other eco-viable systems (composting, hoeing, etc.). With rational distribution and produce exchange, the training of doctors, nurses and engineers would be a universal option, and linked to physical labour, because otherwise, the elitist elements of the old class system would be carried over into the new one.

Will we ever see such a social development? Yes, but only on a limited scale for the foreseeable future in neo-fascist Britain. Anyone fancy driving the last electric train to Glasgow Central?

Cheers, anon.

Editorial note; this is certainly one idea, but I don't think all views of a sustainable future have to have such 'back to the past' overtones. For free copies of Intro to SolFed, write to SolFed, and for further ideas on freedom economics, you could try "The Economics of Freedom" (2003), published by SolFed (contact/ordering details, page 34-35).

Resist Wal-Mart

Dear DA,

We are looking for any support we can, including office supplies and basic nutrition for the people occupying the site of interest. The campaign has been running, under-manned and under-resourced for some 12 months. The issue has been covered in local newspapers and wider as a contentious issue raising valuable points, such as workers' rights and unions, foreign investment and conscientious responsibility for environment and local business, as well as GM and food standards (poor diet and crime figures are also an interesting and relevant point of discussion).

This campaign is one to prevent the building of yet another industrial big-box style supermarket on the Old Kent Rd - Asda, whose company title has recently been bought out by the mother of all mega-malls, Wal-Mart. There is, we are glad to hear, already a growing movement to prevent the spread of the Wal-Mart monstrosity in the US; however, we have met with some hard times in our campaign due to the sneaky Asda take-over (Asda is a very popular store). We have been attempting a promotional campaign for a community centre style construction instead. There are no large community activity centres to accommodate the many young and old of the immediate area. There are 100,000 people living in estates mostly within a 1 mile radius of the site, and, as you can imagine, a fairly high crime and apathy rate in the area.

Whatever help or support you can offer, including people to physically resist the evictions (we have physically resisted 3 evictions so far), we would be very grateful indeed. We see this issue as a wider issue in hand, an issue of globalisation, profit over people and a breakdown in communities internationally.

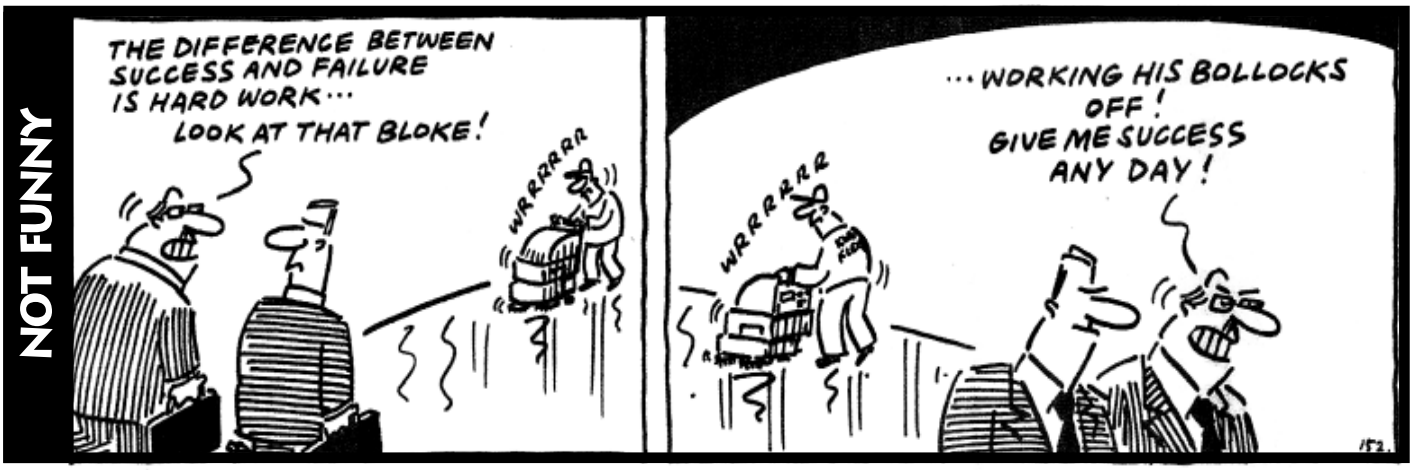
Despite having struggled for 12 months with this campaign, the struggle is by no means near its end, the site of the proposed development faces many complications, such as being divided into 42 separate plots of land, owned by different owners. Wal-Mart has succeeded in buying out (as far as we know) only 21 of those plots. The other 21 plots are not clearly demarcated, making the case for eviction extremely complicated and bothersome... this of course acts in our favour!

We would love to accommodate anyone with skills in permaculture, organics, alternative energy etc., bearing in mind that the conditions of living are pretty rough (we have had our water and electricity cut off several times, and our toilets smashed out).

We are looking for any help whatsoever, whether it be legal, financial, media-coverage, larger networks, resources (photocopying, generators, etc), left over vegetables/foodstuffs, etc.

ZN

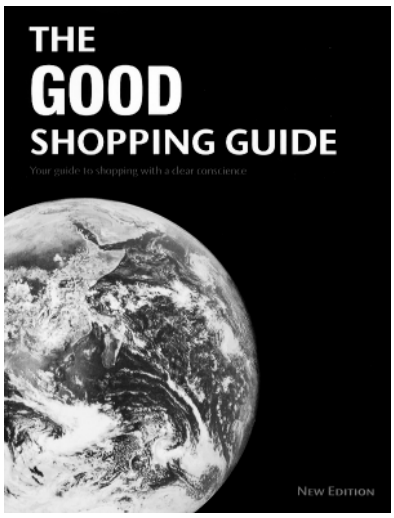
Resist Wal-Mart campaign phone line: 0790 440336



What to buy and what not

The Good Shopping Guide

New Edition ISBN 0-9542529-1-8 £12
www.thegoodshoppingguide.co.uk www.ethicalconsumer.org
ECRA publishing Ltd, Unit 21, 41 Old Birley Street, Manchester, M15 5RF



If Christmas consumerism only grips you for one purchase, this could be that essential stocking filler. If you are plagued by questions such as "Which companies are boycotted and why?"; "Which companies are greenwashing?", etc., then this is for you. If you are not, then you need to read this book.

Which are poisoning our environment? Testing on animals? Have oppressive working conditions? Genetic engineering? And political donations – these are just a few of the 12 categories that you can check up on, in this very easy to use and very extensive independent guide, before you part with your cash. Whatever you may be shopping for, whether a washing machine or a chocolate bar, a bank account or nappies! There are over 700 different product brands in over 60 different product areas. The good, the bad and the ugly.

Sure, changing production and working conditions are crucial to the fundamental economic and social changes we all want. But our actions as consumers do make a difference, and here is the information to make an educated decision. Ignorance is bliss is no excuse. The first edition that was published last year by William Sankey sold out. I guess that this year they will have upped the print-run.

The trend towards ethical spending has been growing for many years, and now, as individuals and organisations, we can encourage co-operative and responsible producers. At the very least, we can support companies that are proved to have a better, more responsible and caring attitude.

Most people are aware of the Nestle boycott, and of most of Nestle products, but what are the best alternative products available? Here's more than you ever knew about what goes into goods. You will have the information you need to make clear decisions, whether about buying better products, or avoiding those of unethical companies.

One example - bedtime drinks companies. Horlicks is subject to boycott calls. Why? Horlicks parent company is the multinational pharmaceutical giant Glaxo Smithkline. The call for boycott is because it is attempting to block cheaper versions of its anti-AIDS drugs, as well as undertaking animal testing and being one of the ten largest political party fund donators in the USA. Glaxo Smithkline was also ruled to have made misleading health claims about its Ribena drink on three occasions, including marketing a sugar free version that contained sugar. They are involved in the production, sale and experimentation of genetically modified organisms (GMOs).

The vast majority of the research featured in the good shopping guide comes from ECRA (the ethical consumer research association). ECRA was founded in June 1987 and is a not-for-profit, voluntary organisation owned and managed by its staff as a workers' co-operative. Proud to have maintained its independence, ECRA is funded almost entirely by readers' subscriptions and by adverts from ethically-vetted companies. This book is a valuable resource for most people's bookshelves; every home should have one.

Rabbit-proof Fence

Dir. Philip Noyce, Australia, 2002, 1hr 33min

Starring Eveline Sampi, David Gulpilil, Kenneth Branagh, Ningali Lawford.



Based on a true story (and

of desert. The rabbit-proof
which stretched through the
ck gave them a useful guide
one state to the next. The arid
alian deserts provide the film
striking backdrops, and the
ine is as brutally emotive as it
l.

Eco-economy

Lester Brown, Earthscan, £17.99, ISBN 1853838268

Tomorrow's Energy

Peter Hoffman, MIT, £22.50, ISBN 0262082950

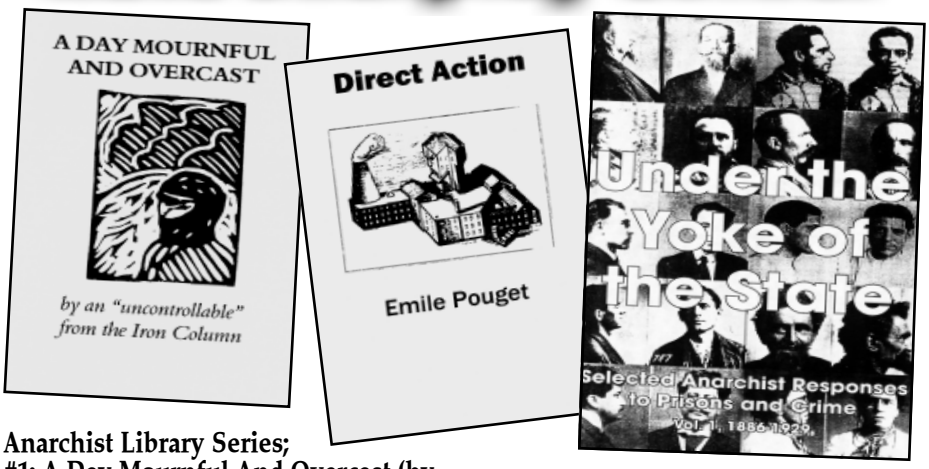
One thing alone underpins the Western cosy lifestyle – cheap available energy. The war in Iraq and its aftermath, and this year's blackouts in the USA, Canada and London, only served to underline this fact. The war in Iraq was about cheap oil, and we are running out. Some petroleum geologists think we only have a decade of the good times left, and there is a debate raging between the free market economists and the resource scientists.

As a book, *Tomorrow's Energy* is very broad, with asides on history and literary matters. However, it clearly sets out the key issues surrounding harnessing hydrogen energy – namely, storage and the barriers to rapid introduction of the technology.

If we are to keep our cars on the road and the lights on, new sources of energy need to be exploited. Now, heavy oil sources are becoming more viable, propelling Canada to top of the league. As from 2003, it is second only to Saudi Arabia in terms of official oil reserves, while the USA under Bush is considering a new generation of nuclear power plants. The European Union, meanwhile, looks to a hydrogen-fuelled future.

Lester Brown's book is optimistic in tone, which is, perhaps, surprising, as he has had a reputation as a doom-monger. He charts a course towards a sustainable future, even in Bush's America. It appears that farmers in the mid-west are queuing up to sell their wind rights. Whirring blades will one day power the cities and bring wealth after the nodding donkeys have gone. As Brown puts it, "The issue now is whether the environment is part of the economy or the economy is part of the environment".

Kate Sharpley Corner



Under The Yoke of the State

Selected Anarchist Responses to Prisons and Crime vol.1, 1886-1929

Edited by the Dawn Collective
Published by Kate Sharpley Library, 2003, ISBN 1-873605-48-X

Right from the off, the Dawn Collective tell it like it is - anarchists always come into conflict with whatever makes up the state. They are the state's biggest enemy. They were also among the first to see the futility and malignancy of prisons.

Since capitalist society is so rotten, so exploitative, and so self-consciously driven to make money at the expense of everyone else, then prisoners in capitalism's jails, no matter what their crime, can never be vilified or forgotten. This is a world where economic success is the primary goal, where greed is sanctified by the term "hard working" and where those who don't become a "success" are essentially left to fend for themselves. And so it goes on. For a small pamphlet it crams a lot in, from personal reflections by anarchists that have spent time in prison to First World War internment camps.

There are complete essays by Peter Kropotkin, Emma Goldman, Alexander Berkman and many more, plus personal accounts, for example, by Louise Michel, who was on the barricades during the Paris Commune. It is also illustrated, including Frans Masereel's woodcuts dating back to 1919.

Ideal for dipping into, such a wide selection of writers and contexts make this a treasure chest of literary insight into prisons and the prison system. The theme which binds these disparate elements together is a consistent critique of the prison system and the failure of society. Simple truths emanate from the pages - the Law is made to protect the wealthy and punish the poor; if prison is for reforming people, why is it all about punishment and the consequent removal of humanity from both prisoner and guards? Or, as Emma Goldman eloquently puts it in *Between Jails*, "How can they understand the black despair and bitter hatred of the offender against the world which first drives him to crime, and then sends him to a living grave?"

Jail is a cancerous growth of a capitalist society that should be cut off quick. Within these pages lie the reasons behind them and the inspiration to oppose them.

Any money made from the sale of this pamphlet will go to the prisoner's literature project.

Anarchist Library Series;
#1: A Day Mournful And Overcast (by an 'uncontrollable' from the Iron Column), 21 pages;
#2: Direct Action (by Emile Pouget), 19 pages

Both priced £3 from KSL (see address below)

In these booklets, KSL has served up two more gems from the anarchist past. The first is an anonymous look at the 'militarisation' of the revolutionary anarchist militias in Spain 1937. The second is Emile Pouget's 'classic statement of revolutionary syndicalism' from 1937.

The defeat, across half of Spain, of the July 1936 attempted fascist coup d'état heralded the Spanish Revolution. Among the first actions of the anarchist militias was to open the gates of the prisons. The author of 'A Day Mournful And Overcast', a liberated prisoner himself, joined the most famous militia of them all, the Iron Column. For the best part of a year, the militias spread the revolution and held the fascists at bay. Based on the non-hierarchical principle of elected delegates, rather than appointed officers, they reflected the very revolution they were defending. Until, that is, the Republican government was able to impose 'militarisation' on the militias. 'A Day Mournful And Overcast' is a bitter-sweet reflection on the coming of 'militarisation', on the happiness of anarchist comradeship, and on the brutality of barrack life which recalls the author's former life in prison:

'We used to live happily in the trenches… and everyone was content. Why? Because none of us was superior to the other.' 'A Day Mournful And Overcast' first appeared in *Nosotros*, the daily newspaper of the Iron Column in Valencia, in March 1937.

Direct Action

Thirty years earlier, *L'Action Directe* was penned by Emile Pouget, an anarcho-syndicalist member of the CGT (Confédération Générale du Travail), regarded as the world's first revolutionary union confederation. For Pouget, 'direct action is… an ongoing attack upon capitalism', and 'the revolution is the handiwork of day-to-day action'. And these ideas remain as relevant as ever almost a century later. For present day anarcho-syndicalists, just as for Pouget, direct action is the key to revolutionary activity. Ranging from denying (bourgeois) democracy to anticipating capitalist resistance to revolutionary change, from posing will power in place of passivity to debunking the many objections to the direct actionist approach, and much more besides, Pouget writes with power, clarity and brilliance. This pamphlet does more than simply explain why we anarcho-syndicalists reject social democracy and the parliamentary path to social, political and economic change. It makes the case for direct action as the necessity that underpins all revolutionary activity. Whether you're a long standing activist or a newcomer to the movement, you will find this pamphlet a worthwhile read.

For more on the CGT and the events in France around the time when Pouget wrote *L'Action Directe,* see Unit 4 of the SF SelfEd Collective's *History of Anarcho-Syndicalism* – available from www.selfed.org.uk or contact: selfed@selfed.org.uk; SelfEd, PO Box 1095, Sheffield S2 4YR.

Contact KSL, BM Hurricane, London, WC1N 3XX for orders and titles: www.katesharpleylibrary.org

Streetcore

December marks a year since we said our final goodbye to Joe Strummer - the most honest and well respected musician of the punk era. He had been enjoying a resurgence in creativity and popularity since putting together a new band, the Mescaleros, in the late 1990s.

Of course, he is still best remembered from his days in the Clash but, with his two albums, *Rock Art & the X-ray Style* and the world music flavoured *Global a Go-Go,* he had shown that he still had the energy, the passion, the words and the tunes to reach a new audience. With typical modesty, he had wondered before starting out again after an absence of nearly ten years, would anyone even turn up to see him? People did, and his shows with the Mescaleros just got better and better,culminating in his benefit show for the striking firefighters in November 2002. Here, his co-writer in the Clash, Mick Jones joined him on stage for the first time in 20 years. This gig has already entered folklore as Strummer's last (although that was actually at Liverpool a few days later).

It is typical though of the man who liked to walk the talk, still showing the commitment he had from the punk days, always asking questions but never telling people how to think. The sticker he had on his battered Telecaster for years carried the declaration "Ignore Alien Orders". Asked why he never recorded or toured in the nineties, he replied that he didn't have anything to say that he thought was worth listening to, so he concentrated on movie soundtracks and bringing up his new family.

He was working on his new album when he died, and the result, *Streetcore,* is proof that Strummer could still rock with the best of them (those who saw him live never doubted it), and the Mescaleros, with their killer rhythms and over-the-red-line guitar and keyboard lines are as tight and tough as they come.

Unlike the previous Mescaleros outings, which were rooted in various world and folk music with a rock undercurrent, Streetcore anchors itself in rock & roll and lethal heavy reggae. "Coma Girl", the album's opening track, is a fusion of garage band rock and rocksteady basslines.

"Get Down Moses" follows on and, with dubbed-out bass and crunchy reggae guitars and lyrics about the sellout of the world wholesale, listeners can hear Strummer laughing in the face of all the darkness multinationalism can muster. "Long Shadow" is pure Americana played in a rambling style. It was written for Johnny Cash, but could just as easily be about Strummer himself. Its character crosses deserts and rivers; he haunts the places of desolation in order to speak with the voice of the storyteller. The song's style and spirit evokes the ghost of Woody Guthrie as Strummer sings: "Well, I'll tell you one thing that I know/You don't face your demons down, you gotta grapple with 'em, Jack/And pin 'em to the ground", and it ends with the prophetic; "And I hear punks talk of anarchy/I hear hobos on the railroads/I hear mutterings on the chain gangs/It was those men who built the roads/And if you put it all together/You didn't even once relent/You cast a long shadow/And that is your testament/ Somewhere in my soul/There's always rock& roll".

Other tracks are as catchy as anything out there, as anthemic and raucous, funky and memorable as Strummer ever wrote. The rocking "Arms Aloft", the searing "All In A Day", with its razor-wire guitar stomp, and the medium to slow heaviness of "Burnin' Streets". The one disappointing track is "Midnight Jam", which was obviously put together after Strummer's death and takes samples of his voice from his World Service radio show.

There are two covers on Streetcore. First is a deeply moving reading of Bob Marley's "Redemption Song" played acoustically by Strummer. This is the only track that the Mescaleros don't appear on, as, originally, it wasn't recorded for this set but is included by Luce (Strummer's widow) and the band, and it works magnificently. The other is the last track, a cover of the Bobby Charles' classic, "Before I Grow Too Old", re-titled here as "Silver And Gold". It's a barroom song played in melancholic, alt.country style, reminding me of the Waco Brothers. Strummer's last line in the song is, "I've got to hurry up before I grow too old", before he speaks to us in his distinctive voice, "OK, that's a take". It's almost as unbearable as it is memorable.

Streetcore is the sound of Joe Strummer at his peak, with his own band and on his own terms both lyrically and musically. The fact that this is a final album for Strummer is beside the point; this is one of the best rock & roll albums of 2003. To use his own words heard after the firefighters gig as he was leaving the stage, "I fucking enjoyed that!" DA



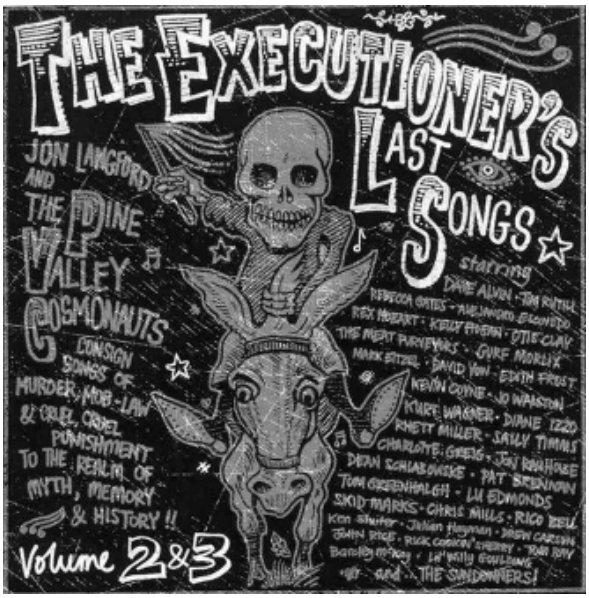






The Executioner's Last Songs vols. 2 & 3

Jon Langford & the Pine Valley Cosmonauts
Bloodshot Records, 2003 – double CD
www.bloodshotrecords.com



Jon Langford with a whole bunch a guests rides out with the two follow-up volumes (in one double CD package) to the original 2002 anti-death penalty insurgent country twangfest.

So many great voices join here doing tradition, just plain old and even the odd new song, voices raised up, sung low and just plain mumbled to 'consign songs of murder, mob law and cruel, cruel punishment to the realm of myth, memory and history'. In addition to Jon Langford's Welsh punk rock rabble rouser's vocals (see Mekons, Waco Brothers, the PVCs themselves), there is Kelly Hogan's peerless voice, Kurt Wagner's (of Lambchop) distinctive and always fascinating delivery, Ottis Clay's classic soul belter, David Yow (of Jesus Lizard, it is presumed) with a honky tonk soaked lament, Mark Eitzel (American Music Club) folk club singer song writer, Lu Edmond's Russian (I assume) 'Gulag lament' and many, many others – twenty seven tracks over the two disks. This time it's for the *Illinois Coalition Against the Death Penalty* and *The National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty*.

The songs are more than just country *AND* western in its full breadth – minus the countrypolitan horrors and hat act monstrosities of that commercial tin eared succubus Nashville – taking in the aforementioned 'Gulag Blues', there is also some soul, folk, pop, rock and all good time stuff. The songs are a grisly fare of death and murder, many of them traditional songs of the American South. Many of these mountain ballads originate in the Irish, Scottish and English folks songs taken over to the US and developed and evolved amongst the rural poor. Mixing in with the blues, musical and church music, these would go on to form rock'n'roll; here their seemingly amoral obsession with death, murder and state retribution fit the mood perfectly.

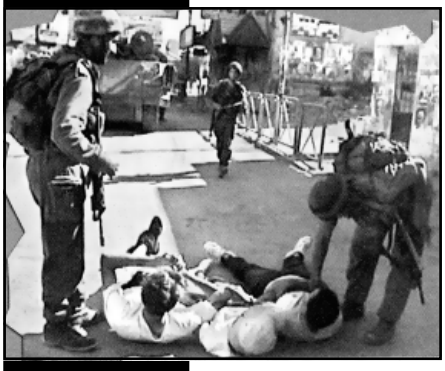
If you like old time music, folk music or good ole rollicking rock'n'roll, get this marvellous stuff. In fact, even if you think you hate country, open your ears and try it out - at least the money's not gone to some huge conglomerate.

Jeremy Hardy vs. the Israeli Army

Dir. Leila Sansour, UK, 2003, 1hr 15min, Cert. 15.

In March 2002, comedian Jeremy Hardy went to Bethlehem as a witness and to participate in the activities of the International Solidarity Movement, whose volunteers from around the world were acting as human shields.

Hardy got more than he bargained for. A demo of unarmed people protesting [redacted]ror confronted Israeli [redacted]. Clearly defenceless, [redacted]t point blank range, [redacted] serious injuries. This is [redacted] to the work of the ISM [redacted]n Hurndall, who gave [redacted]it of justice.



[redacted]

From Homebreakers to Jailbreakers

Edited by Rahila Gupta
Zed Books, £14.95

Against all the odds, Southall Black Sisters, a poorly funded, radical Asian women's group, has become synonymous with black British feminism and activism. Active in Southall near London since early 1979, the Black Sisters have spearheaded many high profile campaigns on domestic violence, abused women who kill such as the celebrated case of Kiranjit Ahluwalia, immigration rights, and the dangers posed to women by the rise of religious fundamentalism.

This anthology makes the connections between race, gender and class. Provocatively argued, it should be of interest to anyone interested in the relationship between the disempowered margins of society and the state - and the power balance between men and women.

Book launch 15 December at 6.30 pm, tickets £3 from Newham Bookshop, Tel. 020 8552 9993

You can't keep a good band down

Randy
Burning Heart Records, 2002 – CD www.burningheart.com

Swedish Anarcho-punk with the fun added back in. Still a lot of 70s British punk (e.g. Clash) and US style pop punk, but also hints of 70s glam and not so glam rock in the riffs and choruses.

Don't expect major treatise on the failure of modern capitalism and the future of libertarian communism, but do expect heart on sleeve lyrics and dare you not to pogo music. As the song says; 'This is music for the working class radio, this will make you dance, dance, dance tonight', and it worked for me. Burnt the toast, I was so busy jumping up and down and, who knows, maybe next time we'll review one of their records the same year as it comes out.





BITING THE HAND WE FEED

The myth that Labour created the welfare state is peddled by Marxists because it fits in with their proposition that, for the welfare system to be restored to its former glory, it is merely a case of replacing the "sold out" Labour government with a true socialist government. And, hey presto, they are the people to do it.

The defence of the welfare state has become the number one battle cry of the ever rising number of Marxist parties currently being formed in an attempt to take control of the political ground vacated by Labour. The analysis is simple; the Blair government is intent on dismantling the welfare state. All we need is to elect true socialists and the welfare state will be returned to its former glory. Obviously, these people think we are stupid, simple and/or born yesterday.

In propagating their 'populist' message, the Marxist parties are doing those who wish to see social provision play a central role in society no favours. In reality, the welfare state evolved primarily to feed the interests of capitalism, during a time of particular socio-economic circumstances. It was not so much the Labour Party who pioneered the welfare state, but rather the state acting (as it always does) in the interests of capitalism. But time moves on.

The fact that state provision of welfare is rapidly disappearing has nothing to do with the Labour Party betraying its socialist past, and everything to do with the fact that the interests of capitalism have now changed and the welfare state is no longer required. The myth that Labour created the welfare state is peddled by Marxists because it fits in with their proposition that, for the welfare system to be restored to its former glory, it is merely a case of replacing the "sold out" Labour government with a true socialist government. And, hey presto, they are the people to do it.

a century of bureaucrats

Unfortunately for them, most people know this to be nonsense. The welfare state was first introduced in Britain by the liberals in 1906. The primary reason for its introduction was that it was recognised that the poor health and education of the British work force was not only a check on economic performance, but was also putting at risk the British state's ability to maintain an army. Also, crucially, it was seen as a means of controlling an ever more powerful labour movement, which was out of control (i.e. spontaneous strikes were breaking out everywhere, as unions and workers' organisations ignored union, labour and capitalist bosses alike, and took matters into their own hands).

From the 1890s onwards, the more far-sighted capitalists had come to terms with the fact that the workers' movement could not be defeated by brute force, and instead, it had to be controlled. From the introduction of the Industrial Conciliation Act in 1896, capitalism sought to use state-sponsored conciliation mechanisms to try an absorb union officials and use them to control trade union militancy. The welfare state was seen as a means of extending this social control. It was hoped that both Labour Politicians and trade union officials would be sucked yet further into the system through handing over to them the implementation and administration of the new social programmes.

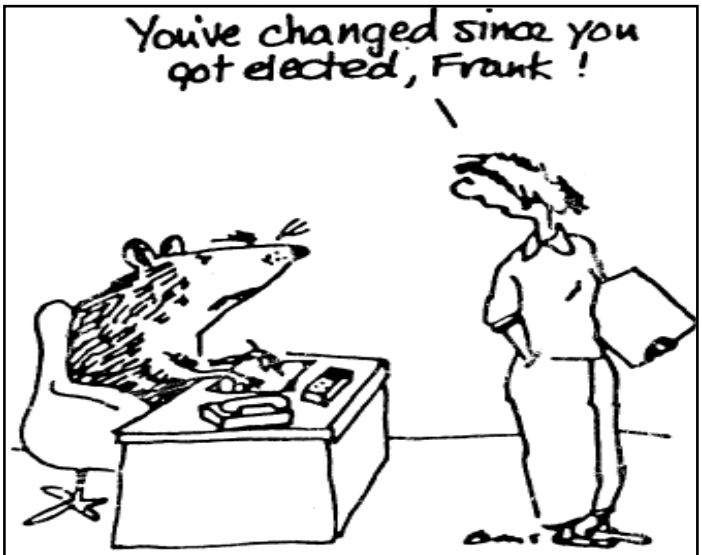
It was also hoped that the welfare state could be used as means of modifying working class behaviour. The introduction of social protection paid for by both management and workers (National Insurance) was seen as a means of promoting a moral consensus between labour and capital. The aim was to create the idea of a common interest between the owners of capital and the workers. Both were suddenly interested in alleviating the suffering and hardship within society. The hope was that workers would see themselves as part of the system and internalise more easily ideas such as "hard work for the good of all", and "reasonable" and "proper behaviour" in the hope it would insulate workers against anti-capitalist ideas based on social conflict and direct action.

social engineering

To back up this social engineering, most of the legislation introduced contained coercive sanctions against anti-capitalist behaviour. For instance,

The introduction of the welfare state from 1906 onwards was actually the start of a reasoned state corporatist strategy.

It was designed to pacify the working class by giving us something to vote for...



Bureauc-rats

unemployment benefit was not paid to those sacked for "industrial misconduct". This measure was aimed squarely against activists, militants and those "guilty" of insubordination towards their employer.

As such, the introduction of the welfare state from 1906 onwards was actually the start of a reasoned state corporatist strategy. It was designed to pacify the working class by giving us something to vote for, thereby undermining independent working class organisation and culture through social and political absorption. This strategy was being developed both in Britain and across Europe and, to a lesser degree, in the US.

Though this process was disrupted in most countries during the First World War and the inter-war years, it truly came into its own in the post Second World War period, when the capitalist West had to deal with a powerful communist state encamped on its borders. Fifty years on, it is hard to imagine the fear that gripped western capitalism, as they became paranoid that workers in the shattered economies of Europe would turn to



communist Russia for solutions to their lives of daily misery.

As a check on the spread of communism, new social democratic states were created, built on the ideas of state corporatism. The state would organise capitalism to ensure ever-greater social, political and economic equality, and so create a society in which everyone had a stake and where individual needs would be met by the state "from the cradle to the grave".

Behind this myth of individual citizenship, workers were in fact being constrained within a system of authority and deepening exploitation. Most notably, this was seen in the union movement, which was formerly the only form of organisation that brought together workers as workers, and through which workers could develop their own culture and independence in opposition to capitalism.

Workers' self-organisation withered in the majority of the newly created social democratic states, as union structures were absorbed into the state machinery. Effectively, union officials were offered state bribes in the form of a myriad of state and state-funded bodies and mechanisms. Negotiation between employers and labour no longer took place by workers in the workplace, but happened in remote locations and was done by even more remote union bureaucrats, within tightly controlled government procedures. The results were handed down to the workers from upon high…

corporatist hey-day

The form of the corporatist state differed from country to country, but there was the common aim of keeping the west capitalist by assimilating the workers' movement into capitalist society.

In Britain, the move towards the corporatist state gathered pace during the Second World War. Trade union leaders found themselves in Cabinet, while union officials were 'elevated' to innumerable committees dealing with anything from war production to the administrating of rations. The assimilation of the trade union movement was such that, in the words of one war historian, "the annual reports of the Trades Union Congress began to read like the records of some special government department responsible for co-ordinating policy in the social and industrial spheres".

After the war, the newly elected Labour government, far from tightening control over capitalism, quickly moved away from the state-controlled wartime command. They immediately handed back control of the economy to the private capitalists. Instead of a state-socialist model, Labour quickly adopted the corporatist approach in the rest of Western Europe, aimed at pacifying the workers' movement and restoring British capitalism to its former glory.

The corporate state form of government proved to be highly efficient, but its system of social control based on ever higher standards of living coupled to ever higher levels of state social provision was considered by the greedy forces of capitalism to be mightily expensive. It was maintained for several decades by capitalism partly because of the continued but diminishing threat of communism, and also because of the long post-war capitalist boom, which guaranteed ever-rising profits for everyone. After the 1960s, the level of capitalist profits began to flatten. The fat cats' response was to plunge the West into a long period of economic crisis



When state corporatism worked, it was a sense of security that capitalists wanted workers to feel.

Now, it is a sense of permanent insecurity that is required in order to drive down wages in the search for ever greater profits.

that is more-or-less still with us today.

Britain leads race to bottom

As capitalist rates of profit fell, they unleashed successive attacks on workers' pay and conditions. To get away with this, they turned to the state as the main means of defeating any workers' resistance. The late 1970s saw the beginning of the end of post-war corporate state, with Britain at the forefront of the decline. The British working class had a deep mistrust of the state and this deep mistrust manifested itself in militant workplace organisation. Even after several decades, there were pockets of resistance which had refused to be absorbed into the state mechanisms.

As a result, while in many European countries strike action had dropped to a historic low, in Britain, unofficial wildcat strikes began to increasingly plague British capitalism. Hence, British-based capitalists were far more ready to abandon corporatist means of social control and risk a full attack on an unruly trade union movement than in other European states.

Thatcher arrived with immaculate timing, to help the state drive home the attacks through the use of draconian legislation backed by a powerful, centralised police force. It all ended in bitter defeat for organised labour, as trade union influence within the state was expunged, and trade union officials found themselves sacked from the countless state bodies. As capitalism realised its confrontationalist strategy was working, confidence grew. They dropped the worker assimilation idea of state corporatism, in favour of coercion – and launched all-out attacks as the new means of controlling workers.

The welfare system itself soon became an instrument of state coercion. The benefits system was transformed into a means of regulating a vast army of workers no longer needed by capitalism, and condemned to a lifetime of intermittent employment underpinned by welfare payments. As it went with benefits, so it is now going with the rest of social provision. As the better paid flee state schools, pensions and healthcare, welfare is becoming a permanent poverty trap to be endured by the bottom third of society and feared by the rest – much like in the US.

reality check

The current state of affairs has not come about because the Labour Party in government has sold out, but because capitalism has decided it can no longer afford (and no longer needs) the corporate state. When state corporatism worked, it was a sense of security that capitalists wanted workers to feel. Now, it is a sense of permanent insecurity that is required in order to drive down wages and conditions and to discipline labour, in the search for ever greater profits. This simple mechanism lies at the centre of the free market ideology now eclipsing social democratic corporatism around the globe.

The heresy that lies at the heart of Britain's rapidly forming social democratic Left is laughable in the face of capitalist reality. The idea that all that is needed is the election of 'old' Labour-style, socialist politicians to bring a return to state corporatism is no more than a flimsy illusion. The welfare state was created by the state to meet the needs of capitalism and is being dismantled by the state to meet those very same capitalist needs. The state is not neutral, and a socialist government cannot simply gain power and hope to use the state against capitalism. Indeed, the reverse is true; capitalism will either use the state to corrupt or absorb socialist politicians or, ultimately, it will use the state to smash government.

There are plenty of alternatives to the dead-end politics of Left electoralism. They all revolve around the idea of workers' and communities' self-organisation. People coming together to take control of their own struggles and using direct action to force capitalism onto its back foot is the only way to reverse the cuts in welfare provision. The day-to-day struggle must be constantly linked to the need to defeat capitalism by creating our own structures and rejecting those of capitalism and the state. Ultimately, we must look to take control of welfare and social provision away from the hands of the hierarchical state bureaucrats, and administer it by and for the workers themselves, under the democratic control of society as a whole. For now, there are dozens of ways in which we can repeatedly bite the hand that we feed, to reverse an untrueism. DA



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 jacob16@btopenworld.com
Red & Black Club, PO Box 17773, London SE8 4WX. Tel. 0207 3581854.
South West Solidarity and **Solidarity Bristol**, 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. da@direct-action.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.

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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

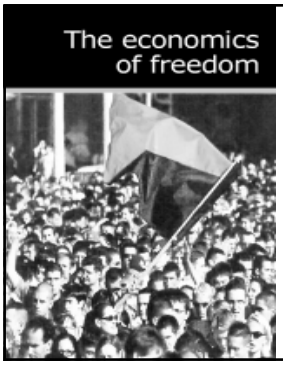
North & East London SolFed
Free Solidarity Bulletin out now. Socials: Last Thursday of the month, 8pm, near Camden Tube. Plus, advice surgeries/discussions. Also for people SE of London and along the S. Coast. Contact details p.34.

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

South Herts SolFed
St Albans Discussion Meetings. Tel. 01727 862814.

Catalyst
Freesheet of the Solidarity Federation - IWA

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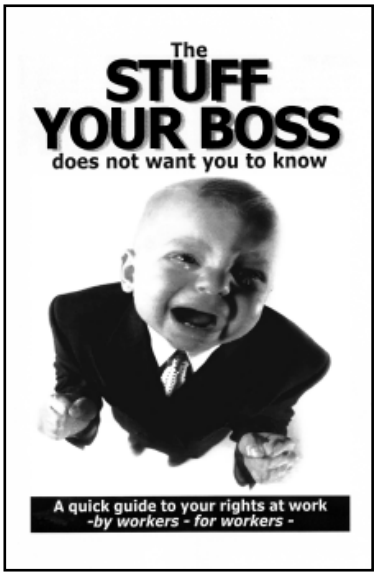


The economics of freedom

New reading for Summer 2003:
Democracy from the bottom up - no party politicians, corporate managers or union leaders. What might a future, decent economy look like? Here is a detailed model (but not a straightjacket) of how it could work.
£2.50 (payable to Solidarity Federation) from SolFed, PO Box 1095, Sheffield S2 4YR.
solfed@solfed.org.uk

Manchester SolFed
Discussion - info. - solidarity - support

Winter 2003-4 discussions:
Weds 7th January - no meeting
Weds 4th February - Social dependency culture
Weds 3rd March - Spectating versus participation
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



Casualisation and so-called flexible working are ways of undermining working conditions and exploiting us more than ever. They also make permanent jobs more vulnerable. So casualisation does not only affect temporary and agency workers, but all workers.
The most effective way of defending our rights is by organising ourselves and taking collective direct action. Information is empowerment - the newly updated "stuff your boss" leaflet is now available for free/donation from:
SolFed, PO Box 1095, Sheffield S2 4YR.
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Write to the same address for info on stickers and other support materials.

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. See three reviews of new publications on page 28. 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.

Cultureshop
Online shop for independent/radical/political issue-based videos. Recent films include; The Summit (filmed during the Earth Summit in Johannesburg); Zapatista! (first-hand account of the Chiapas struggle; Mark Thomas Live in Brighton, Devonport Nuclear Safety Lecture (exposure by John Large, nuclear consultant).
Also, the Free Mumia Abu-Jamal campaign have produced a 32 track double CD, including tracks from Primal Scream, Chumbawumba, Asian Dub Foundation, Zion Train and Smith & Mighty. 150 minutes in total plus booklet £15.
www.cultureshop.org

Critical Mass London
Last Friday of each month, 6pm at South Bank, under Waterloo Bridge. Email: info@cmlondon.enrager.net Forum at www.enrager.net/forum/viewforum.php?f=4
Also third Sat of the month, 2pm outside Finsbury Park main gate, 7 Sisters Road.

Menwith Hill
Campaign for the Accountability of American Bases (CAAB) picket every Tuesday e
Hill, near Harrog
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(0)1482 702033

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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, eroding@eroding.org.uk

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

56a Infoshop
Bookshop, records, library, archive, social and meeting space. Anarchist, eco-activist, queer, feminist, DIY, squatting, class struggle. Open Thur 2-8, Fri 3-7, Sat 2-6. Near Elephant and Castle/Kennington tube: 56 Crampton St, London SE17 3AE

Rebel Bull
Hereford's freesheet, from Herefordshire Anarchist Group (HAG), c/o PO Box 7, Pontypool, Gwent NP4 8YB.
info@herefordanarchists.cjb.net

Manchester Radical Bookfair
5th Manchester Radical Bookfair - Saturday 6th December, 11-5 at Bridge 5 Mill, 22A Beswick Street, Ancoats, Manchester.
info@radicalbookfair.org.uk

AWN
The Anarchist Workers' Network is being set up to circulate and share news, advice and information about workers in struggle.
info@awn.org.auk
http://www.awn.org.uk

Bradford Anarchist Group
Local anarchist group for the Bradford/Wakefield area, contact; BAG, c/o 17-21 Chapel St, Bradford BD1 5DT.

Plymouth Claimants' Union
Offers free advice and support for the unwaged – donations, calls, letters, and new members welcome. Tel. 07811 582742. PCU, c/o M. Scantlebury, 144 Alexandra Rd, Mutley, Plymouth PL4 7EQ.

Norwich Anarchists
£1 for newspaper 'Now or Never'; PO Box 487, Norwich NR2 3AL.

Resist Wal-Mart
See letter on page 26 for details – we need self-motivated people to help with the campaign in London. Tel. 07906 440336.


Drop the demon puppets
www.direct-action.org.uk
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SF