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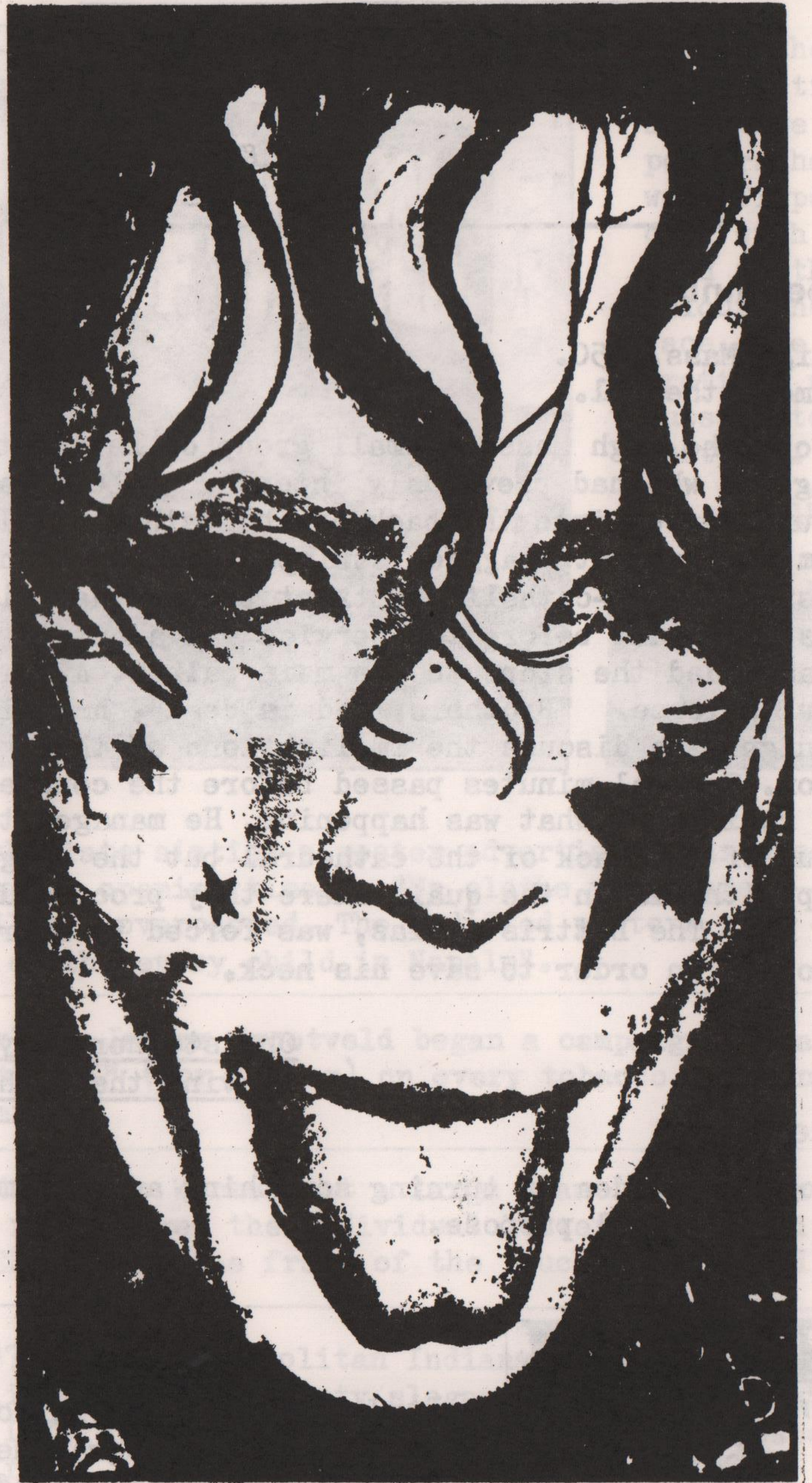
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## Spectacular Times

# Buffo!

A Short Anthology of Political Pranks  
and Anarchic Buffoonery



# Spectacular Times

LONDON 1982

"Fantasy will destroy power."  
"Laughter will bury you."

Rome graffiti.  
1978.

## In the beginning

Easter High Mass, 1950.  
Notre-Dame Cathedral.

Just before the High Mass, a small group of Lettrists, including one who had previously intended to be ordained, slipped unobserved into the back of the cathedral. In a side room they caught, gagged, stripped and bound one of the priests. The ex-catholic Lettrist put on the priest's vestments and, just before the service was about to begin, gravely ascended the steps to the main pulpit. A moment's respectful silence. "Brothers, God is dead", he said; and began benignly to discuss the implications of this conclusion. Several minutes passed before the congregation actually registered what was happening. He managed to escape out of the back of the cathedral but the congregation caught up with him on the quais where they proceeded to try to lynch him. The Lettrist, alas, was forced to surrender to the police in order to save his neck.

Christopher Gray  
Leaving the 20th Century

## Détournement

Distortion - the idea of turning something away from its true or original purpose.

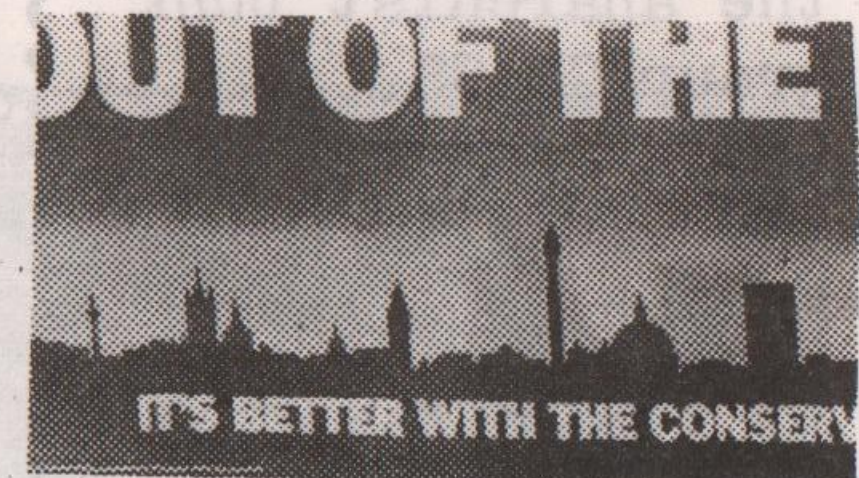


In January, 1982 Paris commuters arrived at Stalingrad metro station (left) and found that its name had changed. Overnight every sign in the station had been replaced in matching lettering with "Gdansk".



During the recent GLC elections Conservative Party posters had one word flyposted over with another word in the same colour and type-face. The word 'rotten' was substituted for 'better'.

Time Out



In the late sixties a poster advertising Harrods extended opening times - "We clothe very late" - was similarly overpasted. The modified posters read - "We clothe every child in Napalm".

1967: Robert Jasper Grootveld began a campaign of painting the letter "K" (for Kancer) on every tobacco hoarding in Amsterdam.

France, May, 1968: Workers at a large plant making heavy lorries re-arranged the individual letters of the firm's name (BERLIET) on the front of the trucks to read LIBERTÉ.

Italy, 1972: The "Metropolitan Indians" attempted to show the reality behind the empty sloganising of the Communists and the Left by producing their own parodies of posters and graffiti. Common examples were:

"Long live sacrifice"  
"Bosses' Power"  
"More work, less pay" and  
"All power to the Dromedariat"

Freedom &  
Open Road

The teen magazine, Loving ran a 'brides' edition which included a special offer of a song called "Our Wedding" by a group called "Joy de Vivre". However, when readers played the record they found it to be a track from an album by the anarchist punk group CRASS. Loving described the album as a "sneering attack on love and marriage". The News of the World said the title was "too obscene to print".

Women's Voice. Jul/Aug, 1981

Posters for George Wallace, the ultra-right wing candidate in the U.S. Presidential elections, carried the words "In your heart you know he's right". The most common graffiti addition in the convenient space below these words was "But in your guts you know he's nuts".

NO POPE HERE

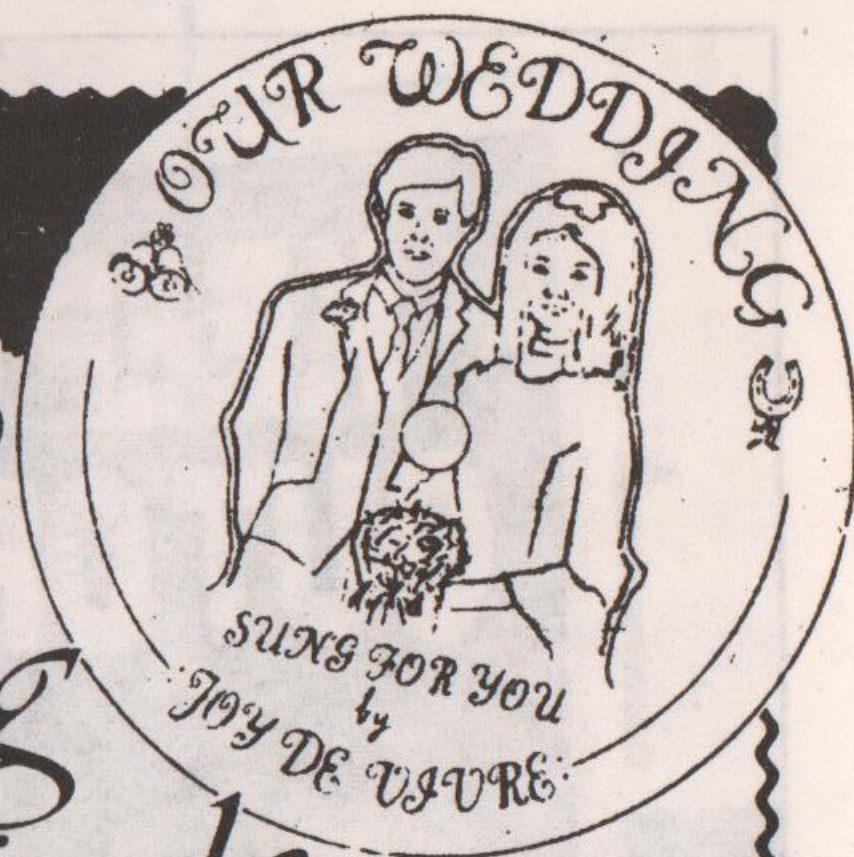
Lucky old pope

Belfast graffiti

**FABULOUS RECORD OFFER**

**Loving's**  
*Wedding Day Single*

*yours - for the price of a stamp!*



Yes, folks, we've got together with *Creative Recording and Sound Services* to offer you the chance of making your wedding day just that bit extra special, with this romantic song, *Our Wedding*, by *Joy De Vivre*. There's no limit to this great write-in, so all you have to do is simply fill in the coupon below and send it off, together

with stamps to the value of 18 pence and this super flexi single will be yours.

Joy De Vivre has captured all the happiness and romance of that all-important big day - your wedding - so make sure you send off for your copy in time for the grand occasion - it's a must for all true romantics!

**Freeze ending**

The big freeze is coming to an end. A slow thaw is expected to gain momentum in the next few days and temperatures will climb to 7C over the weekend.

**Up and up**

RAF search-and-rescue helicopters have flown 187 mercy missions since the blizzards and freeze-up began.

**Child-saver**

The Government announced yesterday it would give a £450,000 grant to the NSPCC over the next three years - to save children's lives.

**'Keep off'**

The Government yesterday blocked takeover bids for the Royal Bank of Scotland by both the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation and the Standard Chartered Bank.

**Plane 'iced up'**

A witness saw ice crusted on the airliner which crashed in Washington on Wednesday killing 78 people; a U.S. investigator said yesterday.

**Inflation steady**

Britain's annual inflation rate remained at 12 per cent in December, the same as November, according to the Retail Price Index.

**Feathered find**

Mrs Marie Tyler, of Sutton Coldfield, who lost a gold ring six weeks ago, believes that one of the birds she feeds found it and put it on her back garden bird table.

**Everybody out**

Workers walked out on strike when Mrs Thatcher visited Kellogg's giant breakfast cereal plant at Trafford Park, Manchester yesterday.

**Rolling on**

Two high-rolling gamblers from Las Vegas were thought to be on their way to London after winning £20,000 at roulette in a Northampton casino.

Page one of the January 16th issue of the Northern Echo (left) contained a message for the newspaper's new editor, Mr. John Pifer. Can you spot the hidden message?

(below) For the professional touch - 'Letraset' direct on to posters.



**"The pollution problem is in your hands. Keep Britain Tidy."**

**Stop driving your bloody Rolls Royce**

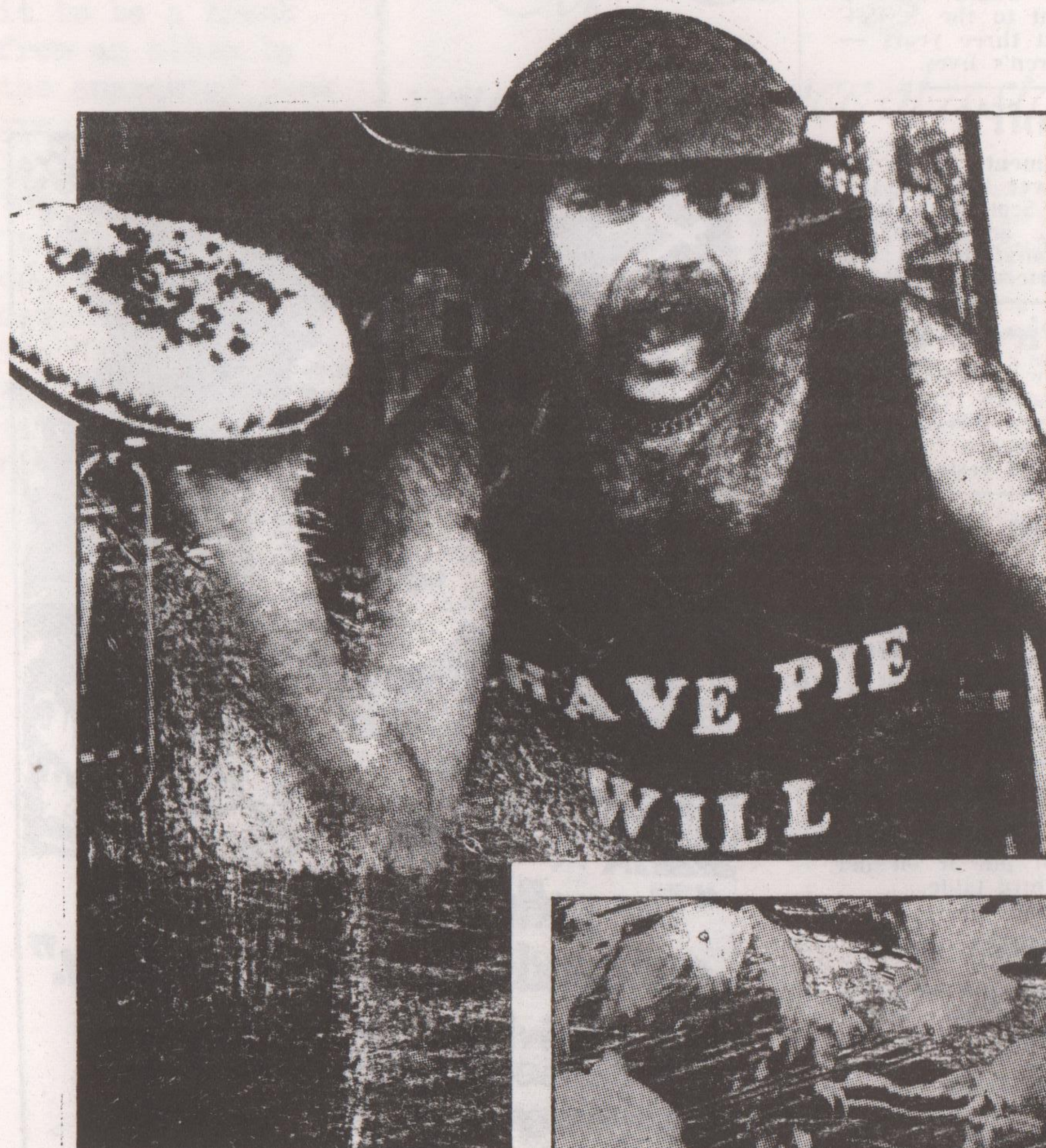


**KEEP BRITAIN TIDY**

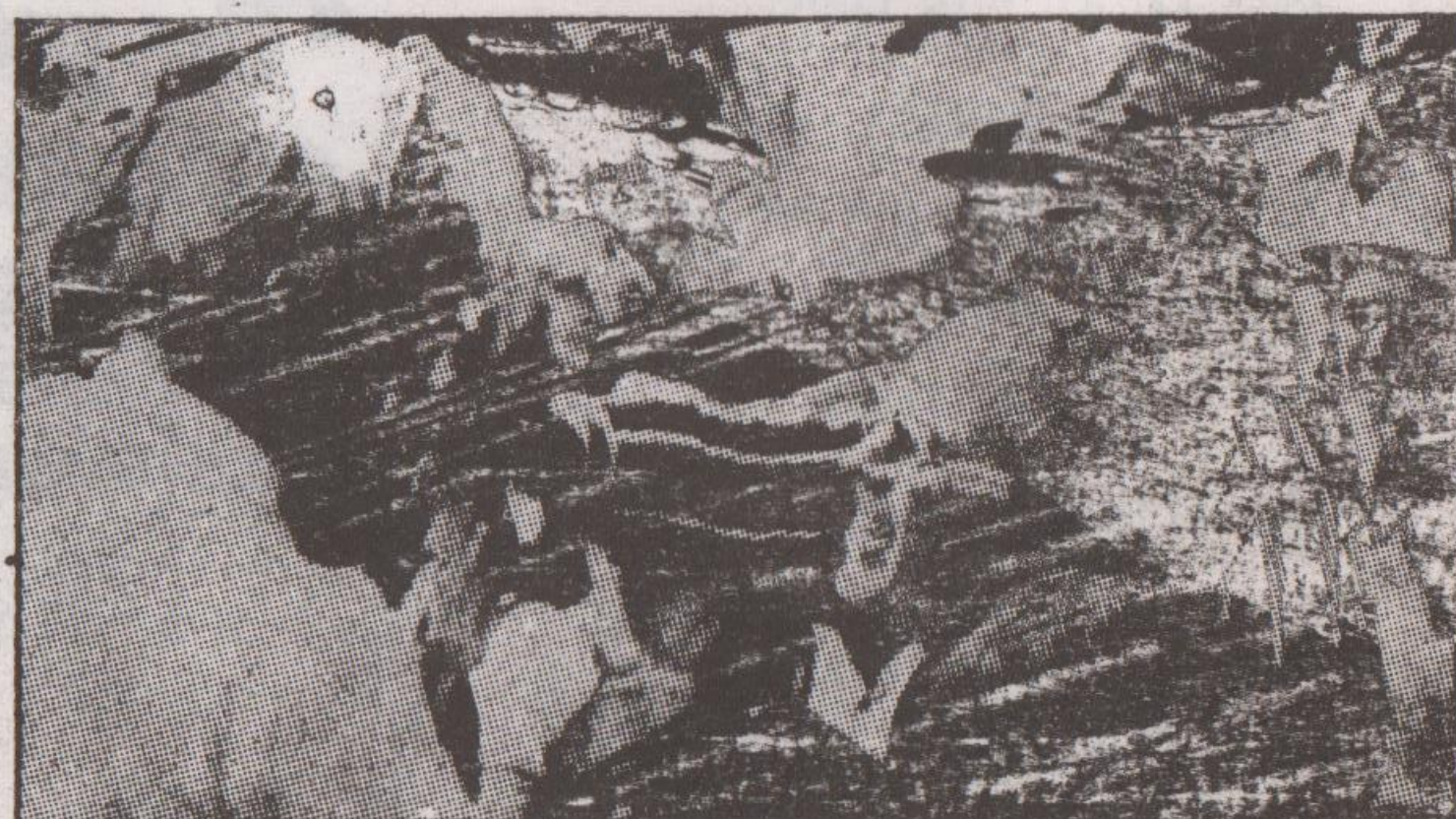
"The most effective way of attacking vice is to expose it to ridicule. People can put up with rebukes but they cannot bear being laughed at; they are prepared to be wicked but they dislike appearing ridiculous"

Molière

### Simple Simon meets the Pieman



Yippie Pieman Aron Kay lets us see his wares then meets Daniel Moynihan more than half-way



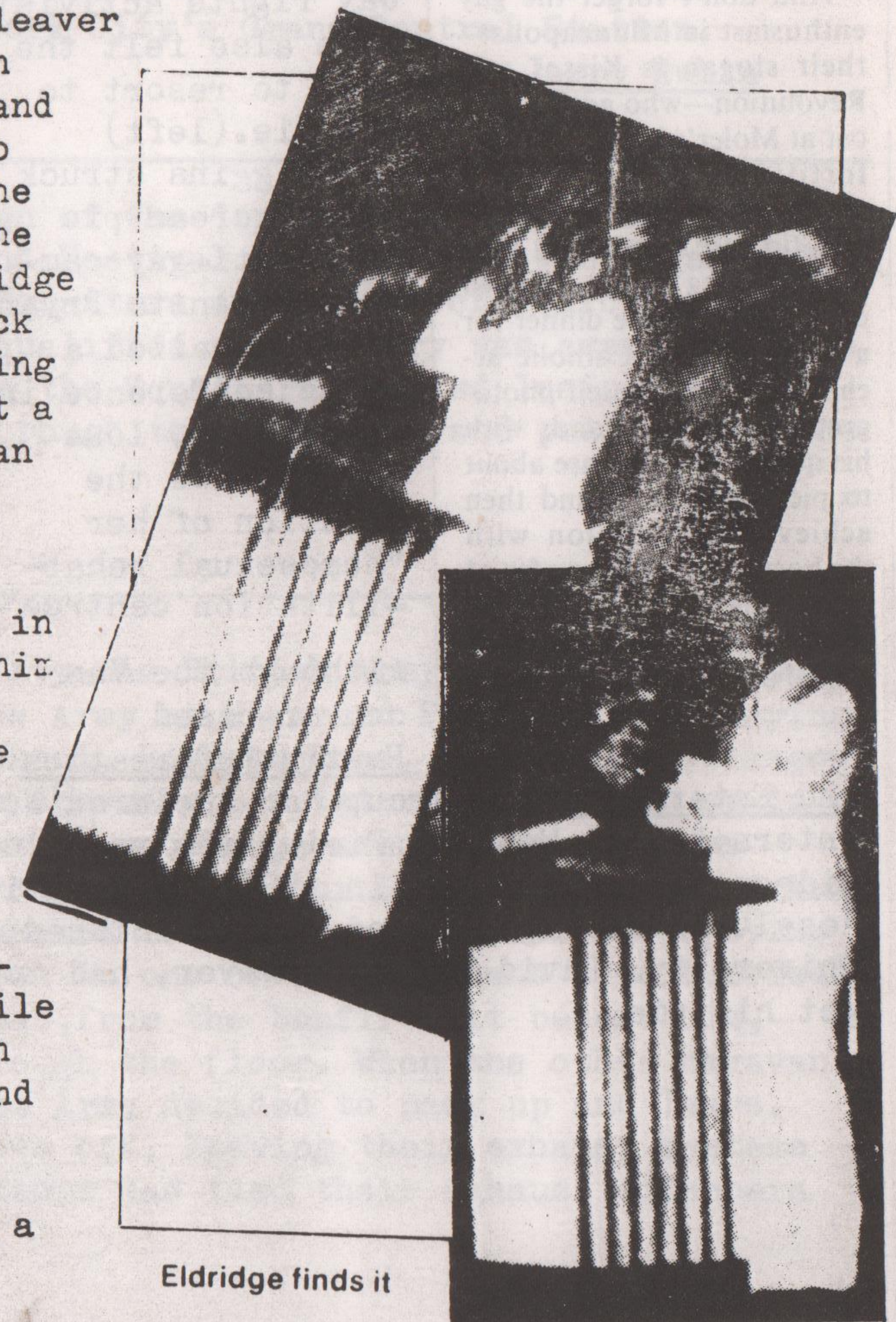
Aron Kay of the Yippies - pieman extraordinary of North America - has a long list of 'hits' to his credit including William F. Buckley, Daniel Moynihan and Watergate 'buggers' Anthony Clacewicz, E. Howard Hunt and Gordon Liddy. The anti-feminist Phyllis Schlafly responded, "At least he had the good taste to use apple instead of something that would have stained my outfit."

Aron's protege on the west coast is Vancouver-based Frankie Lee of the Anarchist Party of Canada (Groucho-Marxist). His 'hits' include the Canadian cabinet minister Marc Lalonde and brain experimenter José Delgado. Frankie specializes in personalized pies. He hit Delgado with a cow brain and tomato sauce concoction. Delgado asked, "Why me?".

For his hit on revolutionist-turned-religionist Eldridge Cleaver

(right) Frankie used an oreo cookie cream pie and explained "Because oreo cookies are black on the outside and white on the inside, just like Eldridge Cleaver". Frankie struck as Cleaver was addressing an audience of 1,500 at a 'born - again' Christian "I Found It" rally in Vancouver. Some of Cleaver's Christian friends caught Frankie in the car park and beat him up.

Religionists seem prone to violent reactions. Guru Maharaji Ji was pied by Pat Halley - a staff member of the Detroit anarchist newspaper Fifth Estate. While the guru continued with his message of peace and love, Pat was severely beaten by the guru's followers and suffered a fractured skull.



Eldridge finds it

Other victims react by trying to re-write history. When the "Revolutionary Three Stooges Brigade" pied Donald Speyer of the Dayton Power and Light Company ("Since DP&L are always trying to get a bigger slice of the pie, we thought we'd give them a whole one") he claimed he had never been pied.

"Apparently", said the Brigade, "he always goes around with gooey globs splattered all over his face."

When Roy Rogers was opening a new branch of his Roy Rogers Hamburger restaurant chain in Fairfax, Virginia, an unknown young man succeeded where thousands of bad guys in dozens of movies had failed before - he hit the 'King of the Cowboys' right between the eyes with a cream flan.

And don't forget the gay enthusiast in Minneapolis—their slogan is Kisses and Revolution—who got his hair cut at Moler's barber college, fortified himself with a couple of Burger King whoppers (in case they didn't feed him anything in jail), showed up at a \$75-a-plate dinner for a local anti-gay Catholic archbishop, had himself photographed shaking hands with his quarry (we who are about to pie, salute you) and then achieved communion with the host—not with a wafer of unleavened bread, but with a 69¢ chocolate cream pie from a local bakery.

Gay rights activists have also felt the need to resort to the pie. (left) Tom Higgins struck with a cream pie when anti-gay campaigner Anita Bryant (right) called a press conference in Des Moines, Iowa to announce the creation of her "homosexual rehabilitation centres".



Anita Bryant gets her just dessert.

Although the Vancouver-based Pastry Information

and Entertainment group has declared November 4th-11th as International Week of Pieing the practice has not become widespread in Europe. In 1979 Conservative M.P. Michael Heseltine was splattered as he finished a speech at Leeds University. David Frost, however, had to go to New York to get his pie.

Reports & Photos  
from "Open Road"  
1977 - 1980

"Spectacular organization is completely out of its depth with this sort of thing. The Marx Brothers have shown what a role can become if you play with it. The only pity is that the Marx Brothers were stuck with the cinema. What would happen if a game with roles started in real life?"

Raoul Vaneigem

It's my party and I'll snub who I want to...

On the 21st March, 1968 the New York Yippies organised a party for 5,000 people. The venue for the party was announced as New York City's Grand Central Station.

Jerry Rubin

June, 1973: As a sign of the 'truce' prevailing for the Camden Neighbourhood Festival a tug-of-war was organised between a team of Squatters and a team of Policemen. The Squatters were disqualified and victory was awarded to the Police because when the Squatters started losing ground, spectators broke through the sidelines and pulled with the Squatters.

IT

October, 1972: A thirty-man British Army recruiting team set up a display of "The Army at Work and Play" on the playing field of Lochend School, Lochend Road, Easterhouse, Glasgow and the local youth showed great interest, turning up in considerable numbers. A cookhouse erected to dispense modern army food ("Forget what your Dad told you about Army grub!") was soon smashed to matchwood. Soldiers enjoying a peaceful cup of tea in one of the caravans were hurriedly evacuated when flames, from the bonfire lit beneath it, started to lick through the floor. When the other caravan lost its windows the Army decided to pack up and leave. Two Land-Rovers drove off, leaving their exhaust systems behind: young saboteurs had tied their exhaust silencers to nearby trees.

IT

In the mid-seventies an organisation known as BESA (The Berkshire Extremely Silly Association) publicised a number of "Silly Events" to which the public were invited free of charge. Those who turned up at the advertised time and place would find themselves present at a tree planting or similar municipal ceremony.

## Stamps and Banknotes

The "friendly policeman" stamp (right) was said to have been withdrawn earlier than planned because of the widespread practice of adding captions to it. Pine Out magazine even ran a competition for the best example. The winning caption was "No, he can't stay even if you do marry him." (One of the children depicted in the stamp was black.) Xtra's favourite was "No, I didn't kill your daddy."



In 1981 "Friends of the Earth" produced a label - addressed to 10, Downing Street - for people to stick on empty drink cans. The labels carry a message to the Prime Minister on the virtues of returnable containers.

"Friends of the Earth" estimate that a total of 50,000 cans have been sent in this way. However, in April 1981 "Friends of the Earth" discovered that the Post Office were intercepting the cans before delivery. When asked where the cans were being held up the Post Office was unable to answer on "security grounds".

Peace News

It is usual for bank staff to remove very worn or defaced notes from circulation but in Chile it became a political duty. This was due to the Chilean workers habit of writing anti-government slogans on their banknotes. In 1973 the problem reached epidemic proportions and the government was withdrawing banknotes almost as fast as new ones could be printed.

Xtra!

In 1977 the big banks in Italy printed their own small denomination notes in large quantities. Members of the Italian Radical Party collected together 100,000 lires worth of this 'unofficial' money which they took to be changed at the Credito Italiano bank in Milan.

The manager fell into the trap and refused to change the notes into 'real' money, thus bearing out the Radicals' claim that "The banks rob and the State is accomplice", and precipitating a near riot in which the regular customers sided against the bank manager and forced him to comply with the demands. The next target of the Radicals is to be a catholic bank since, "The banks rob and the Church is accomplice".

Guardian

On the 24th August, 1968, Jerry Rubin, Abbie Hoffman and ten other Yippies entered the New York Stock Exchange and climbed to the visitors gallery overlooking the main hall.

The Yippies addressed the brokers and traders working below them on the evils of money and greed. Most of the brokers found the incident amusing and at the end of the speech many joined in good natured applause. Then the Yippies reached into their pockets and threw into the air handfuls of dollar bills. As money floated down like autumn leaves the scene changed dramatically. Brokers and traders jumped, pushed and buffeted each other to catch the falling banknotes, others on hands and knees scabbled about on the floor grabbing as much as they could. The security guards arrived and the Yippies were ejected from the building.

Do it!  
Jerry Rubin

### **Bulletproof Glass Encloses Gallery At Stock Exchange**

The New York Stock Exchange last night installed bulletproof glass panels and a metal grillwork ceiling on its visitors' gallery for what an exchange spokesman said were "reasons of security."

Work to enclose the 100-foot-long gallery, which in places hangs directly over the desks and telephone booths of clerks and brokers, began shortly after the close of trading at 3:30 P.M. yesterday. The job was expected to be completed before today's 10 A.M. opening bell.

Last Aug. 24 a dozen or so hippies threw dollar bills from the gallery—a display many exchange members do not want to see repeated.

New York  
Times

## Straight from the horse's mouth.

Hugh Gaitskell was at the 1963 May Day demonstration in Queen's Park, Glasgow to address the Glasgow Labour Movement on the theme of the demonstration: "No to Polaris!" Gaitskell was known to be a supporter of American bases on the Clyde and as he worked his way round to explaining the necessity of such bases he was interrupted by heckling and cat-calls. He said his critics were "secret members of the Communist Party" and "tools of Russia" who should all "go back to Moscow".

Finally he lost control and started to scream abuse at his audience. Facing a crowd of thousands he shouted, "You're nothing! You're just peanuts!" Only the police and stewards saved him as hundreds rushed forward to storm the platform.

Stuart Christie  
The Christie File

In 1975 Gianfranco Sanguinetti - sometime member of the Situationist International and accomplice of Guy Debord - created a scandal in Italy by publishing a fake anonymous report claiming to be a leading member of the ruling class and suggesting that the only way to save capitalism from the wrath of the workers and others, was to work out a common front with the Communist Party.

This ironic report was widely acclaimed and discussed in the press, parliament and amongst leading business figures until about nine months later Sanguinetti revealed himself and the true nature of the document.

Re-fuse



I'LL cut everybody's hands off. — Ayatollah Khomeini.

Students at Hamburg University in the late sixties knew that, despite so-called 'denazification', many of their professors still held Nazi sympathies. During a traditional ceremony in November, 1967, a large group of students stood and scoffed and laughed at the participants. Eventually one professor, purple with rage, screamed at the students, "You should be in a concentration camp!"

Jerry Rubin, 1970.

"Supposing one day trucks travelled through the city announcing, "The war in Vietnam is over! The war is over! Turn on your radio for further information." Within two minutes everybody would be calling their mothers, "Hey, Mom! The war's over!"

Nixon would have to go on T.V. to reassure the American people that the war was still on."

During the May uprising in Paris in 1968 students and young workers occupied the Sorbonne and the Odeon and barricaded the surrounding streets against the paramilitary CRS. The official Communist Party was less than impressed. When the slogan "Never Work" appeared on the facade of the Sorbonne the Communist Party daily newspaper 'L'Humanite' bemoaned the defacement of the building and wondered how such views could have so easily won over 16,000 students.

The Sorbonne set up an occupation committee and its presses flooded Paris with revolutionary posters and leaflets. The Odeon was the venue of a non-stop discussion. When the CRS used CS gas and riot batons in an attempt to clear the streets and occupied buildings the students and young workers fought back with cobblestones and petrol bombs.

The Communist Party General Secretary George Marchais said that the activities of the students had no revolutionary validity. The students were not members of the Communist Party and, Marchais told 'L'Humanite', the Communist Party is "the only revolutionary party".

Correspondent  
and 'L'Humanite



A POLICY of containment in Ulster was the "passport to failure," said former NATO chief General Sir Walter Walker when he spoke to the Surrey branch of The Monday Club, at Camberley's Civic Hall on Thursday.

"The key to success is clear - hold and dominate," he declared.

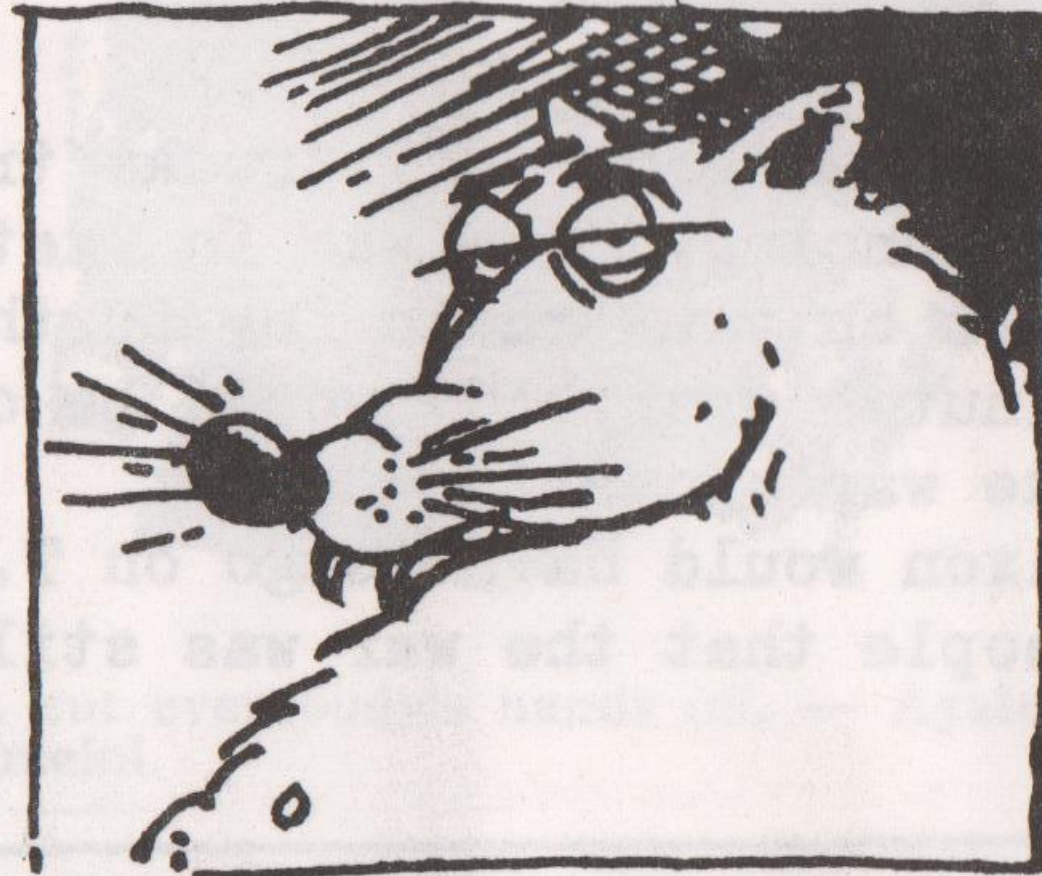
The general called for a "citizen army" equipped with miniature neutron bombs the size of cricket balls to protect Britain from the advance of world Communism.

He said that the bombs "miniature battlefield H-bombs" - were the most powerful deterrent today.

They could kill by lethal gamma rays and not by blast and fire. They released-up to 80 per cent of their total power as an intense burst of nuclear particles and gamma rays so penetrating that they could kill soldiers even in heavy tanks.

Camberley News

11th Feb., 1977



## YIPPIE!: THINGS TO DO ON ERECTION DAY

- 1) Vote. Bring some spare underwear with you, preferably that of the opposite sex, and fling it over the top of the booth while you're voting.
- 2) Help others vote. Stand outside the polls silently handing out sharpened pencils to voters on their way in. If you feel this is insufficiently militant, hand out kitchen matches. It is best to bring along both pencils and matches, so your action can shift with your mood.
- 3) Get out the vote. Volunteer for Election Day precinct work. Cover a precinct for Nixon. Cover the same precinct for Humphrey and Wallace. Once they've signed you up for a precinct, they're counting on YOU to get the vote out there. You may want to do more than one precinct.
- 4) Demonstrate. Assemble at 1 pm at Civic Center Plaza. Listen to rock bands and smoke marijuana. Then move out over the city in at least three big groups: for fun, go to Montgomery Street for a giant Monopoly game on the sidewalk; for militancy, go to Presidio or Hall of Justice for mock trials and such. After dinner, assemble at Civic Center Plaza again (7:30 pm) to hear speeches, smoke more marijuana, and then walk down Market Street to the candidates' headquarters to join in the victory celebrations. Pigasus (a pig) will gracefully concede. Humphrey headquarters at 11th and Market, Nixon headquarters at 1st and Market, both easily recognizable by their large plate glass windows.

Yippie Election Leaflet  
1968

## Elections...

VOTE EARLY.  
VOTE OFTEN.

### Belfast Graffiti

Shortly before the official launch of the Social Democratic Party a meeting was organized to form a branch of the new SDP in Kent. The meeting attracted support from all sorts of organizations including the ultra-right wing Freedom Association. Alas, when the good people of Kent arrived at the hall they found out the person organizing the meeting was "of anarchist persuasion".

Time Out  
27.2.81

## ....and the elected

Representative Tim Moore sponsored a resolution in the Texas House of Representatives in Austin, Texas calling on the House to commend Albert de Salvo for his unselfish service to "his country, his state and his community".

The resolution stated that "this compassionate gentleman's dedication and devotion to his work has enabled the weak and the lonely throughout the nation to achieve and maintain a new degree of concern for their future. He has been officially recognized by the state of Massachusetts for his noted activities and unconventional techniques involving population control and applied psychology."

The resolution was passed unanimously.

Representative Moore then revealed that he had only tabled the motion to show how the legislature passes bills and resolutions often without reading them or understanding what they say.

Albert de Salvo was the Boston Strangler.

IT No.106

The only safeguard against authority and rigidity setting in is a playful attitude...

Raoul Vaneigem.

### On the street again

Paris, May, 1968: The first non-university territory to be occupied during the revolt was the Theatre de France at the Odeon. The wardrobe department was raided and dozens of demonstrators came out to face the CS gas dressed as centurions, pirates and princesses.

During the 1981 Brixton riots police signalled their intention to charge one group of rioters by beating out a frightening 'heartbeat' rhythm by banging their truncheons against their riot shields. The rioters responded by beating their dustbin lids - in a cha-cha rhythm.

Sunday Times

During the march on the Pentagon, Yippie children moved among the military police guarding the building, gaily unzipping the officers' flies.

Playpower

On demonstrations groups of demonstrators with cameras and tape recorders should surround newspaper and television reporters demanding to know why they are there, have they been paid to attend, what they expect to achieve, etc. Every way they turn they should find cameras pointing at them and microphones thrust before them to record their every word.

A boy with purple hair trotted up to the Police Control Van and asked for two choc ices.

Ginsberg, 1966

1967: Dutch Provos planned to disrupt the wedding of Princess Beatrix to ex-Nazi Claus von Amsberg. Leaked Provo plans included: "during the Psalms the church organ will emit laughing gas" - "hidden loudspeakers will blare forth the sound of machine-gun fire - watch the police fire back!"

- "horses bolt at the smell of lion manure. It can be collected from the zoo and strewn along the procession route. Oh what fun to see the runaway golden coach, with Beatrix and Claus desperately clinging on to one another." The massive police presence, enticed by such plans, prevented them being put into action. But the Provos didn't give up.

Harry Mulisch wrote in Delta: "Then all at once the television picture grew hazier and hazier until the whole screen was white...suddenly the carriage with the newly-weds emerged from the mist and, when I grasped what had happened, I was overcome with emotion. Other people, with more guts than me, had brought it off, were throwing smoke bombs into living rooms all over Europe, the Soviet Union, United States, Japan, and were being pursued far along the canals and beaten up in doorways by policemen falling over each other to get at them. Others were being shoved up against railings by mounted police, held tight by reins looped around their necks, and kicked senseless by spurred riding boots."

quoted in  
Playpower

On Hallowe'en Eve, 1968, members of WITCH (Women's International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell) haunted the New York Stock Exchange. The witches, dressed in black fairy-tale cloaks, claimed they had an appointment with the Chief Executor of Wall Street - Satan himself. Commissionaires barred their way so they grouped outside the building and "with closed eyes and lowered heads the women incanted the Berber Yeall - sacred to Algerian witches - and proclaimed the coming demise of various stocks. A few hours later the market closed 1.5 points down, and the following day it dropped five points."

Rat, 1968  
quoted in Playpower

In 1960 a series of demonstrations were held in Japan against the renewal of the Japanese-U.S. security treaty. President Eisenhower was to make a state visit to promote the pact. However, on the night of the 19th, June 300,000 Sohyo (trade union) members and 40,000 militants of the Zengakuren converged on the Diet (parliament) building in a 'snake dance' They then held a mass urination on the main steps of the

building. The Japanese government was obliged to ask Eisenhower to cancel his visit.

Cockburn & Blackburn  
Student Power

Paris, May, 1968: Probably the most gruesome protest against the Vietnam war was planned by a group of young French conspirators: The population of Paris was to rise one Sunday morning to find the Seine running blood red and dotted with the floating bodies of dead Vietnamese. The plan never came to fruition; the bodies were no problem, the deep frozen bodies of dead Asians (who would pass for Vietnamese) were bought in bulk by the medical school for training purposes. They were delivered fairly regularly to the school by refrigerated lorry. Hijacking the lorry would be no problem; deliveries were made at night and no one expected such a load to interest hijackers. The problem came with the red dye. No one had predicted what a prodigious quantity of dye would be required to colour such a volume of water. The quantity required was impossibly large and the plan was scrapped.

Apocryphal

"Make the fog flee before you"

Andre Breton

## The Media

January, 1982. In response to the French Communist Party newspaper L'Humanite's Moscow line on Poland, a group in Paris produced a fake L'Humanite supplement on the Polish crisis.

This unofficial insert was of the same layout and in the same typeface as the original newspaper. Under a banner headline of "Smash the counter-revolution in Poland" it explained difficult concepts such as "war is peace" and "slavery is freedom". A picture of smiling and joking Gdansk shipyard workers was captioned "Imperialist agents disguised as workers".

"After a meeting of the libertarian groups in Glasgow, we prepared a leaflet explaining the facts behind the treatment the Scottish Daily Express had given me over the previous few weeks, citing other cases of heaverbrook skullduggery, showing what a bunch of twisters they had as reporters. With the assistance of some sympathetic printworkers at the Express offices in Albion Street, we inserted a copy of our leaflet inside most of the copies of the morning edition as it came off the machine to be packed. There were a few red faces the following morning when those readers opened their papers over their porridge and read the truth for once. The Express had to print an apology the next day for this unwarranted exercise of free speech, over which the "Guardian" chortled in two columns."

Stuart Christie  
The Christie File.

TWO weeks ago, a film crew from the prize-winning American CBS television programme "Sixty minutes" had the temerity to enter the former factory behind Zurich's railway station that has served as an "autonomous youth centre" for the last four months. They were promptly set on by a gang of hooded youths, trussed, and covered with paint.

It emerged later that, so far from being spontaneous the youths had carefully arranged to have a video company on hand when they set on the intruders. The resulting film, after some haggling, was sold to CBS for 500 Swiss francs, thus ensuring that the American public would see the Zurich youths at their most truculent and, at the same time, swelling a kitty that is helping to pay off the fines of hundreds of youths that have been charged in the last 15 months of rioting.

Guardian  
27.8.81

## Shopping

1968:

New York: "We'll choose a shop. About twenty of us will go in, select the stuff we want, hand the cashier a flower and head for the door."

New York City Yippies

Lower East Side: The Black Mask group staged a mill-in at Macy's during the Christmas rush. Demonstrators flooded into the store disguised as shoppers, store detectives and counter assistants. Stock was either spoiled, stolen, swapped around or given away. Accomplices ensured that respectable middle-class shoppers were mistakenly roughed up and arrested.

King Mob Echo, London.

London: The King Mob group themselves entered Selfridges store in Oxford Street with one of their number dressed as Santa Claus. Good old Father Christmas toured the store giving away free gifts from the stock on display and wishing everyone a merry Christmas. Soon afterwards the shoppers were witness to the edifying spectacle of policemen arresting Father Christmas and snatching back toys from small children.

In 1964 the San Francisco Diggers opened a Free Shop where people brought and took what they wanted. For a short time a similar Free Shop existed in London.

### IT

In 1977, Italy saw the formation of a new kind of consumer affairs group; the "Autoriduttori" (a title that translates clumsily as the 'autonomous' or 'do-it-yourself' price-cutters.)

Their activities include printing their own bus and theatre tickets and (reduced) electricity bills as well as the mass ransacking of supermarkets in order to expropriate the surplus on behalf of themselves (as consumers.)

### Open Road

### Toxteth Riots, 1981

Many people in Lodge Lane were nervous about entering shops that were being looted. Local youngsters helped out by bagging up a selection of goods and placing them outside on the pavement for collection.

A man walking down Lodge Lane asked a passer by for a cigarette and was given a box of 200.

### Freedom

Paris, c1970. An exclusive grocery store was the victim of an organised, mass shoplifting raid. Caviare, foie gras, truffles and chilled Reising was then distributed free to nearby slum dwellers.

### Apocryphal

A group of activists received information that the auction sale of two houses owned by Kensington and Chelsea Council was being rigged - speculators had apparently agreed that nobody was going to bid above an agreed figure. On the day of the auction six of the group, respectably dressed, turned up at Chelsea Town Hall.

The bidding went to £20,000 - believed to be the agreed top figure - then the group started bidding. Some of the speculators started bidding against them. Only when the figure for one house reached £75,000 did the auctioneer suspect something - then there was pandemonium.

### Correspondent

### Trains, Buses & Bicycles

During General Franco's rule a group stopped the Madrid-Barcelona train in a rural area and before allowing it to continue, covered the outsides of the carriages with Anarchist slogans. Thus decorated the train arrived at the crowded Barcelona station.

### Apocryphal

On Merseyside, one Spring night in 1976, a group of people entered bus depots and stuck official - looking notices inside the buses. The notices read: "EXPERIMENTAL FREE TRAVEL: Due to the sharp rise in administration and collection costs the Executive are introducing free bus travel for an experimental period of 14 days. No fares will be collected on any MPTE services from Monday, 3rd May to Sunday, 16th May 1976."

### News Ltd

1967: Thirty Dutch Provos painted their bicycles white and announced that they belonged to everyone. People were invited to bring their bicycles to the Spui at midnight on Saturday, where they would be painted free.

Urged on by insurance companies and manufacturers the police rounded up and confiscated all white bicycles in Amsterdam - on the pretext that they might be stolen.

### Playpower

Then there is another spiffing wheeze currently being put to the Tube drivers' union - that the drivers simply refuse to stop at Westminster and St James's stations. This would hurt the MPs, the civil servants in the Home Office, and Transport Ministry - and would make everyone else giggle.

### GUARDIAN

February 15 1982

In 1979 the Montreal City authorities turned down a request for a bicycles-only lane on the grounds that it had no funds available for the necessary painting of road markings. As a protest, a group of cyclists painted - overnight - their own cycle lane on 1½ miles of street. The city hired a contractor to paint over the unofficial paintwork.

Open Road

### Workers' Playtime

During the prolonged strike at Grunwick's, strike-breakers were moved in to undertake the mainly mail-order film processing work. In support of the strikers, local postal workers attempted to suspend deliveries to the factory but, after a short time, their efforts were defeated by legal manoeuvres.

Three months later, postal workers in Sydney, Australia were surprised to find many sacks of mail - recently unloaded from a mail ship - contained packets for a firm called Grunwick in London.

Apocryphal

July, 1968: Lisbon bus and train workers were protesting because the British-owned Lisbon Tramways Company would not give them a wage rise. They protested by running the services as normal but staff refused to accept fares. This new kind of transport strike proved very popular with passengers.

The Times

New York City IWW Restaurant workers won some of their demands - after a failed strike - by giving customers double portions and making errors (on the low side) when making up bills.

I.W.W.

Detroit, 1968: Inspectors at a car factory relieved boredom by taking their jobs absolutely seriously. They began rejecting something like three out of every four or five cars under examination. Some cars were rejected simply because they failed to turn over quietly enough. Management tried to drop hints about inspectors being too punctilious (but were naturally reluctant to state this openly). The inspectors ignored the hints. Unfailingly they argued back that their interests and the company's were identical and thus they had a duty to ensure that only products of the finest quality left their factory.

Ratgeb

### New York

Thousands of office employees were forced to leave their buildings yesterday as police, plagued by more than 200 bomb threats since a weekend explosion at Kennedy International Airport, stepped up their search for explosive devices in the New York metropolitan area.

A New York Police Department spokesman said that although no bombs were found yesterday,

the threats, many of them apparently made to lengthen lunch breaks, continued to pour into police headquarters.

"The number of calls yesterday and the number today goes up around noon, and if people leave early, we seem to get calls from neighboring buildings," the spokesman.

San Francisco Chronicle

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Wed., May 20, 1981

Mr. Luigi Angeli, a factory worker from Riva del Garda, has been given a medical certificate which prescribes total rest until the year 2030, when he will be 99 years old. During his national television interview, Dr. Mario Rizzonelli, who wrote and signed the certificate, said: "Mr. Angeli can live a normal life but he must not return to work under any circumstances whatsoever. He is a very sick man." Asked to describe the nature of Mr. Angeli's sickness, Dr. Rizzonelli said: "I am prepared to discuss the subject with the President of Italy or the chief inspector of Social Security. But I am not willing to have my recommendation of half a century of absolute repose questioned in public."

National Press & Private Eye

"This could be our last chance to unmake history."

Raoul Vaneigem



## Afterword

The idea of a foreword to this pamphlet was dropped fairly early on. However, after collecting and sifting so many items and writing and talking to contributors, friends and comrades it became clear that some sort of statement was necessary.

Humour has always played an important part in social education -not always for the good. Sexist and racist jokes reinforce stereotypes and keep us apart. Whose propaganda war benefits if the stereotype Irishman is "thick" and always ready for a fight?

On the other hand the most powerful symbols and advertisements can be totally deflated and demystified by someone with a bit of intelligence and a spray-can or felt-tip marker. (As a bonus the new message carries with it all the impact and presentation the medianiks worked so hard to put into the original!)

Dangerous trends in popular humour are soon recuperated; television political satire which scandalized the establishment twenty years ago is now presented at peak viewing time as satirical comedy. It may make us laugh, but it rarely does more than encourage our cynicism - as Shakespeare observed, "There is no harm in an allowed Fool". Revolutionary buffoonery must attempt to jolt people out of customary ways of thinking and behaving.

Such pranks have nothing to do with practical jokes. Too often practical jokes are played by the confident and cunning on the helpful and guileless. The message of practical jokes is that we should not be trustful of others, nor be too eager to be of assistance - a profoundly reactionary message.

Revolutionary buffoonery tries to build confidence, not cynicism; it tries to demystify, not alienate. But most of all it brings play back into everyday life.

It has always been the aim of jesters, by playing the Fool themselves, to expose the real fools.

Larry Law

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