

Anarchic Networking

The last Northern Anarchist Network meeting was in Hebden Bridge in Yorkshire in January. Over twenty people attended and discussed opposition to the Countryside Alliance and other right wing groups; the threat to Unemployed Workers Centres; the Anti-Terrorism Bill (see separate articles) and the Tameside Careworkers' dispute.

They also discussed the future of the Network, which is good for giving a sense of perspective and for keeping in touch with other anarchists. People living in isolated areas in particular can feel supported and occasionally inspired! The general tone of the meeting was optimistic, recognising that there is growing resistance to the oppression around us – and even a “buzz” in the air.

The next NAN will be in Bradford on 1st and 2nd April – you can ring 0161 707 9652.

Bury the Unemployed?

Bury Unemployed Workers Centre, which has a good track record of defending people's rights, could be under threat. Local government officers intend to revamp the centre, sidelining the unemployed people on the committee and replacing them with poverty “experts” and managers who manage other managers. This is consistent with what New Labour is doing around the North West. When they were in opposition, the party valued Unemployed Workers Centres as they provided valuable bases for activity. Now they are an embarrassment to their former supporters, whose social philosophy only extends to “partnership” with business and managerialism.

Road Revival

Pressure group Transport 2000 has warned today (2nd Feb) that three shelved road schemes in the Greater Manchester area may be reintroduced. 18 months ago the government put on hold the A6 Stockport bypass, the A555 / A523 Poynton Bypass and the A555 Manchester Airport Link West. It has now referred the schemes back to the local authorities to decide if they should be given the go-ahead. The schemes were put on hold for good reason – they would increase car use, pollution, and danger. Transport 2000 is calling for the schemes to be permanently ditched.

Columbian Military attack the U'wa's

A coalition of groups are demanding that Fidelity Investments pressure Occidental Petroleum to cancel drilling on land in eastern Colombia that is sacred to the indigenous U'wa people. The 5,000 strong U'wa tribe have declared they will commit mass suicide if the pipeline goes ahead against their will. Last week (25th Jan) Occidental brought in the the Colombian military to launch an armed assault upon the U'wa's to evict them from tribal lands. So far three tribesmen are reported missing. Fidelity controls more than 30 million shares of Occidental, representing \$700 million.

Demonstrations and actions were planned at Fidelity offices in 21 cities nationwide and overseas, including London, Prague, Amsterdam, New York, Denver, Chicago, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Tokyo, and Tel Aviv.

Contact this international campaign at: www.ran.org or the local group: u'wacampaign@nematode.freemove.co.uk.

Seattle Showdown

Last month's Riotous Assembly included a video from the events on the streets in Seattle, USA, followed by a brief discussion, and what it meant for Manchester. Points highlighted from people who were there included the diversity of forms of protest, the scary police weaponry, the amazing jail solidarity, and the openness of the protestors' plans, despite bugging devices being found. A network formed for the protest, which set guidelines for everyone's involvement, despite disagreement. Though this made it feel safe for some groups to be involved, it also resulted in “peace police” getting between sweatshop-shops & protestors, punching people who damaged windows, leading to pointless arrests. Alliances were formed for the time of the WTO conference between reformists & others who see the need to challenge small as well as international capital.

Terrorised by the bill

Are you, or have you ever been, in disagreement with the Government?

The new Terrorism Bill could be coming your way. After 25 years of harassing and intimidating Irish people with the Prevention of Terrorism Act, the new Bill will now apply across the U.K. Due to become law sometime this year, its most worrying clause is an attempt to redefine terrorism. This will now include the threat of violence not just to people but to property, and to anything that causes a risk to “health and safety” of any section of the public. This is so vague that virtually any politically motivated action could be outlawed as terrorist.

The bill will give a whole load of powers to stop, search and detain people, with even less rights once in custody than now. It brings new powers to ban organisations, and even going to a meeting or wearing something which suggests support of them will be illegal. It attacks international campaigns and solidarity by making support of “terrorist” groups abroad illegal. The ANC? The East Timorese? This engenders the right to safe haven from persecution and would criminalise those supporting independence struggles around the world. It will allow the police to cordon off areas and then remove everyone – ideal for demonstrations. Even failing to tell the police what you know about “terrorist” activity will be illegal.

The law represents another layer of armour to deal with opposition to the state. We should not be surprised by it and should not hope too hard for Parliament to throw it out. Through solidarity now and in the future we can however make it unworkable and unenforceable. Success lies in continued grassroots organisation against the state and its oppressive forces.

In Manchester there has been one very well attended meeting of over 50 people already, where we heard details about the bill and discussed ideas for responses.

More details from www.blagged.freemove.co.uk/terrorbill/
Liberty 0207 4033888
Right to Protest Forum via JB on 0171 7270590



The Loombreakers were Lancashire weavers who, in 1826, smashed the machines that were destroying their livelihoods and communities.

Pick it up **FREE** from: **Frontline Books**, 255 Wilmslow Road, Rusholme; **One World Centre**, Mount Street, near Central Library; **Mistys Café**, Longsight District Centre, Stockport Road; **Café Pop**, Oldham Street, Piccadilly; **Unicorn Grocery**, 89 Albany Road, Chorlton; **Pankhurst Centre**, Nelson Street, near MRI.

If you live outside Manchester, send us a stamp for each issue you want. Prisoners and local action camps get it free - just send us your address.

The Loombreaker
c/o Manchester EF!
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255, Wilmslow Road,
Manchester M14 5LW
0161-226 6814

loombreaker@nematode.freemove.co.uk

The Loombreaker comes out at the beginning of each month, so get any news to us by the end of the month. If we've managed to offend you, write us a letter..

Do you wanna be in our gang? The Loombreaker is looking for people to get involved cos we're too lazy to spell and we need people to kick our ass! (Seriously we need people to help out).

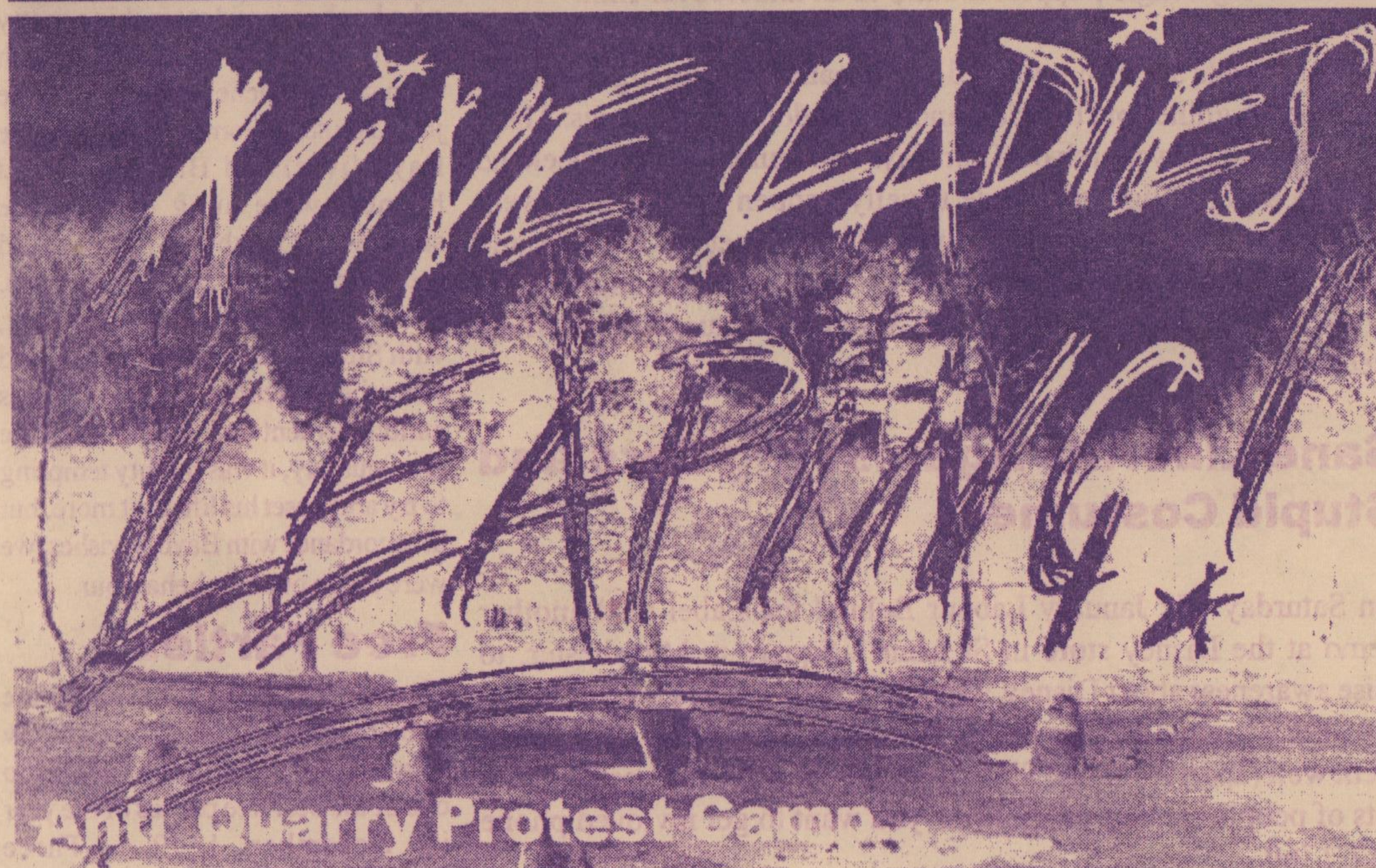
Interested in taking action?

Come to the *Riotous Assembly* for direct action, campaigns, taking on the bosses, grassroots resistance, defending communities, earth, animals, and fun! It's a chance to meet & chat. Bring ideas & events each first Tuesday of the month, 7:30 pm, Yard Theatre (opposite Junction pub) 41, Old Birley Street, Hulme. Next date: **07.02.00**



The Loombreaker

No. 8 ★ January 2000 ★ Free



Despite being designated as a National Park, the Peak District is not safe from destruction by quarry merchants. There is an application for two dormant quarries to be reopened on the hillside at Stanton Moor, a site of neolithic and bronze age barrows and stone circles including the Nine Ladies stone circle. A company plans to quarry 30 acres of land over the next 40 years, extracting 2.39 million tonnes of gritstone.

While the National Park Authority twiddles its thumbs trying to decide whether to do anything, local people and their new friends are taking action to stop the destruction of this wooded slope. A protest camp was set up in the autumn of 1999, and welcomes visitors, especially if they are able to:

- Bring supplies (e.g. firewood, food);
- Help build treehouses and other dwellings; or
- Give out leaflets to walkers and tourists.

The site also needs builders, climbers, tunnellers, supporters and van drivers plus building, wood, nails, tools, tarps and food (no more lentils please, or carrots unless you are going to stick around to eat them).

For more information contact 07974 049369 (better to phone back than leave a message) or check out their web site at <http://pages.zoom.co.uk/~nineladies/>

Directions

You can get a Trans Peak (TP) bus from Manchester, Derby or Nottingham and get off at the Peacock Hotel in Rowsley. Walk up the road opposite the hotel, signposted to Stanton. Walk up the hill to the crossroads and turn left. Keep walking. After the first junction on your right there will be a track on the right blocked by boulders. The camp is up this track, on your right before you get to the barn.

Inside:

Anti-Genetics, Animal Rights, Anti-Deportation, an “exclusive expose” of the SWP, May Day, new dodgy laws, free parties, West Papua, Disney & child labour, Social Services Cuts, and loads more

The Loombreaker is about the action people are taking in and around Manchester to defend & create what is important to us, so reclaiming control of our lives.



DIARY

Sat 5 Feb: Anti-Vivisection demo NatWest. Transport available from M'cr - 07931 586 826

Weds 9 Feb: Anniversary of the death of Mike Hill. NW Hunt Subs - 0961 113 084.

Fri 11 Feb: Genetically Modified Food - The case against. Public Meeting. 7pm, Victoria Halls Methodist Mission, Knowsley St, Bolton.

Sat 12 Feb: Anti-Vivisection Demo against HLS, Cambridgeshire. Transport available from M'cr - 0121 632 6460

Mon 14 Feb: Blockade at Faslane. Transport from M'cr - Manchester CND 0161 834 8301

Tues 22 Feb: Demo against hare coursing at the Waterloo Cup. 0961 113 084.

Sat 26 Feb: Southern Voices Community Day - 0161 273 2228

Hacienda court cases on 28/29 Feb and on 6 March for 2 weeks, in Manchester magistrates court..

Sat 4 Mar: Mumia Must Live! demo. Assemble Embankment, London at 12 noon also demo in manchester meet in the peace gardens at 3pm.

Vegan Nutters in Black Balaclavas...

Natwest actions are continuing every Saturday with activists travelling across the country, occupying banks, dropping banners and doing demos and street collections. Natwest are being targeted because they loaned £24.5 million to Huntingdon Life Sciences, effectively bailing them out after workers were shown punching and throwing beagle puppies around in an undercover film.

Local activists are also involved in the national campaigns against Newchurch guinea pig breeders and Huntindon Life Sciences. There are pickets at Newchurch on Thursdays and Sundays, every weekend there is a night vigil and these usually happen midweek as well. People are at the gates of HLS every day to greet the workers and night vigils are starting soon. Activists from Manchester and Liverpool are planning to visit HLS and Newchurch on alternate weekends.

Sane Liberals Against Big Ears and Stupid Costumes.

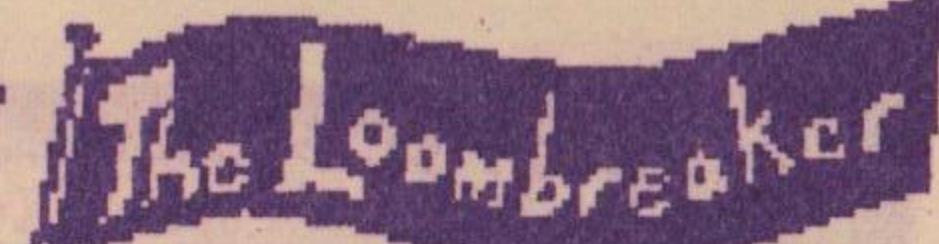
On Saturday 15th January Labour Behind the Label held another demo at the Disney store in St Anne's Square in Manchester, to raise awareness about Disney's appalling treatment of garment workers. For example workers in Haiti are paid 70p a day. The demo went well (apart from one SWP comrade trying to sell papers), with lots of people signing petitions. If you want to get involved phone 247 1760.

Genetic Charges Modified

The Lincoln court case ground to an unexpected halt on Wednesday 19th January after less than 2 days of legal wrangling. Expected to last up to 3 weeks, the Crown Prosecution Service clearly wanted the 22 defendants out of there as soon as possible, saving a lot of money in the process. All defendants were originally charged with Aggravated Trespass, some with Criminal Damage, and a much later and ridiculous addition of Section 4 of the Public Order Act, 'intent to cause distress or alarm'. However, the Prosecution appeared to be standing on shaky evidence and offered everyone Section 5 of the aforementioned Act, 'threatening, disorderly or abusive behaviour' which is not an imprisonable offence as the original charges were.

Now the question was, how could 22 activists agree on this?! After much discussion, focussed mainly on criminal records and the chances of fighting and winning the case, 12 people agreed to accept Section 5, and 10 accepted 'breach of the peace' which is a civil rather than criminal matter. On the plus side, we didn't have to stay in Lincoln for 3 weeks with a magistrate from an alternative reality (note blatant ignorance of basic social facts with the question: 'Why can't everyone sign on at the same time?'), who would most likely have found everyone guilty of the original offences. On the other hand, the ethical case against genetically modified crops may have been fought and won, if not the legal one. With 'threatening and abusive' taken out of the charges, the 12 who pleaded guilty walked away with fines for £200 or conditional discharges for a year and costs of £45. Benefit night anyone?!

Meanwhile, 2 activists have been charged with Criminal Damage for the destruction of a genetics test site on October 30th.



Jack Off! Straw

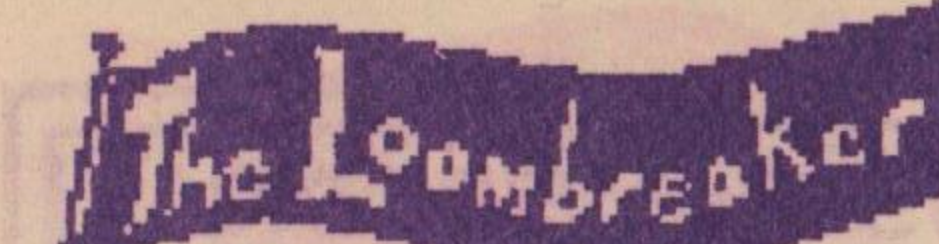
About 20 people from Manchester rose early on Saturday 15th January to travel to Blackburn to lobby Jack Straw at his surgery. The lobby was in support of Bayo Abiola, a Nigerian who has been resident in this country for 10 years and who has a British born son. Manchester activists were joined by some from Liverpool (where Bayo lives) and Blackburn, and banners were hung outside the surgery so 'Jackboot' Straw could see as well as hear Bayo's supporters. The lobby passed without incident, with Straw agreeing to see Bayo and two others. Bearing in mind Straw's announcement on Pinochet only the previous day, it was mighty tempting to try and upset his life a bit more, but in accordance with Bayo's wishes, we were all on our best behaviour.

Free Parties

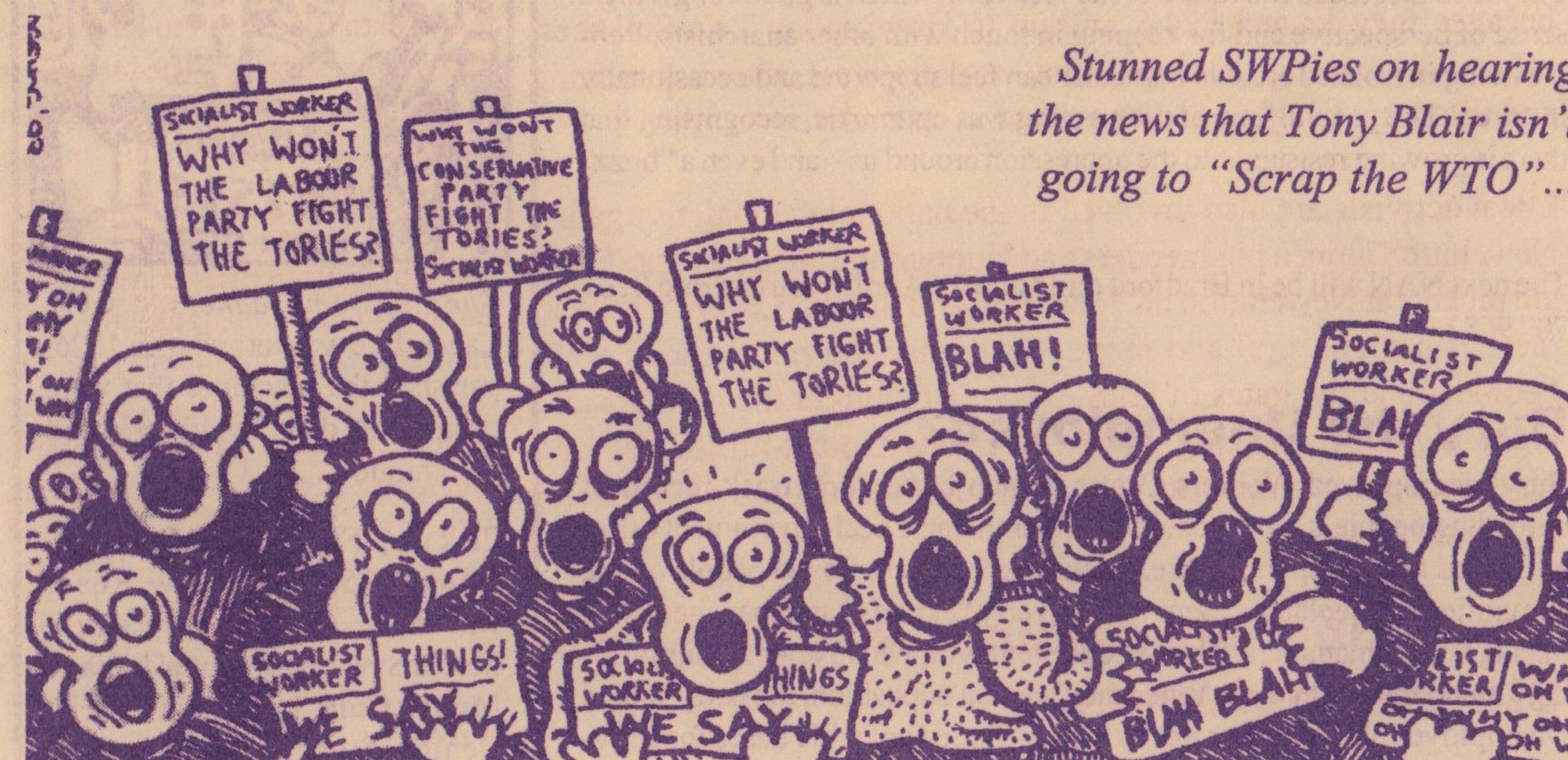
The old Norweb building next to the Mancunian Way, just a stone's throw from Hulme's Redbricks was host to one of the best free parties of the year in December 1999. Three soundsystems, funky projections courtesy of Counter Culture Collective and an Okasional Café room metamorphosized an otherwise unused building into a living breathing creature of fluffly joy that carried on dancing until late into the next day.....!

Rare Messenger

Despite the dangers of a West Papuan speaking out in public, thanks to the death and destruction Indonesia has brought, East Timor-style, to this invaded island, a speaker visited Manchester and showed a video of what's happening there, and answered questions about the (armed) independence struggle these indigenous tribes are waging. He talked too of the first Meeting of Tribal Councils taking place on the 26th-28th February over there, and the British companies who are involved in supporting this genocidal regime, & why we hear nothing of West Papua. Hopefully he'll be able to come back to Manchester in March. There'll be a solidarity action in Manchester at the end of February - contact Manchester Earth First!, 226 6814, for more info.



After N30: The politics of "Anti-Capitalism" and the problem of Newsagents Provocateurs!



Stunned SWPIes on hearing the news that Tony Blair isn't going to "Scrap the WTO"...

The success of the anti-capitalist, anti-WTO demos on June 18th and Nov 30th of last year has inspired activists to look towards MayDay as this year's big demo. The actions last year showed that people getting together at a grass roots level, without leaders, without permission, without authority, can run rings round the powerful institutions of capitalism.

Inevitably, the old left are finally waking up to the successes of these direct-action groups. Many on the left are looking with open minds, realising that they don't have the answers anymore and looking to different ways of doing things. But just as in the case of so many other successful protest movements, some on the left seem to be just jumping on the bandwagon. It feels to me like the Socialist Workers party must have decided upon the anti-WTO protests as an opportunity to sell more papers and recruit more party members. They seem to be trying to take over the anarchist-inspired direct action and straitjacket it into their boring outdated mode of politics - meetings, rallies, marches etc etc ad nauseum. They've begun organising meetings all over the country, all called 'People & Protest', making links with the World Development Movement, Jubilee 2000 and other groups.. Their 'Socialist Review' says something along the lines of - 'this movement needs leaders'.

They are clearly missing the point. It's really great that the left understands the problems with such as the WTO, and are putting considerable efforts into mobilising around that, but it's just that I think their way of reacting to it is part of the problem. The success of June 18th, or the street parties, the fun and games in Seattle, lies in the fact that there wasn't any political party trying to lead it, and no party hacks trying to be leaders. Much of what happened was due to autonomous groups organising themselves, allowing for spontaneity and creativity - things which could never exist in the ordered, hierarchical world of the old left - where policy and directives come from above and must be obeyed by everyone. The traditional ways of organising were jettisoned by those involved with J18 and Seattle precisely because they offered no solutions; boring marches, with dull speakers, selling each other the same old regurgitated political rants in papers will never change anything. More to the point, it doesn't inspire people to get involved and makes politics dull.

At the core of our problem with the WTO and G8 and the government, is the fact that a small group of powerful people get to make decisions which have a far-reaching effect on our lives. Not much different in fact to what many on the left want - they just want a 'different, more fair...justsocialist, but still small group of powerful people deciding what happens. Well I for one don't want my life controlled by anyone, be they socialist, communist, or what. What I and many other direct activists want is a dissolution of that hierarchy - a radically different way of organising, without party politics, without institutionalised authority.

All over the world there will be anti-capitalist actions on May 1st. In this country you can take part in Manchester, Sheffield or other locations across the North as well as in a day of discussion and workshops in London on April 30th.

The 'People and Protest' meeting in Manchester

was incredibly well attended with 200 -250 people(although we'd heard this was partly because the SWP had cancelled all their branch meetings). It seemed to me unfortunate then, that the meeting wasn't particularly inspiring. We spent 45 minutes listening to speakers - the most interesting actually being Charlie from the SWP, because he talked at least a bit about Seattle and the protests, rather than just the attempts to reform the WTO. The chair then tried to give the rest of the time to contributions from the floor, saying that 'the people on this podium don't have all the answers, and it's important to get ideas from everyone' - but this departure from the conventional way of giving time to speakers to respond met with some resistance from certain people in a certain party. A few of us got together in a pub after, and had a much more inspiring discussion - the ideas flowed for what we could do in Manchester on May Day. Watch this space!

Sources of Radicalism

A more interesting initiative from some on the left is a series of lectures organised by Frontline books - your favourite radical bookshop, and the Institute for Labour Studies. It's called 'Sources of Radicalism' and is in the Green Room about once a month. The first lecture was by Dave Haslam, DJ, and author of 'Manchester, England', who talked about radicalism in Manchester's history and in popular culture. The talk was thought provoking, not least because of the debate afterwards, where many on the left had clearly been inspired by the direct action protests in Seattle, without really understanding the autonomous / anarchist politics behind it. At least here though the attempt was to open up to new ways of thinking and acting. Ask at Frontline for more information

A Former SWP Student Organiser gives us their "Kiss 'n' Tell" exposé!

"I was the SWP organiser at a large University in the early/mid 90s. Recruitment to "the Party" was paramount. Everything was subordinate to this goal, the Anti Nazi League, student politics, strike support etc. was all organised in order to build the SWP. We would receive weekly instructions (known at the time as "Party Notes") from the leadership on what issues to get involved in, and how. At all times we were told to "Recruit, Recruit, Recruit". The success of any particular campaign was largely irrelevant. For example, I organised a large and very successful protest against the introduction of cuts to the student grant, within days of the cuts being announced. At the end of the demo a leading local member of the SWP asked me how many new members the SWP had recruited, "None" I replied, "Well this demo was a waste of time" was the Party's official response. Everything revolved around "Paper Sales" - flogging copies of Socialist Worker". Branches would compete to see who could sell the most. Members who didn't sell many copies, ended up forking up for extra copies in order to avoid embarrassment at branch meetings.

You know those petitions you are always being asked to sign by SWPIes? They usually end up in the bin. (the ridiculous demands e.g. "Scrap the WTO!" should be a bit of a give away). My bottom drawer was always full of petitions gathering dust. It is openly admitted within the SWP that petitions are only used as an excuse to talk to people and to try and get them to buy a paper. We also used to put little marks by the names and addresses of people who seemed sympathetic and use the petition as a contacts list.

(Un)fortunately, there isn't room here to go into all the gory details, but my short time in the SWP witnessed:

Purges of dissidents, physically threatening opponents, abandoning new members to the mercy of neo-nazi gangs, spreading (false) rumours of rape about former members, secreting deals with the cops at protests (e.g. Chequers trespass '94) exploiting aids victims to sell papers, sadly the list could go on for ever...

And finally the SWP's leader not only has bust of Marx, Lenin and Trotsky...but also himself. Nuff said."