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# GrassRoots

Leicester's radical voice

Aug/Sept  
2000

GrassRoots is Leicester's only independent radical campaigning magazine.

GrassRoots is printed by the Leicester Radical Alliance.

We welcome contributions from anyone. Send information, articles, letters, and donations to:

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c/o Dept Z,  
Littlethorn  
Books, Humberstone Gate, Leicester.

www.plebs.com/  
leicester-radical/

## An NHS sell-off is coming our way. Let's stop it.

Leicestershire Health UNISON, which organises 4,500 healthworkers in Leicestershire, has stepped up its campaign against the cuts in acute hospital services being contemplated by Leicestershire Health Authority and the University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust. The 'Reconfiguration Project' promises (as ever) better services - but as a recent UNISON inquiry concluded, the numbers don't add up. There's a gap - a gap which seems designed to be filled by privatisation under the so-called 'private finance initiative'.

The union has agreed to establish an open planning committee to co-ordinate work publicising alternatives to the Authority's proposals. Everyone concerned by the reconfiguration can get involved in the campaign for a better health service.

### Campaign

Nick Holden, UNISON Branch Chair, explains: "We want everyone in Leicestershire to be part of our campaign. We are running this campaign to fight for the best possible health service for people in Leicestershire. This is not about 'saving' one hospital or another, and it never should have been

- its about safeguarding the NHS in the whole of the county.

### Profiteers

"You cannot solve the underfunding in the NHS by inviting private contractors to run parts of the health service for profit, and you cannot tackle the pressure on beds by swapping an acute hospital for a rehabilitation hospital - particularly one that the NHS has to rent from profiteers.

"Leicestershire needs increased provision for rehabilitation within the NHS, but not at the expense of acute care. This proposal is reckless and would result in a worse service both for patients requiring rehabilitation and those needing acute care.

"That's why we are stepping up our campaign to halt the Reconfiguration Project. And it is why we are opening up our campaign to all healthworkers -  
*(Continued on p. 2)*

### Kidderminster Hospital Sell-Off Causes Labour Council Meltdown.

In 1998 the local health authority announced plans to close the Kidderminster General Hospital, which provided a local version of the NHS for most of the last century. Labour in opposition promised to stop the scheme, but in government . . . you can guess the next bit.

The result? At the last local elections, campaign body 'Health Concern' took seven seats from NuLabour on the district council.



inside...

Sierra leone - the truth, credits, beauty tips  
Behave!, electric meters, crunch, street party  
Photo features: jubilee 2000 & pride, websites  
NEW pull-out diary, t-shirt offer, emma g

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Welcome to the eleventh issue of *GrassRoots*

Editor: Chris Williams

Contributors: Nick D, Nick Holden, Tristram Hooley, Porky Pig, Steve Rooney, Elaine Smith, Kala Subbuswamy, Chris Williams,

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Treasurer: Alan Stanley.

• *GrassRoots* is printed and published by the Leicester Radical Alliance. Next Radical Alliance meeting: 7.30pm, Tuesday Aug 29th, Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate.

• *GrassRoots* editorial meetings now happen every week, between 5pm and 6pm on Sundays at Secular Hall.

• The LRA is an alliance of a whole bunch of people who want to change the world. Some want to change it a little, some a lot. Rather than waste time bickering with each other, we prefer to turn our ire on the real enemies: authoritarianism, capitalism, oppression, environmental destruction, and the inability of Leicester City Council to carry out simple repairs to my rubbish chute in less than five months.

• This month's thanks go to Leicester AUT, Leicester Trades Council, Kathryn Busby and Geoff Forse.

• We put the 'poor' in 'radical reporting': send cheques to 'Leicester Radical Alliance'. We crave stamps, envelopes, help, and Lord Levy's accountant's phone number.

• Coming soon: Student/education special.

• Send us your photographs, diary dates, useful bits of local news, etc,

# DIAMONDS ARE FOREVER

Teenage rape victims. Babies with hacked-off limbs. Child soldiers brutalised by war. Yes folks, those Satanic Sierra Leoneans (like the Zany Zimbabweans and the Rampaging Rwandans) are at it again. What's wrong with these people? Don't they don't share our respect for human life? Racist nonsense maybe, but these are precisely the sentiments underlying mainstream media coverage. Journalists have once again opted for heart rending stories which say everything about the scale of suffering, but nothing about why it's happening.

At the heart of the conflict is control of Sierra Leone's rich natural resources. For 10 years, competing diamond companies have helped to fuel, sponsor and exacerbate a brutal civil war between the Revolutionary Armed Forces and the government. On one side are companies who have purchased diamonds from RUF controlled territory. The profits from this trade more than off set any moral qualms about helping to fund an organisation with a penchant for amputating children's limbs. On the other side of the conflict are

those companies who have backed the "legitimate" government in return for lucrative mining concessions. It has to be stressed that the government enjoys "legitimacy" only in the eyes of interested business people. It has delivered nothing but poverty, misery and war for its people.

Western leaders share the business community's concern that the plunder of natural resources runs as smoothly as possible. So much so that RUF leader Foday Sankoh was made Minister of Strategic Resources (ie. diamonds) last year, as the US and UK governments reverted to their now familiar policy of helping to install homicidal maniacs in positions of power and authority (remember Saddam, Pinochet, Suharto..?) However, Sankoh was less than cooperative and started to question the validity of the concessions granted by the government. The

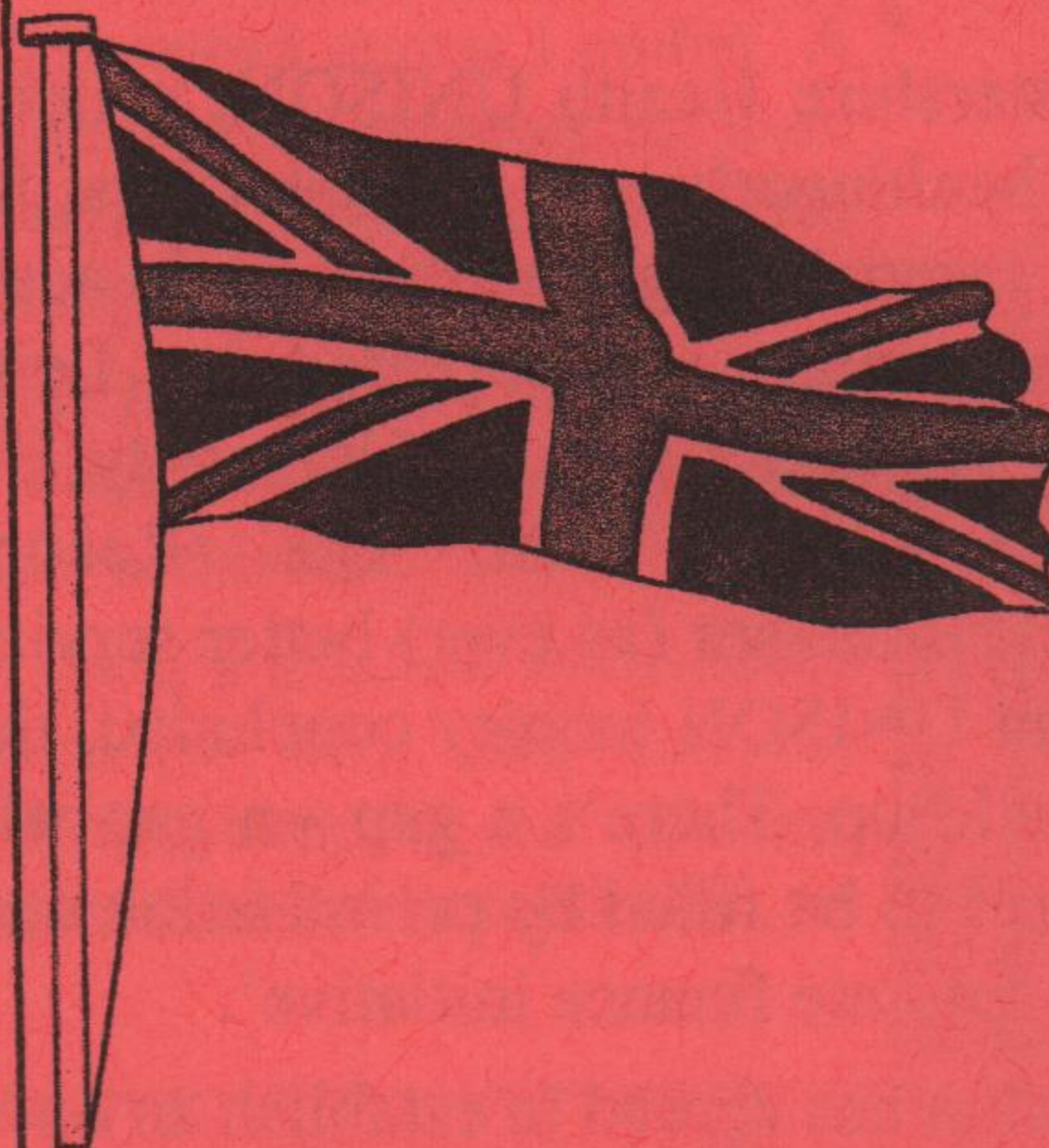
diamond companies and their friends in government were naturally outraged. Conflict resumed and UN "peace keepers" became the latest pawns in a game controlled by multinational gangsters.

Whatever happens in the near future in Sierra Leone, one thing is certain: the potential profitability of its diamonds is sure to override any concern for the welfare of its people. The real lesson to be learnt is that unlike human life (which is temporary and expendable), diamonds are forever.

More info: 'Heart of the Matter' - <http://www.web.net/pac/pacnet-1>

Steve Rooney

## Child soldiers UK's unique selling point



Despite the recent fuss, it was the UK that vetoed the UN's latest attempts to outlaw child soldiers. The British Army relies on a constant supply of 17 year olds. Adults aren't sufficiently malleable, it seems.

## Union Fights NHS 'Reconfiguration'

(Continued from page 1)

whether they are members of UNISON or not - and everyone else in Leicestershire. We believe that the proposals can be stopped if we all work together."

Other plans include: printing 100,000 copies of a campaign leaflet exposing the real implications of the Reconfiguration Project; writing to MPs and all local councillors explaining the reality of the plans; balloting all UNISON members working in Leicestershire acute hospitals; discussing strategy with other UNISON

branches facing PFI projects; and lobbying the Health Authority's final consultation event on September 5th.

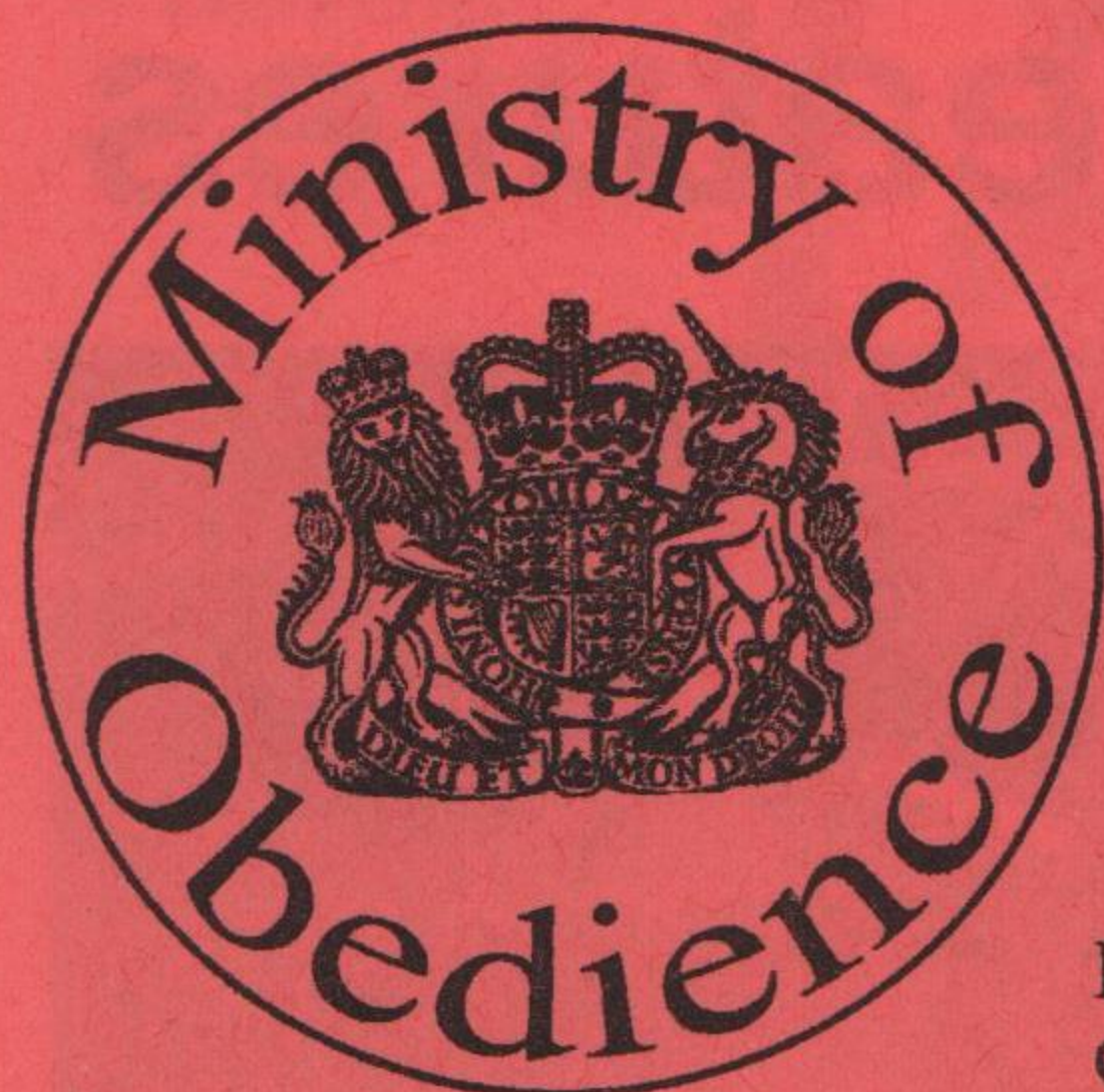
The union has expanded coverage of the campaign on its website: <http://pages.unisonfree.net/leics.health> and more information on the planning committee and other activities can be found there.

More information can be obtained from Nick Holden, Branch Chair

<<mailto:glengate@stayfree.co.uk>>

## Beauty as Duty

Are you worried that your make-up could be costing the earth? Well worry no more as The Ark in St Martins Square is now stocking a range of fully organic and biodegradable cosmetics. Eco-warriors - you now have no excuse not to look your best at all times!



## Warning: politicians are not a joke

In a statement released this week, the Ministry of Obedience warned: "Politics is a serious business. Sniggering at your elected representatives is both unproductive and unpleasant. On a broader level, our research has revealed that unnecessary joking and messing around at the workplace costs employers \$6 billion every year. This cannot be tolerated in a profit-conscious democracy. That is why we are aiming to reduce UK laughter emissions by 35% over the next three years." The Ministry is launching a massive Public Information Campaign to ram the message home, with the aid of new high-impact slogans such as "Don't Make Me Laugh - It's More Than My Job's Worth" and "Humour - It Just Isn't Funny".  
[Lifted from *The Pork-Bolter*, Worthing's equivalent of *GR*]

## Do we owe them a living? Course we don't!

Elaine Smith sees red:

If I came up to you and offered you the use of something you need, asked you to pay for it before you had even seen it, and then, told you that you had to pay an extra 10-25% on top of that, would you?

Thousands of the most economically deprived people in this city are forced to do this every day through electricity and gas prepayment meters. Not only do we pay for our electricity and gas up front in cash before we receive it (unlike those who pay quarterly in arrears) but we pay an extra for the rent of the meter on top of the standing charge. The gas and electricity we receive through our meters also cost us more - 10% extra for electricity and whopping 25% extra for gas!

When the price of gas and electricity is lowered by OFWAT and OFGAS it can take months before our meters are changed to the lower tariff, and in the meantime we continue to pay at the higher rate. So when they do eventually come to alter the meter we are in credit! In the rest of the world, this overpayment would be returned to the creditor, but

the gas and electricity boards put the credit towards the next bill which in effect means that I never get it back because I am never in arrears! In the rest of the world if I paid cash for something in advance I would expect a discount not extra duty!

This made me especially angry a few weeks ago when the electricity meter ran out and left the house in darkness. The washing machine had stopped with my eldest son's work trousers inside. In the past we could have gone down to Raw Dykes Road and purchased another card, but they have closed this outlet down. We can only buy cards from a few local shops or post offices. Once they've shut you're stumped. At the time this happened, the electricity company owed me £48.80.

British Gas are (as I write this) advertising on TV about the abolition of the standing charge. Will this include the pre-payment meter users or will it be yet another way for national companies to screw yet more money out of those with least economic power in our society?

## Free Street Party!

the streets are for people not cars  
communities not capitalism



- Wild music
- Jugglers, clowns, street art & theatre
- Nature blessings
- Homage to the unknown deserter

\*\*\*

Sat. 19th August

12 pm

Meet at Peace Walk,  
Victoria Park

\*\*\*

### Seeding Power

: A day of guerrilla gardening, anti-privatisation, and free tea!

- creating a community garden
- giving out rare seeds
- possible occupation of a neglected building
- tea and information for passers-by

We need help with: plants, banners, information leaflets and displays (eg organic food, GM, permaculture, LETS, housing), tea urns, food, people!

If you can help, contact LEAF on (0116) 210 9652, or kalasubbu@yahoo.co.uk

**Crunch:** the benefit night is a community reaction to the increase in racist attacks in

Leicester intended to make a positive stand and to raise our morale. **Crunch** will happen 8pm-2am on September 29th. **Crunch** will be a massive night at the Y [opposite the railway station].

Appearing are top reggae band

**Duppy's Conquerors**, indomitable ska-sters the **Splitters**, great hip-hop band **F.B.I.** and the wonderful **Schkmphf**. LRA favourites **Ghenghis Hi-Fi** will take us through the night with

reggae sounds to groove to. Meanwhile in the bar, catch the

**Eazy** sound system together with guest DJs from **Babble** and

**Trancemission**, joined by new faces

**Bugsy** and **Jam**. All £ go to Leicester's Refugee Action. **Crunch**

is possible cos of/ venue - Y/ slot -

**Home Grown Roots/ PA -**

**Favourite Tunes/** playing for

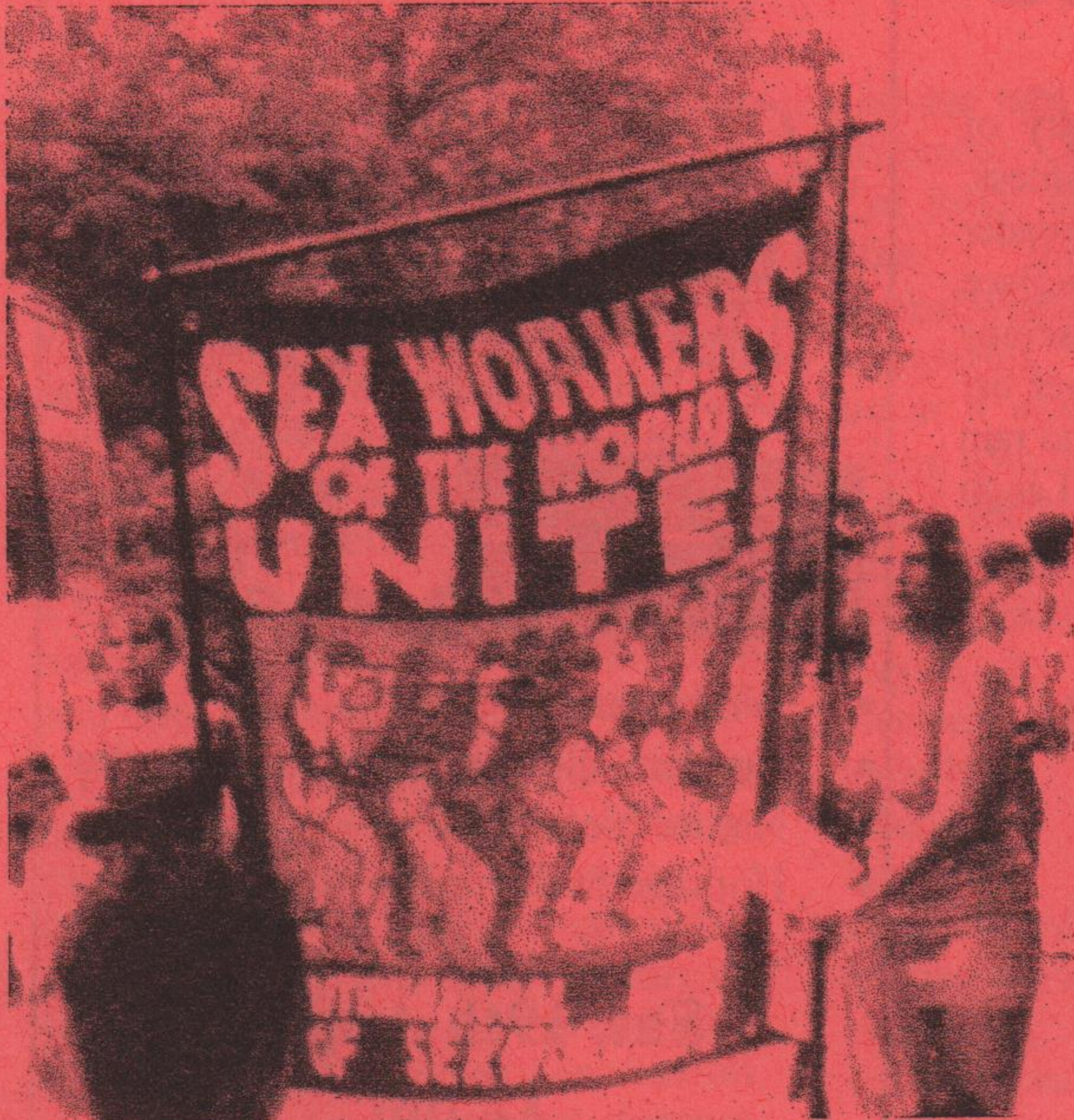
nothing - bands/ giving their time - lots of people/. It will be £4/£2.50 to get in, and tickets are on sale right now from the

Y. More info? Nick on 0794 137 9427.

# Crunch

# Summer special photo-features

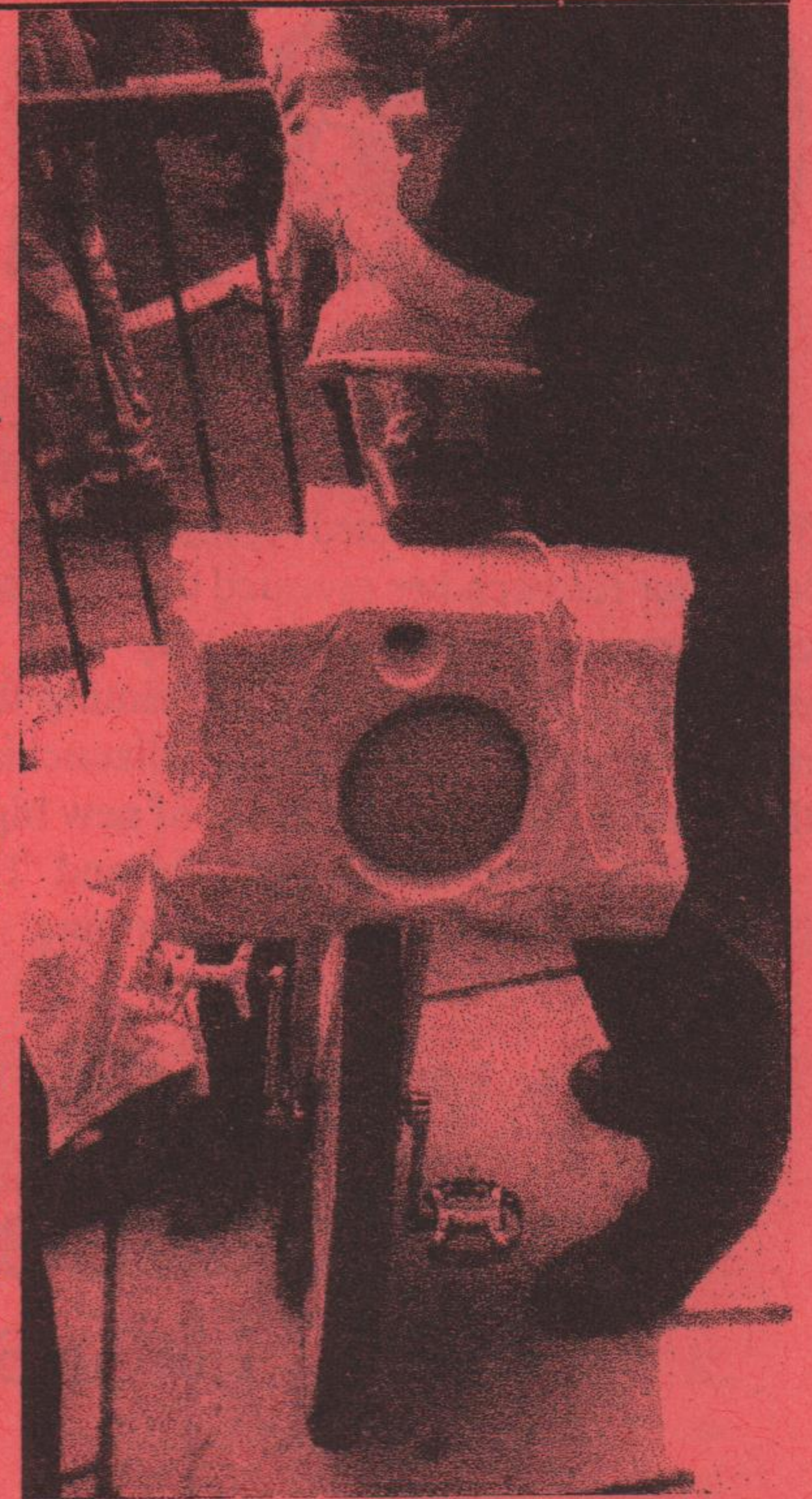
## LGB London Pride 2000



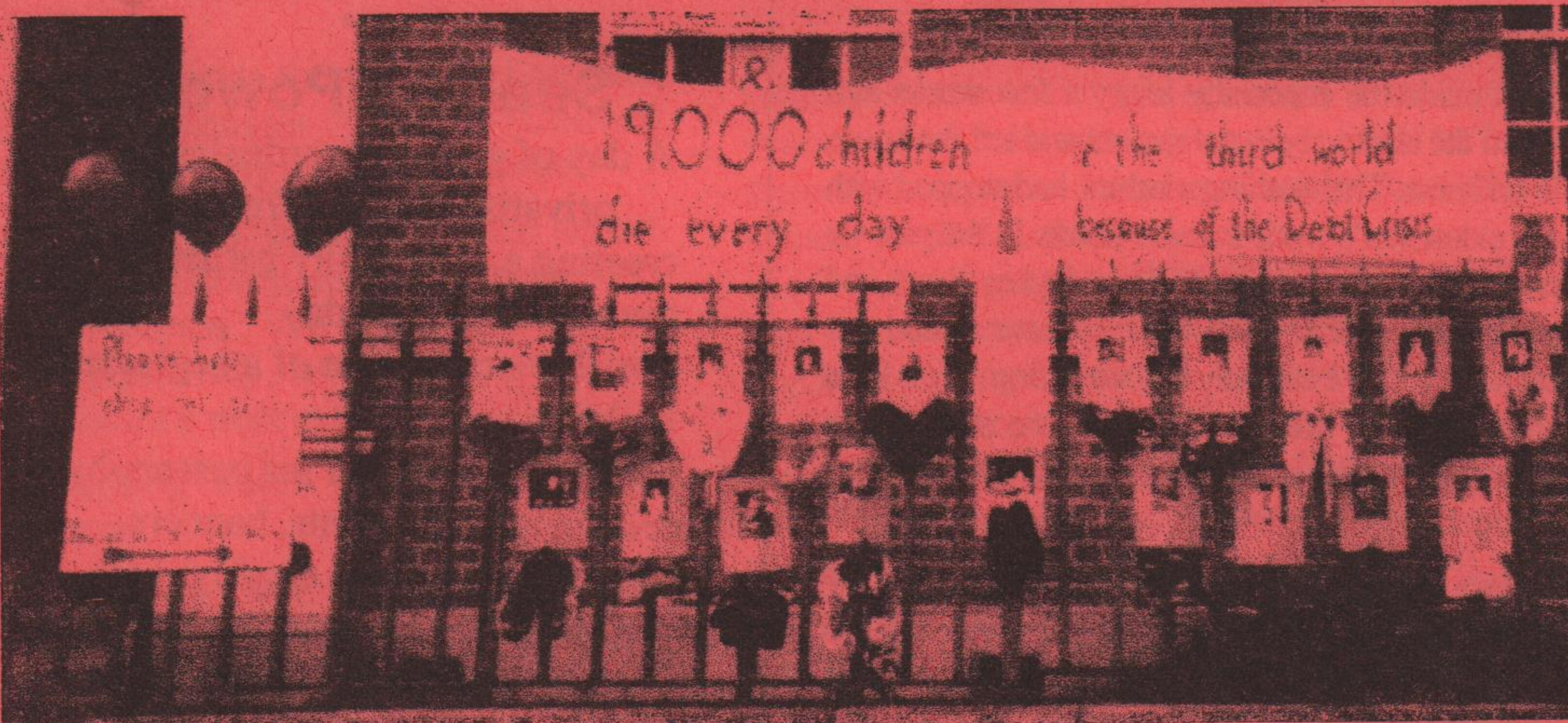
Many local people - including the Leicester Wildcats RFC - made it down to Pride 2000 to celebrate the lifestyles of lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgendered people. Despite worries that the commercialised Mardi Gras festival would suck support from the march, over 10,000 people marched, danced and flounced across London. A B+W A3 publication prevents us from doing justice to the Widest Cloak in the World, so that picture will have to wait.

**Left:** Blimey! Even the sex workers are organised. We're bound to win the world sooner or later at this rate.

**Right:** the world's smallest cycle-based sound system (so far). The unicycle carries a walkman, batteries, and speakers: the whole is finished in a tasteful pink.



## JUBILEE 2000 day of action in Leicester



On June 24th Bishop Street Methodist Chapel hosted a Jubilee 2000 stall. Passers-by had the opportunity write to various world leaders demanding that they cancel the debt of the world's poorest countries. Nineteen pair of child's shoes and pictures of children symbolised the 19,000 children who die every day because of the poverty caused by the rich countries sucking money from the poor ones.



### dot.community Top websites:

*Anti Fascist Action* - carrying on a long fine tradition:

<http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/Senate/5602/index2.html>

*Bristle* - Local mag for Bristol area in same vein as *GR*:

<http://www.bristle.co.uk/>

*Save Kidderminster Hospital* - they say cut back, we disagree:

<http://www.kidderminster.org.uk/hospital/>

*Outcast Magazine* - better on LGB rights than *Boyz* is. Not that this is difficult, but they do it well:

<http://www.outcastmagazine.co.uk/>

*Leicester Radical Alliance* - join the plebs:

<http://www.plebs.com/leicester-radical/>



# GrassRoots Diary for Aug/Sept

EVERY SUNDAY AT 5PM - come to Secular Hall to help put *GrassRoots* together. Bring ideas and articles if you want, or just bring yourself. During August we might be on holiday (chance'd be a fine thing...) ring our number to check.

## August

### Tues 1st

7am. **Shut Down Faslane.** Join the blockade of the illegal nuclear weapons base. Trident Ploughshares (01324)880744.

7pm Loughborough Town Hall Public Consultation over the Health Authority's downgrading plan.

Mon 7th Noon. **Die-in for the people of Iraq.** Meet Trafalgar Square. Organised by Voices In The Wilderness. Ring 07718 629 651 for Leicester transport info.

### Sat 19th

12 -? **Free Street Party.** Rendezvous Peace Walk, Victoria Park, in time for unveiling of monument to the Unknown Deserter, followed by sundry other fun.

3pm - 7pm, **Green Party Summer Fete** - variety of stalls from coalition groups, games, cream teas, live music & info. 23 Braunstone Ave. Includes a stall from the *GrassRoots* team. Bob 221 3224.

Mon 21st 7.30pm **Aylestone Labour Party Branch Meeting.** Lansdowne Neighbourhood Centre.

Tues 29th 7.30pm **Leicester Radical Alliance Meeting,** Secular Hall.

Thurs 31st 7.30pm **Leicester Trades Council** Leicester Town Hall

## September

Tues 5th 6.15pm LCFC Filbert St **Lobby** the Health Authority's public

consultation of the downgrading plan.

Tues 5th 7pm St Francis Community Centre, Hinckley. **Health Authority public consultation** of the downgrading plan. Fri 8th - Sun 10th **Energy 2000.** Experience the power of nature as the wind and sun demonstrates just what can be done with help from UK companies. Ruth Stockdale 0116 222 0254.

Mon 18th 7.30pm **Aylestone Labour Party Branch Meeting.** Lansdowne Neighbourhood Centre.

Fri 22nd **European Car Free Day.** Ditch the metal box for the day and walk, cycle, take public transport or simply fly in supersonic jet.

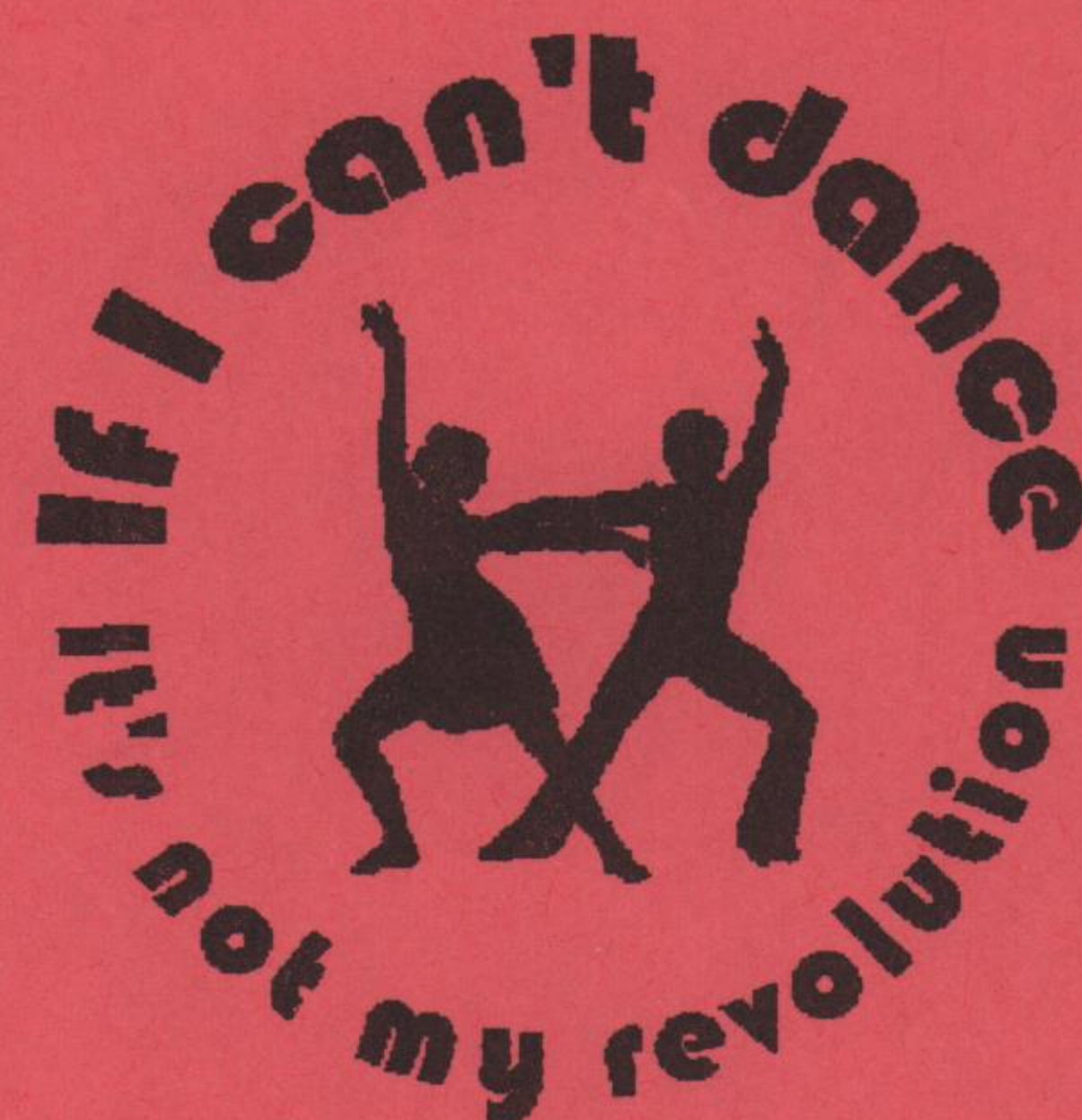
Tues 26th 7.30pm **Leicester Radical Alliance Meeting,** Secular Hall.

Thurs 28th 7.30pm **Leicester Trades Council,** Leicester Town Hall.

Friday 29th 8pm-2am **CRUNCH** - Y Theatre, YMCA, London Road. See page 3.

Sat 30th (all day) **Socialist Alliance Conference** in Coventry. Should the left stand in the General Election, or do we have better things to do with £150,000? Phone or SMS Chris on the *GrassRoots* number for transport details.

Organised your event too late to get it into this month's *GrassRoots*? Stuck for something to do and the *GR* diary is clear? Why not check out our up to date on-line version. Every political activity going on in Leicester and beyond is only a click away. <http://www.plebs.com/leicester-radical/Diary>.



Revolution happening outside and you're still going through your wardrobe trying to work out what to wear? Or maybe you've been pipped to the post while out clubbing, as the object of your desire chose instead to get off with someone wearing a Che t-shirt? Perhaps your old 'Robbie Fowler' doCKers t-shirt is wearing thin?

You need the Leicester Radical Alliance's new t-shirt design, featuring a tastefully cheesy cut-out and a fine Emma Goldman slogan that goes down as well in the meeting as it does in the pub or club. Available in three sizes - S, M and L. Any colour you like, so long as it's red. This really is an utter bargain at just six pounds.

Remember - radical chic is this year's thing.

T-shirts available by sending a cheque payable to *Leicester Radical Alliance* for £7 (inc p&p) to:

'Can't dance T-shirt offer'  
Leicester Radical Alliance  
Dept Z  
Little Thorn Books  
Humberstone Gate  
Leicester

Or buy direct from Little Thorn Books for £6

[Don't forget to choose small, medium or large]

## Who was Emma Goldman, then?

She was a revolutionary American anarchist. Born in 1869 in Russia, she moved to the US at the age of 17 where she became a tenacious activist and civil libertarian.

Her commitment to achieving social justice through anarchism, direct action and civil disobedience has had a rarely surpassed following. Her complex and unceasing fights for freedom of speech led to the creation of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU).

She was one of the first on the organised left to realise the particular issues that affected women and to challenge the institutionalised sexism of the workers movement. Her feminism eventually led to her being jailed for advocating contraception.

She was also a committed advocate of public education for working-class children and of general educational reform - believing that schools as they are foster blind obedience instead of developing the human faculties, which are necessary if a free community is to be possible.

