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FIFTY PENCE

"Under government and exploitation there can be neither equal liberty nor equal opportunity."

Alexander Berkman
from *ABC of Anarchism*

LEESON WAS NOT SUCH A FOOL

We never thought he was and it was confirmed by a report in the *Independent* that he "may have made millions of pounds by tipping off rivals about his rogue deals". All kinds of racket dealings seem to be emerging, including Leeson having "salted away £25 million in six German bank accounts before

Barings collapsed with £850 million losses". Surely that is the least pension fund he could ensure in return for his prison sentence.

Leeson is no more a crook than are the banks, the City, the currency exchanges ... you name them. An item in the *Independent* (12th February) surely confirms my view: "Daily

turnover in the over-the-counter derivatives market in April last year was \$74 billion, of which 47% was forward rate agreements, according to a survey by the Bank of England published ahead of the quarterly bulletin this week. There was a further \$278 billion a day of turnover in foreign exchange forward contracts and swaps. The survey found the UK had 27% of the \$270 billion daily worldwide turnover in over-the-counter contracts and 31% of the \$892 billion foreign exchange forwards and swaps market."

What have they produced? Nothing. Yes, jobs. We read somewhere that some two million jobs are involved in this racket. But others who are not least involved or benefiting from this racket are producing all the wants (let alone the needs) of the privileged, wasteful, minority.

KUWAIT AND 'HUMAN RIGHTS'

Last week the Appeal Court considered an appeal from a British citizen, Suleiman Al-Adsani, against a High Court ruling that he could not sue the government of Kuwait in an English court for compensation for injuries sustained under torture.

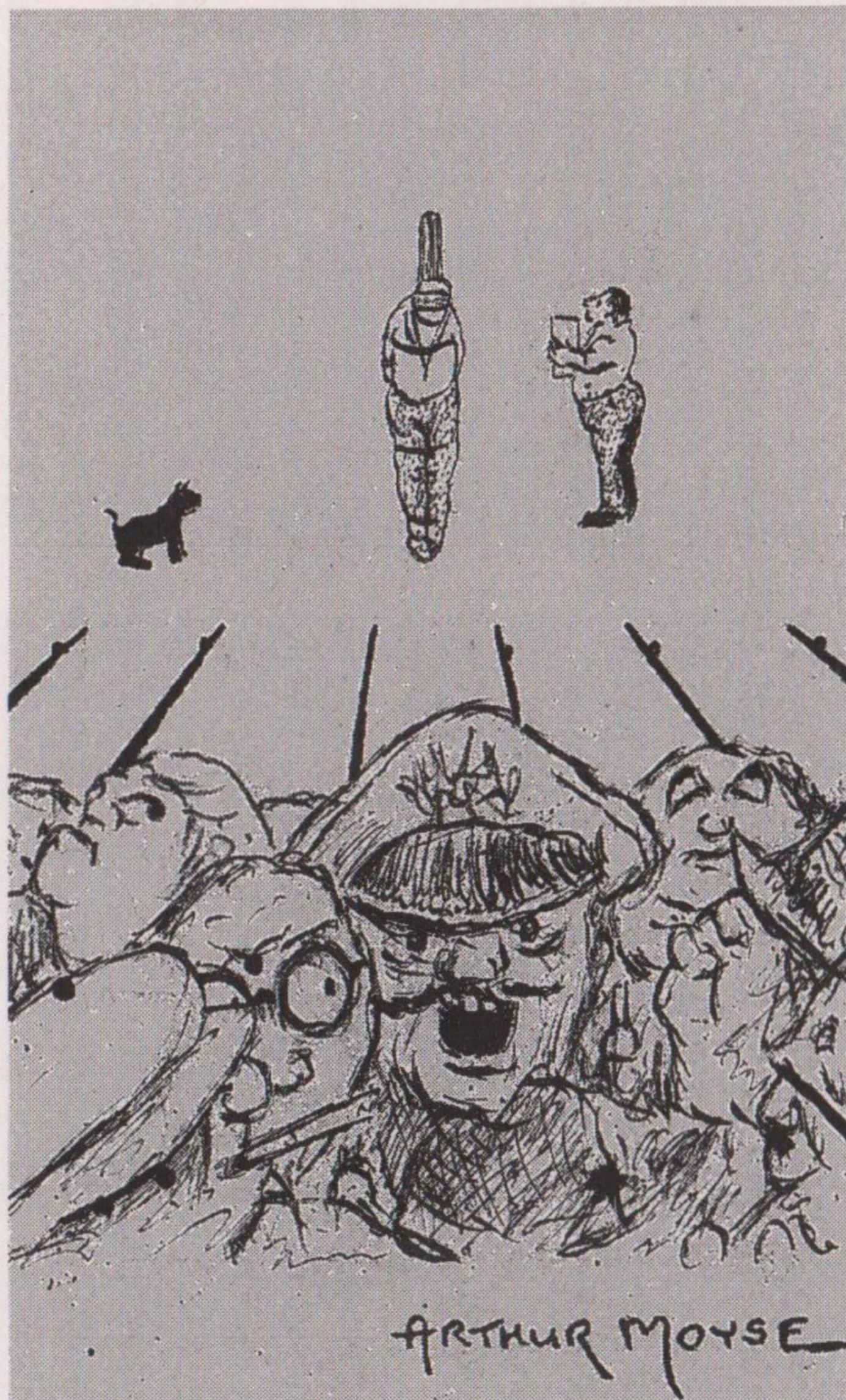
Mr Al-Adsani was a pilot with the Kuwaiti Air Force, whose aircraft were all grounded throughout the Gulf War. He did not flee with the ruling family but stayed in Kuwait during the Iraqi occupation and, he says, was a resistance fighter. After the restoration he was found in possession of a private video looted from one of the royal palaces showing a prince, Sheikh Jabar Al-Sabah al Saud al Sabah, enjoying sexual activities with a concubine or several.

It appears that Kuwaitis are as interested in the private lives of their royalty as the British are of theirs, and many copies of the video were sold throughout Kuwait during the Iraqi occupation. Mr Al-Adsani says the copies were made and sold before the original came into his possession. Be that as it may, he was arrested and taken to prison and from there to Prince Jabar's palace.

Prince Jabar in person, assisted by prison officers, took Mr Al-Adsani to a palace swimming pool containing the bodies of several persons who had apparently been drowned there, and held his head under the water. They then took him to a room full of foam mattresses soaked in petrol which they set on fire. Then they left, locking the door. Mr Al-Adsani was badly

burned and then released, having persuaded the prince that his father was a friend of the king and knew his whereabouts.

None of Mr Al-Adsani's story is disputed, nor is the observation by Mr Justice Mansfield in the High Court that his treatment amounted to "torture according to international law",
(continued on page 2)



"We always read a prisoner his rights before we shoot him"

TRAGEDY AT DUNBLANE

All other news this week has been overshadowed by the devastating murders of sixteen young children and their teacher at the primary school in Dunblane. The enormity of the situation has brought journalists, experts and church ministers out in force trying to cover every possible angle and nuance in an attempt to explain it away. Reports have ranged from the respectful and sensitive to the downright crass, and included a particularly offensive Channel 4 news item where a reporter visited Aberfan to scratch away at thirty year old wounds to see if he could draw some parallels between the experiences of the people of Aberfan, who lost over a hundred children in a mining disaster in 1966, and those being experienced by the community at Dunblane now.

There is a point to be made some day, that at Dunblane the grief of the Prime Minister and leader of the Opposition was allied to anger, while at Aberfan the grief of the authorities was modified by defensiveness because they had caused it. But the moment of tragedy was not the time to make it.

People have been saying again and again how inadequate words are to convey sympathy and express grief after so tragic an incident, and yet the words still flood in, including those
(continued on page 2)

JUSTICE, JUDGES AND MICHAEL HOWARD

Michael Howard, the Home Secretary, is clearly not concerned about what judges think of him, even though he is a senior barrister and may shortly have to return to that profession. He is unconcerned even when judges denounce his decrees as unlawful and unconstitutional, content to know that he is pleasing the people he evidently respects: the xenophobic, vindictive right-wingers who run much of the Conservative Party at constituency level.

So he is quite unlikely to be concerned when a judge says his latest wheeze is unworkable and/or will have an effect opposite to what is (ostensibly) intended. This is what Judge David Pearl, chairman of the Immigration Appellate Authority, has said of Howard's portended Asylum and Immigration Bill. Judge Pearl was giving evidence to an independent inquiry into the Bill chaired by the former Appeal Court Judge formerly called Mr Justice Glidewell (Sir Iain Glidewell since his retirement).

One of the main justifications for this unlovely measure is that it will reduce the time between an application for asylum and the final decision that a 'genuine' asylum-seeker will be permitted to reside in this country. Mr Howard boasts of a 'fast track' application procedure.

Judge Pearl points out that the 'fast track' procedure already exists, and is used for a category of applications deemed on the evidence of application forms 'manifestly

unfounded'. The effect of the Bill, if it becomes an Act, will be to extend the 'fast track' procedure to six more categories of more or less hopeless cases. 'Fast track' means such cases are given priority over potentially 'genuine' cases at the Appellate Tribunal. They do not take long, but there will be so many of them in the seven categories that 'genuine' cases will be put back and delayed much longer than they are now.

The total number of new applications is about 2,200 a month. The adjudicators only hear about 700 cases a month, so the backlog grows by about 1,500 a month. On 29th February the number of appeals waiting to be heard was 14,328. Most of these would probably be 'fast track' if the Bill became law, so potentially successful appeals would have to queue for twelve months or more instead of ten months as at present.

This in the face of a decree from Mr Howard's appalling colleague Mr Lilley, that asylum-seekers now have no support whatever from public funds while they are awaiting appeal. Perhaps Mr Howard thinks this is just, because of what happened to his own family. His parents, refugees from Romanian pogroms in the 1920s, got nothing from public funds but were supported for a time by private charity. Some people equate justice with freedom from oppression. Others, perhaps including Mr Howard, think that justice means the unfortunate being oppressed to an equal degree.

KUWAIT AND 'HUMAN RIGHTS'

(continued from page 1)

nor Lord Justice Ward's in the Appeal Court that "the body of the plaintiff has been scarred by what is accepted to have been torture in the same way that the body politic has been scarred by torture". The only ground of defence offered by the government of Kuwait is that they cannot be sued because they are a sovereign state and the State Immunity Act prevents sovereign states from being sued in English courts.

Mr Al-Adsani lost his appeal and talks of appealing to the European Court. His case is supported by the anti-torture society Redress.

The day the Appeal Court case opened was also the first day of a conference on 'human rights' held in two London hotels by a Kuwaiti government organisation, the Kuwait National Committee for Missing Persons and Prisoners of War Affairs. There are said to be six hundred Kuwaiti citizens in Iraq, all alleged to be prisoners, though it is not impossible that at least some of them are wartime collaborators and looters on the run from Kuwaiti government reprisals.

Speakers at the Kuwaiti 'human rights' conference included Lady Thatcher the former British Prime Minister, George Bush the former United States President, Malcolm Rifkind the Foreign Secretary, Andrei Kozyrev the Russian presidential candidate, Sir Peter de la Billiere the general in command of British forces during the Gulf War, and members of the Kuwaiti royal family. All well-known defenders of human rights, so long as 'human rights' is equated with not putting brakes on the ability of capitalists to make profits.

To be fair, it seems likely that Lady Thatcher, George Bush, Malcolm Rifkind, Andrei Kozyrev and General de la Billiere were only doing it for the money. Lady Thatcher, for instance, charges £25,000 a lecture on her American lecture tours, and for all we know was paid ten times more than that for attempting a defence of the Kuwaiti human rights record. But all the speakers now run the risk of being accused of thinking torture is compatible with 'human rights', provided it does not constitute restraint of trade.

THE FAG END

In the doorways and on fire escapes outside establishments all over London you can see shivering solitary figures braving the chilling wind to indulge their habits. London's determined smokers are keeping up their resistance to the ever-widening social pressures to give up cigarettes. They are now being snapped by photo-journalists as though they have become an endangered species. These lonely figures are vaguely reminiscent of the man in the old Strand cigarette advertisement whose slogan was 'You're never alone with a Strand', which has become a part of 1950s popular culture memorabilia. Today's outside smokers, however, are not often suave and interesting in hat and mac like the Strand ad man, but tend to look slightly shifty and embarrassed as they freeze in their shirt sleeves or mini-dress pulling away on their cigarettes. The new message could be 'You're always alone with a fag in your hand'. If they looked more at home with their habit they would perhaps become society's new rebels - We expect some tobacco marketing whiz-kid will latch on to that angle soon enough.

Cigarette advertisers must be getting nervous as new anti-smoking policies and health findings are persuading people to give up smoking. An advertisement in the London *Evening Standard* magazine for Marlboro cigarettes covered three double pages. The image was the same on every double page - a smart convertible car waits at a railroad crossing. On pages 2 and 3 there were large red numbers added running from 95 to 129 - is it a sign of age when you no longer understand the ads? Closer observation (and help!) revealed that

the high-speed train was in fact passing along the track in three sequences over the three pages and the numbers were the seconds ticking away, after which the driver could step on the gas. And that's how they get us, they challenge our intellectual pride. We spend time working them out and we've lingered longer than the message deserves and the ad has made an impact. A pity that the train doesn't carry the obituaries of the two Marlboro 'cowboys' used in the adverts over the years, who have both died of lung cancer.

This week the Liggett Group, an American tobacco company, agreed to pay \$50 million per annum for the next 25 years as a contribution to the anti-smoking programme. A questioner on BBC's *Question Time* asked whether tobacco companies in Britain should give a percentage of their huge profits to the National Health Service to alleviate some of the costs of treating patients with tobacco-related ailments. There was considerable support for this idea from both the panel and the audience, but Michael Heseltine took the line that the companies could not be held responsible for the consequences of tobacco smoking, as they were unaware of the health risks when they started manufacturing. He obviously did not want to upset the sensitivities of some of the country's biggest providers of revenue.

Cigarettes were called 'cancer sticks' in the late 1950s and the joke Strand slogan in the early '60s was 'You're never alone with a cell out of control' (i.e. cancer) so they have known for over thirty years. No smoking policies are inconvenient to smokers and can cause real misery, especially for elderly smokers in residential homes where they are often actively discouraged from smoking, and staff sometimes have an unwritten agenda to delay buying the cigarettes for immobile people in an attempt to force them to give up.

Provision must be made for those who cannot conquer the most tenacious of addictions, and imagination must be used to dissuade young people from starting.

TRAGEDY AT DUNBLANE

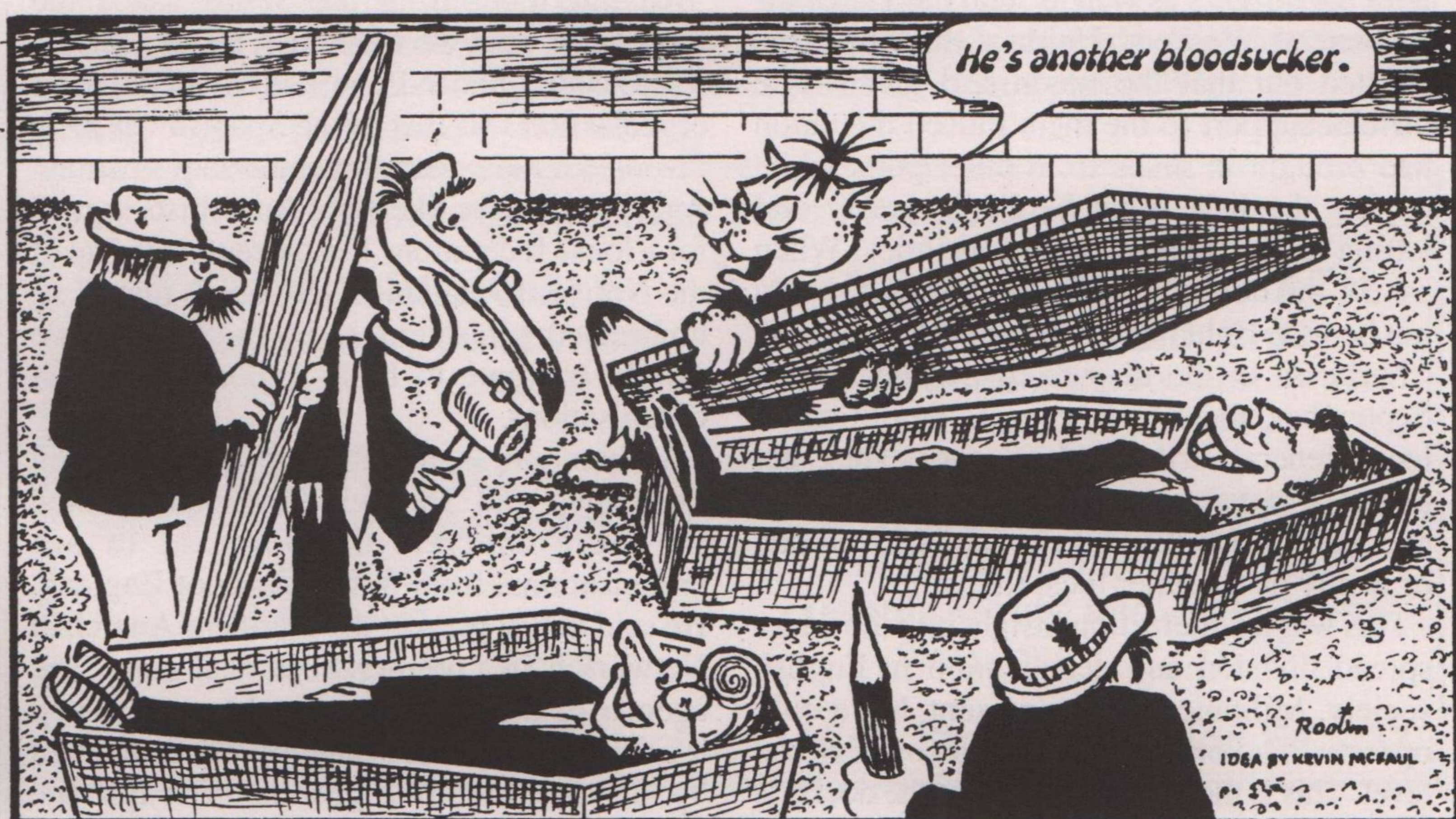
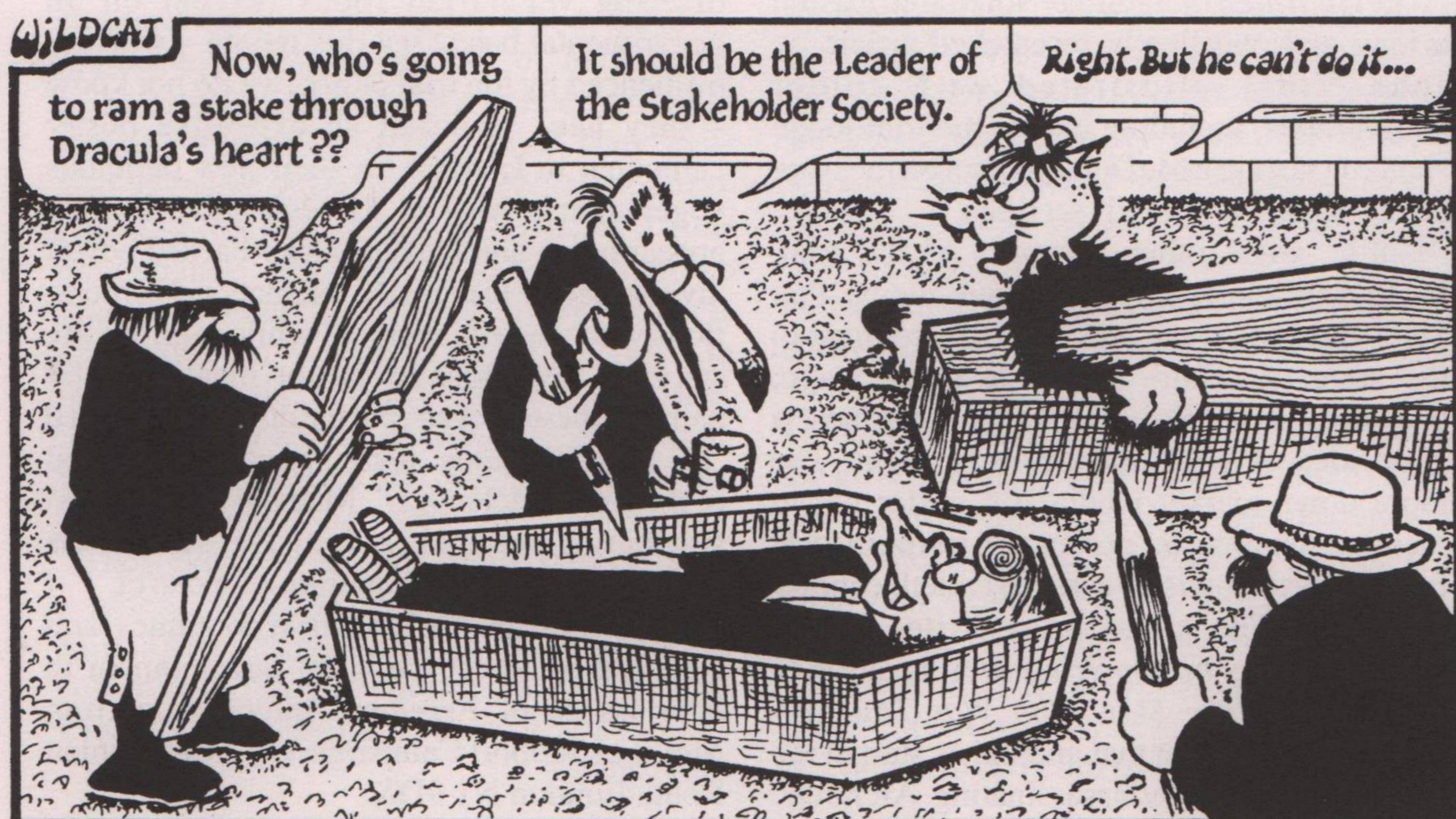
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inconsequential ones. An elderly man stopped passers-by in Camden Town on Thursday and told us how he'd telephoned a television channel to complain about the incessant coverage of all aspects of the tragedy. "Why can't they just leave the people to deal with their terrible grief as best they can. We don't want to hear about the killer, we don't want to waste one thought on him." It emerged that his only child had died of meningitis some thirty years ago and he was still awaiting the healing hands of time.

Analyses of motive, gun laws, paedophilia, violence in society, the whereabouts of God and the belief in good resulting from evil will flood the media and our living rooms for months to come. The images that will remain are the class photo which some haven't yet been able to more than peep at, the decency and dignity of ordinary people waiting in orderly queues outside their school to learn of their children's fate, the flowers, the vigils and the lighted candles in windows - tiny gestures from millions of people whose lives have been touched towards hundreds of people whose lives have been ruined.

LANGUAGE & COMMUNICATION

Freedom Press are hoping to publish an edition of *The Raven* later this year on the subject of Language and Communication. It is an area which could be rich with possibilities for people to contribute. It will address some of the questions raised by the first edition on this subject (*The Raven* Number 12 'On Communication') and will also be addressing issues ranging from electronic publishing, anarchists and the Internet, Will Ong and Marshall McLuhan to Esperanto and the links between language and nationalism to name a few of the ideas which have already been promised. We will be more than happy to hear of suggestions and offers of contributions from readers who can write to Angel Alley marking the envelope 'The Raven on Communication'.



FOURTH NORTHERN ANARCHIST NETWORK CONFERENCE IN SALFORD

DAY ONE: LIBERTARIAN, SOCIALISM – MAKING A START

This must have been the best conference of the libertarian left in the North of England in living memory. Both in size and spirit it represented a substantial step forward. The three earlier conferences – held at Manchester, Sheffield and Leeds respectively – had been promising, but with over fifty in attendance during the weekend of 9th and 10th March, and an array of intelligent contributions during a well-debated agenda, most at Salford were clearly impressed.

The participants at the Salford Conference represented the four great cities of the North of England: Sheffield, Leeds, Liverpool and Manchester. Smaller towns like Halifax, Doncaster, Ashton-under-Lyne, Rochdale and Oldham, on both sides of the Pennines, also had a presence.

The diverse congregation of the broad church of libertarian socialism was well reflected in the gathering: seasoned syndicalists from Dukinfield and Doncaster, members of the Solidarity Federation, warriors from Class War, anarchists from many of the big towns and cities of Yorkshire, dockers and their supporters from the Liverpool Docks dispute, road protesters from the campaign against the M66 at Daisy Nook.

This remarkable event, in which Class War calmly debated with 'Fluffies' about tactics, was organised by Manchester Class Struggle Group. Manchester Class Struggle is composed of two groups: Subversion and a local section of the Anarchist-Communist Federation. Most can only applaud the outstanding way this function was put on. Good venue, splendid facilities, social activities laid on, and even a good vegan lunch which carnivores like me couldn't fault.

DOCKS DISPUTE AND ANTI-ROADS CAMPAIGN

The Saturday morning session concentrated on direct action in the anti-roads struggle, and the Liverpool Docks dispute. A presentation was given by two campaigners against the motorway at Daisy Nook in Tameside, near Manchester. It was pointed out that climbers who had helped the bailiffs at Newbury to evict protesters were now facing a ban from their climbing organisations.

Those involved in the Liverpool Docks dispute gave a detailed account of the strike against the Mersey Docks & Harbour Company sacking nearly five hundred dockers. The dockworkers have been sacked for turning their noses up at casualisation and refusing to cross a picket line. They want all the sacked workers reinstated. They are demanding full trade union recognition, and rights for elected shop stewards. They insist on real jobs in an expanding port for the unemployed of Merseyside.

In the discussion which followed, attention was drawn to the way the action is hitting the Mersey Docks & Harbour Company. Company profits have fallen and pressures on the company has forced it into negotiations with the dockers as well as the Transport & General Workers' Union – though it was pointed out that the union had given little official support to the men. Indeed the union had brought in scabs from other ports while paying the lads some hardship money and letting them use some union facilities. When asked, the dockers' spokesman said it would not be wise right now to break with the union.

Early on in the dispute, which began last September, there had been an idea to call a local general strike in Liverpool. They got plenty of verbal support, but no serious attempt to organise a one-day strike at Ford's, Liverpool, or in any of the other local industries.

This was an interesting insight into the widespread division and demarcation in English society. Militancy is ever-present, but it only operates here on a particular and not a general level. This is the lesson not only of the dockers'

dispute but of life and work in Britain today.

The dockers got round this lack of active local backing by internationalising the strike. Workers are now responding to the multinationals and the globalisation of capital by seeking international aid. The Mersey Docks & Harbour Company is facing blacking of shops who use its services throughout the world. The US longshoremen, the anarcho-syndicalist unions (CNT and CGT) in Spain and the Canaries, the Cobas in Italy and the Australian dockers' unions are all giving solidarity to the Liverpool dockers.

RESISTING THE JOB SEEKERS ALLOWANCE

A lucid and erudite talk was given by an activist from Scotland on the mobilisation of the unemployed against the forthcoming Job Seekers Allowance, and a scheme called Project Work. Both these measures have been designed by the government with a view, as they see it, to motivate the workshy.

The idea is to punish and bully the unemployed, ideally into low-paid work. Alternatively they can be shoved onto Job Club schemes, etc. Anything to get them off the unemployment register. If people don't comply, benefits can be cut or stopped.

The Job Seekers Allowance scheme will come into force later this year. Some at the conference suggested it will be another Poll Tax type conflict when its full effects are felt.

Implementation of the JSA is not being helped, the conference was told, by disgruntled staff at dole offices unhappy about the scheme. Before Christmas there was a strike at Job Centres throughout the country about bonuses and incentive pay which the government had not paid fully. The incentives are paid to staff for getting people off the register. The consequences of this dispute are just being felt with a rise in the unemployment statistics.

It was proposed at the conference that efforts be made to link-up activity against the JSA, and other measures relating to the unemployed. The Northern Anarchist Network intends to make the existing local campaigns more effective on a regional and national basis. A TUC march against the JSA is to take place in Manchester on 23rd March, and a ground-swell conference is planned in Sheffield for the end of May.

NORTHERN ANARCHISTS: THE FUTURE?

Future action was discussed in the late afternoon. There was some disagreement as to if an anti-election campaign was a worthwhile venture for the Network. A Liverpool speaker thought it was not a 'class issue' and that we should 'agree to disagree' on the matter of campaigning for an election boycott. Dave Douglass from Doncaster wondered if there was not something better we should be discussing than the election. In the end action was left to the discretion of individual groups.

The conference had already indicated its intention for constituent members to involve themselves in the anti-roads protests, the Liverpool dockworkers dispute and the actions against the JSA.

An interloper from the SPGB asked the conference what we were after. Derek Pattison from Ashton-under-Lyne said his model of an organisation was that of the Spanish CNT, he favoured a more formal membership structure. A spokesman for Sheffield Anarchists argued for a loose federation. The current make-up of the Northern Anarchist Network is that of an umbrella organisation, and some said that we should continue to build regional anarchist organisations.

A Spaniard, a member of the Solidarity Federation and Sheffield Anarchists, called for more concrete development of our organisational form in the North of England. He said that at present the Northern Anarchist Network is in a pre-organisational stage. The agenda of the conference had been cobbled together and had not been properly assembled by all the member groups. Though the

organisation of the conference had been good, the agenda had been assembled in an ad hoc rather than a considered fashion. Member groups had to be consulted in future, it was argued. It was pointed out that the organisation of the Salford Conference had been handicapped because the organisers had not had full local support – the Manchester Solidarity Federation had held aloof from responsibilities for organisation of the function.

Whatever form the organisation of libertarian socialism in the North of England will take, it is clear now that no serious libertarian body up here can stay outside. As the Spaniard said: "I can smell it developing" – meaning that the libertarian socialists are shaping-up to be a social force to be reckoned with. Membership is to be open to all who are in acceptance of 'bottom-line principles'.

DAY TWO: CLASS-STRUGGLE ANARCHISM

Harold H. Thompson is an anarchist prisoner in Tennessee now in the seventeenth year of a 37 year sentence for the alleged killing of a rapist and child murderer. The most moving event of the conference occurred at the opening of the second day when a letter from Harold about his beliefs, and written specifically to us, was read out. This introduced a discussion on class war prisoners and their material and emotional needs. The work the Anarchist Black Cross achieved, despite its limited resources, was described, as well as the activities of two other magazine/organisations represented at the conference. These were the Scottish *Inside Out* which encourages support for prisoners and *Conviction* which specifically supports prisoners framed for serious offences whether or not they are anarchists. Individual support can involve general welfare work or, for those inclined, it is apparently not difficult to get appointed as a Home Office prison visitor. Anyone supporting individual prisoners was reminded that the only way to be sure that a letter or parcel reaches the intended recipient, is to send it recorded delivery as it then has to be opened in front of that individual. During the discussion an interesting parallel was drawn between the capitalist restructuring now going on outside the prisons and the new control systems being introduced inside, as well as the correspondence in recent years

between struggles in the streets and disturbances in the prisons.

Nationalism and Bosnia proved to be a rather indigestible topic for the middle of the day, provoking a heated discussion on the merits of the different factions and whether there was any justification in defending the bad against the worse. The consensus was that, whatever the ultimate outcome, it will be the workers who will have suffered and lost and the bosses, particularly the US capitalist variety, who will have won. Wars will cease when people refuse to fight is an old slogan but applicable to the tragedy of the former Yugoslavia where the politicians and generals successfully used the nationalist drum to provoke sectarian conflict and persuade workers to take up arms against each other. We have to recognise that there are some situations in which there is little we can do. There are anarchists and other war resisters, particularly in Belgrade, who need any support we can give, and for all those in need, just caught up in the conflict by being in the wrong place, we can support the supply of food and medicines. But above all else we should not take sides.

The final topic was domestic – why are there so few women active in the class struggle anarchist movement and why, despite the wives active in the miners strike and the women now supporting the Liverpool dockers in their strike, are there so few politically active working class women? Some of the women felt that women-only groups, e.g. anarcho-feminist, were divisive and anyhow tended to be middle class and not particularly interested in the class struggle. The experience of one of the two Spanish comrades present was however different. She described how in Spain, although women-only groups are important, the women are also active in the main mixed anarchist groups. The discussion although predominantly by the men who were, yes of course, in a large majority, was completely free from any sexist attitudes, something not always seen on such occasions. There was a decision, the only one of the conference, I think, that despite the logistic and financial difficulties, future conferences would only be held in towns where creche facilities could be provided.

So ended the third successful conference since the Northern Anarchist Network was formed in February 1995 following as it does the second in Leeds last September and the first in Sheffield last June. It was also incidentally the first not to clash with a meeting of the Northern Anarchist Discussion Forum.

The next conference of the Northern Anarchist Network is to be held in Sheffield in June. Issues for the agenda are to be sent to Sheffield by the member groups.

Brian Bamford / Harold Sculthorpe

McLibel gets attention

Now well into its second year, and with three-quarters of the witnesses examined, the 'McLibel' trial (for anyone who still doesn't know, the libel action brought by the McDonalds food chain against our comrades Helen Steel and Dave Morris) is getting a bit more attention from the media.

The *Guardian* of Saturday 9th March carried a long and excellently researched article by John Vidal, illustrated with colour photographs, including one of the trial judge standing next to a McDonalds sign on the front cover of the 'Weekend' section.

Unlike some other accounts of the trial, Vidal's article is not coy about stating that Steel and Morris are anarchists. In contrast to the state of affairs a decade or two ago, ordinarily well-informed people now have a good idea of what anarchism is about. The more down-market media still prefer not to mention 'anarchists' except as a (wrong) term for mindless rioters or early twentieth century terrorists. The anonymous writer of the introduction to the 99p Wordsworth edition of Chesterton's *The Man Who Was Thursday* (1995) states as fact that anarchists started the First World War by assassinating Archduke

Ferdinand in Sarajevo. Every well-informed person knows that Ferdinand was assassinated by a group of panslavists, but ignoramuses still do not distinguish between 'anarchism' and terrorism.

McDonalds have long resisted the temptation to emulate their competitors by offering vegetarian foods (except on an experimental basis) but this month – whether influenced by the trial or not, we do not know – they have launched an expensive poster campaign in London for their new delicious vegeburgers. Also in London there is now appearing an anonymous sticky-backed advert inviting people to reject the international corporations who waste resources "while millions are starving". McDonalds is not mentioned by name on these stickers, but the distinctive curved 'M' of McDonalds' logo is used as the initial of the word 'McHunger'. Many of McDonalds' vegeburger posters bear a sticker stuck in the middle of the gigantic picture of a carrot.

Meanwhile the McLibel trial continues, and we hope to report the latest development in later issues of *Freedom*. Information from McLibel Support Campaign, c/o 5 Caledonian Road, London N1 9DX.

In recent weeks there has been once again some mention of, and wonderment at, the fact that there are only four hundred or so full-time 'Volunteers' in the IRA. Concentration on this figure is a wonderful way of avoiding the fact that there is in fact a considerable reservoir of support for the IRA in Northern Ireland, and a not inconsiderable body of people in the South with similar views (though very few actually vote Sinn Fein come election time). It could not be otherwise. If it were not for this body of support, the IRA could not operate as it does.

Let us remember that the IRA tried to re-start its campaign in the late 1950s after its dismal failure to capitalise on 'England's difficulty' during the Second World War. The 'border campaign' begun in 1956 petered out once again by 1962. The IRA 'decommissioned' its weapons and sold off much of its arsenal. Politics, not the gun, was the way forward, it decided. There was no support in the Nationalist community for the use of force.

It was loyalist paramilitary terrorism (sectarian firebombings, random shooting) together with security force terrorism (the RUC machine-gunning Divis Flats, the repeated unprovoked assaults on civil rights marchers), and the mass attacks by loyalist mobs – including uniformed members of the RUC – on Nationalist ghettos, that persuaded Nationalists to turn to the gun in community self-defence.

It was the behaviour of the security forces – including the British Army – in the years 1969-71 that persuaded many Nationalists to move beyond self-defence to offensive military action.

NORTHERN IRELAND: PUBLIC OPINION AND PRIVATE ARMIES

It was in those early years 1967-71 that a pool of support for IRA violence was created. That pool of support has contracted (Enniskillen, and so on) and expanded (Bloody Sunday, and so on), but it remains the basis for IRA activity. It is those people who need to be included in the peace process, it is their experiences which need to be acknowledged and respected, and it is their attitudes and views which need to be taken account of, if there is going to be lasting peace. It is pointless thinking that "once those 400 terrorists are caught/dealt with, we can have peace". Those 400 people come out of communities of resistance. The IRA has a waiting list of recruits which will only be swelled by increased state repression, and by internment in particular.

Similar sorts of considerations apply to loyalist paramilitaries and their communities. Working class unionists have experiences and needs which have not been taken account of, and which must be addressed if there is going to be real and lasting peace.

The size of the IRA's constituency is generally measured in terms of the vote from Sinn Fein. Sinn Fein has consistently polled over 10% of the Northern vote since it began contesting elections after the Hunger Strikes. This figure cropped up again in polls conducted in the week after the Docklands

bomb. The Irish *Independent* asked people, "Do you believe the IRA was justified in ending the ceasefire?" 23% of voters in the South answered, 'Yes'; 69% said, 'No'. In the North, 81% said, 'No'; 12% said that the IRA was justified. Presumably this is the 12% of voters who support Sinn Fein. What is extraordinary is that 23% of Southern voters saw the ending of the ceasefire as legitimate, when Sinn Fein regularly achieves only a tenth of that sort of figure in elections.

The Irish *Sunday Independent* asked people in the South a few days later, "Who do you hold primarily responsible for the breakdown of the ceasefire?" 61% of people said the British Government; 7% the Ulster Unionists; only 23% blamed the IRA and Sinn Fein.

As to the way forward in the wake of the bombing, the Irish *Independent* poll found that a majority of voters in both North and South supported all-party talks even in the absence of an IRA ceasefire. In the South, 85% of people were in favour of such talks. In the North, 56% of voters were for negotiations even before a ceasefire.

The Dublin Government's proposal to hold 'Dayton'-style proximity talks to pave the way to all-party negotiations were also strongly supported both North and South: 79% support in the South and 67% support in the North.

At the moment there is a great deal of emphasis on 'democracy', particularly from the Unionist parties. This emphasis is entirely misleading. If the politicians were really interested in serving those who elect them, and if they were really committed to respecting the wishes of the people of Northern Ireland (or of Ireland as a whole) they would be pressing ahead immediately with all-party negotiations on the central issues.

In fact, the emphasis on elections is in part designed to disrupt and obscure the majority support that exists in the North for all-party talks. The election campaigns will inevitably polarise opinion and turn parties against each other. The actual underlying support for negotiations will be buried under an avalanche of electoral briefings. In this case, as in others, elections will serve to obscure rather than elucidate the popular will. Support for particular (Unionist) parties will be taken, quite wrongly, as support for an anti-negotiations stance.

One last point. As Richard Ingrams has pointed out, there is one group of people whose opinion on this question is never canvassed, and whose attitude to the conflict is never discussed. The British people.

Milan Rai

In the next issue:

British opinion and the
'Irish' Question

The effective ending of the Irish Peace Process by the bombs in London in February – all of which have been claimed by the IRA – can only be described as a tragedy. It is still too early to speculate on whether there will be a full resumption of the 'armed struggle' by the IRA or as to whether the Loyalist paramilitary organisations – the UDA and UVF – will respond. What is clear, however, is that an important opportunity has been lost. The Workers Solidarity Movement unreservedly condemns this, and lays the blame for the failure of the 'Peace Process' at the door of the British government.

When the ceasefire began eighteen months ago it was far from certain, even then, as to whether a long-term peace settlement would emerge. In our *Statement on the Ceasefire* (7th September 1994) at that time we warned that "It is far from clear that the British government will fulfil its part of whatever deal has been made. At a minimum this would seem to be the requirement for an early release for all political prisoners, and amending of the 1920 Government of Ireland Act to allow for unity if a majority in the six counties votes for it and allowing of Sinn Fein into direct discussions. Britain has destroyed the possibility of peace before by refusing to honour commitments." This is exactly what has happened. Despite considerable good will over the significant period of time, the British government failed in any substantial way to move towards a situation in which it might meet some minimum concerns: there was no release of political prisoners (in fact the

WORKERS SOLIDARITY MOVEMENT STATEMENT ON THE END OF THE IRA CEASEFIRE

conditions for the prisoners held in the UK deteriorated during this time) nor was there any substantial reduction in the number of troops 'stationed' in the six counties. John Major was more concerned with the survival of his government than maintaining the ceasefire.

As anarchists we welcomed the ceasefire but condemned the peace process in the sense that it has never at any time concerned itself with the reality of life that faces working class people in Ireland, both north and south of the border. Unemployment remains high in Ireland, as do the levels of poverty and inequality. This disastrous situation is one that has been created and 'managed' by two of the most important players within the peace process: the Irish and British governments. They have never been offering anything else throughout the last eighteen months other than more of the same. These social conditions, and the fertile grounds they offer to the politics of sectarianism within Ireland, are the real problems that must be faced of a lasting peace is ever to be attained. Nationalism doesn't recognise this; it offers no solutions to capitalism. It seeks to bind us together on the basis of 'Irishness' or 'Englishness', so that we may be properly and securely exploited by both Irish and English bosses. This has been the underlying basis of the peace process from its inception. The Workers Solidarity Movement rejects it.

The real peace process that is needed is the development of a new politics within the working class communities – a politics that will recognise that anti-imperialism need not be the same as nationalism. The elitist and militarist armed struggle should be abandoned and replaced with mass action.

We are working for a new Ireland, an anarchist society where production is to satisfy needs and where control rests in the hands of the working class. The colour of the flag that flies over our heads is not important, but the quality of our lives is. Compared to the possibility of real socialism and real freedom, republicanism is politically bankrupt.

Many on the left, both inside and outside

Ireland, have looked at Sinn Fein over the years as a party offering a 'real alternative'. Some have even claimed that it is a socialist organisation – with anti-capitalist objectives. The Workers Solidarity Movement has disputed this. We, along with others, have pointed out that Sinn Fein has based its strategy on the politics of nationalism – the so-called 'Pan-Nationalist Strategy'. This has sought an alliance between the main Irish nationalist forces: the Irish government, the SDLP, the Catholic hierarchy, Irish Americans and Sinn Fein, of course. It has been an appalling strategy and it has led Sinn Fein into defending some of the strangest and most worthless of things. To give but one example, in 1994 when the Irish government fell (following a prolonged crisis over an alleged cover-up in a case of child sex abuse) Sinn Fein, almost alone among political parties in Ireland, was calling for support for this Labour-Fianna Fail government, at a time when it was totally discredited. Strange politics indeed.

The Irish peace process has been one of the most important events in politics in Ireland in recent times. It achieved a substantial peace over an eighteen-month period – a reality that was welcomed by most people in Ireland, but particularly so within the six counties. But throughout that time it existed as a 'peace process' that was conducted in a traditionally elitist way. Deals were brokered and agreements were made, some of which never even saw the light of day. People were manipulated to show their support, a particularly important example being the Bill Clinton visit, but they were never invited to involve themselves in any substantial way in bringing about a lasting peace. Sinn Fein, as much as anyone else, were part of this elitist strategy. It showed itself to be a party well able to 'walk the corridors of power'. It met with business leaders and it was feted at \$1,000-a-plate dinners. But it created no mass movement anywhere, at any time, to challenge those who are entrenched in power either in the six counties or in Southern Ireland. Instead, it worked with the powers-that-be and

attempted to wheel and deal – it was as elitist in its approach as anyone else. It is this politics – if one can even call it that – that stands discredited by the ending of the ceasefire. Now that the IRA's objective has been reduced from 'Brits Out' to 'All Party Talks' ("What is required is a meaningful process that is capable of leading to a negotiated settlement" – APRN interview with the IRA, 15th February) they have even less to offer to the working class.

We as anarchists recognise that a new period is now beginning in Irish politics. For this reason we ask all those interested in bringing change to consider the choices that now face us on this island: if there is to be a full resumption in the 'armed struggle' by the IRA, can we expect this to bring any real or substantial change to Ireland? On the other hand, can the idea of peace be left to the John Brutons, the Gerry Adams, the David Trimbles, the John Majors or the Bill Clintons of this world. The answer to both these questions, in our opinion, is *no*. We must build a real social movement based on working class power on this island. We must build for freedom. This is the realistic way forward.

Workers Solidarity Movement
PO Box 1528, Dublin 8, Ireland

CLASS WAR NEWS

At the recent March 1996 national conference, Class War decided to start a six-month review period. This will involve theoretical and practical debate covering areas such as:

1. How has capital reorganised itself on a global scale in the past few years.
2. Discussion of working class community politics.
3. Who we are and what we do.
4. What is our role.
5. History as a weapon.
6. What is our class's attitude towards politics.
7. Changes in class composition.

Articles and papers are invited on all topics, which will be circulated within the Federation. This is leading towards further conferences which will take practical decisions to depend and to spread hostility between the classes. We look forward to hearing from you soon at the address below.

Education Secretary of the Class War
Federation, PO Box 467, London E8 3QX

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edited & introduced by Vernon Richards

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124 pages ISBN 0 900384 83 2 £3.50

FOR THE LOVE OF THE LORD

It was a cruel winter for the likes of I and the Arts, but we survived, by God, we survived. I through leading the wit and Saturday wisdom of the White Hart mafia, and the Arts, as always, to the sound of the crude rough coinage of the chattering class as it rasped across the jiving turnstiles of the Tate's major exhibition dulling the edge of husbandry away from the aesthetic of the Cézanne exhibition.

Like Wellington's thin red line, the chattering class stood their ground in London's bleak Siberian winds and the credit must be theirs – yea that there were some medal carved in Tate Gallery art exhibition 'lard' or 'chocolate' to be worn with pride. Yet it was but a matter of chance that the Tate's major exhibition of the works, dreams and happy-hour paintings came to limp into London from Paris.

A mass of the usual mindless bombings in Paris's public sector made the Parisian catalogue class decide that the art of Cézanne was not worth taking the risk of ending up as isolated meatballs on the streets of the beautiful city, back in the coach in ten minutes and, to add to the la la, staff at the Cézanne exhibition were allowed a closed lunchtime at Musée d'Orsay to allow for the long journeys home. Paris may be the city of light and culture, but not when the bomb-happy fundamentalists are blowing holes in the side-walks and the citizens. With a loss of three million French francs – whose counting – as the absconding manager of the one-week-only *Girls, Girls, Girls* always told the hungry luvvies 'The show must go on' and last one out of the empty hall switch off the light. In the major disaster of the Musée d'Orsay some small gleam of synthetic sympathy can be shown in that the Royal

Academy, ever host to the catalogue classes, found that they could find no one to share the cost of the 'Lord Leighton' exhibition and with £150,000 needed as a last minute life-raft the boys in the Royal Academy back-rooms decided on mass suicide by scrapping the exhibition. But as always happens, at least in John Wayne films, there was the standard 'whip round' among the staff. Christies the auctioneers, in the role of Tonto the lone loyal Indian, rode in with £35,000 and, as with Dickens, others fought to dive their hands into their pockets to give lesser and lesser amounts but, thank God, to the sound of bagpipes, the day was saved.

Christies also kicked in £14,000 for a new frame for the painting *Flaming June* because, odd as it may seem, the frame was held to be worth more than Leighton's painting before the painting was shipped off to South America. With Knacker of the Yard hot on the trail, pooper bags for the dogs, there are fresh problems in that there are allegations of financial irregularities and 'someone' is being questioned by Scotland Yard detectives, but at the moment, as I said to the barman in the White Hart 2, I am not saying anything. There are those within and associated with the anarchist movement who will give an ersatz militant sneer on the Saturday demonstration, crying what do the workers want with decadent bourgeois art, and it is the old perennial cry of those demanding less noise at the barricade as we are in committee that was howled from Stalinist Russia, Hitler's Nazi Germany through to China's little red books, until the politicians of the revolt or the revolution find a use for the arts as political propaganda. Never mock creative work, be it good, bad or exhibitionist indifferent, just demand, literally, no censorship and a free and

open access. Rage your opposition to what you read or see, but never seek to suppress it. And still the great moral problems claim our attention, and high on that agenda is the matter of the work of art created by Rachel Crompton of the University of Staffordshire. 23 years of age, squeaky clean and with a life already devoted to art in all its manifest glories, Rachel hung up three hundred tins of Tesco's six pence each tins of beans, baked for the eating of, on a tree within the university grounds to demonstrate the hard, hungry lives of the students. Rachel spent hours hanging those tins on the tree as a major contribution to conceptual art and a social message, and various students, who shall not be named, stole those tins off Rachel's tree. One can arrive at three conclusions. One that the bump is true and students are starving; two, they are Philistines; or three, they are doing Eng. Lit. and have read the early works of Evelyn Waugh. The Tate, the Royal Academy or sad art student Rachel, it is all of a oneness, comrades. Yet let us be charitable to the baked-bean-happy students and suggest that their action in deflowering the baked bean tinned tree was a latter-day Dadaist affirmation that all art is kaput, beginning with the University of Staffordshire. But let it be a time for sombre drinking, sackcloth and ashes and women wailing at the back of the woodshed, for Eric Hebborn was found in his Rome studio with his head bashed in dying of his injuries. There are those among us who will ask 'Who was Eric Hebborn?' and he was that master craftsman, a great and gifted forger. Exposed as a fraud – the ultimate accolade from tenth-raters – he showed his craft to the non-paying dealers in his book *Il Manuale del Falsario* or, for those of us who never made the University of Staffordshire,

the *Forger's Manual*, and as artist and forger he was brilliant. He mixed his originals with his forgeries and claimed that his market included the New York Met and the British Museum, and this son of a grocer's assistant (quote: "God, couldn't you get a better job than a bus conductor") served his time in the Royal Academy Schools and snatched the Prix de Rome. It is said that Sir Anthony Blunt, while surveyor of the Queen's Pictures, told Hebborn that "the trouble is you can't draw" and Hebborn bought some eighteenth century paper, the old ink and 'produced' a Piranesi drawing (Roman Port) that found its drawer space in the Royal Museum of Fine Arts in Copenhagen, and to this day it is whispered in the down-market loo of the White Hart 2 that the Royal Museum experts give a slight shrug of the shoulder and say that it is, and always will be, a true blue Piranesi, while my old one-off drinking partner 'Sir' Anthony Blunt had his collar felt and had to hand his 'Sir' back to the store-room.

Forgery is, and always will be, the most difficult of the arts, and let no one mock it, though dealers and buyers rage for it is the arts' finest and happiest joke. Hebborn is now dead and the world is a lesser place because of that. He wrote it all off in his book *Drawn to Trouble*,* but in 1978 he was exposed by the sales-room correspondent of the *Times* and, so the decaying files tell us, he was confronted by Brian Sewell, the scourge of the shivering palette, who had flown into Rome to warn, nay to order, Hebborn that he was never to enter Christies' salesroom again. Christies? you ask. £35,000 to help save the Lord Leighton Victoriana, but sell me a Cézanne or a Lord Leighton Hebborn forgery for a fraction of the price and I will be happy.

Arthur Moyses

* *Drawn to Trouble* by Eric Hebborn (Mainstream, £17.50).

Food for Thought ... and Action!

Recent arrivals at the Freedom Press Bookshop.

Secrets, Lies and Democracy by Noam Chomsky interviewed by David Barsamian, Odonian Press. When the air is thick with accusations of secret decision-making, lies and unaccountability in British life, cue Odonian with the latest offering from Mr Chomsky. Compiled from interviews with Barsamian (and the occasional phone-in question) during his Alternative Radio series broadcast on 100 stations in the US, Canada, Europe (where?) and Australia, it forms another succinct collection of Chomsky's views on a whole raft of topics. Short articles are combined under headings such as 'The World', 'The US', 'Historical Background', etc., and provide not just a state-of-the-world update but also a good, short introduction to his ideas. Among the most enjoyable pieces are 'Religious Fundamentalism', 'Free Trade', 'Becoming a Third World Country', 'Health care', 'How the Nazis Won the War', 'Chile' and 'Keeping the Rich on Welfare'. 128 pages, £5.95.

Industrial Society and its Future: the Unabomber's Manifesto, Green Anarchist Publications. With bombs back on the agenda in all sorts of places at the moment – Britain, Sri Lanka, Spain and Israel, to name but a few – it is still something of a novelty to hear about bombs in the USA. The Unabomber was allegedly so called by the FBI because of his habit of targeting Universities and Airlines/Academies. They now deny this, but after a bombing campaign of seventeen years they admit they are baffled and no nearer to catching America's most wanted man now than when he started. In that time he has killed three people and injured 23 in his war against technological society and the 'technophiles' who run it. In his *communiqué* to the *New York Times* (also in this pamphlet) he describes his 'group, FC' as anarchist and terrorist. While the first is open to question, the second is undeniable. He demanded the uncensored publication in a national newspaper of a 30,000 word manifesto in return for "permanently desisting from terrorist activities". It was duly published in the

Washington Post last September, and comprises the bulk of this pamphlet. So far FC has kept his word. The manifesto is set in tightly-printed numbered paragraphs – the better to check for censored or missing sections – and, far from being the inane ramblings of some nut, contains a lot of seductive arguments against technology and the manipulative techniques of the press and mass media, as well as some quite sophisticated analyses of a number of social problems. He argues strongly for a social revolution and directs a stinging attack at the American left, of which many US anarchists would consider themselves a part, and against political correctness. The tone is radical green with anarchist overtones, and 'FC' is clearly sincere when he says "to get our message before the public with some chance of making a lasting impression, we've had to kill people", as if that was some kind of justification. The Unabomber has split the US anarchist movement, with support coming from Bob Black and John Zerzan, amongst others, while the 'Love and Rage' group have accused him of being a murderer "dragging noble ideas through the mud", and the anarchists in the San Francisco area are said to be decidedly pissed off at repeated raids on them by the FBI in search of 'FC'. Earth First!'s Jude Bari, herself injured by a bomb planted by the FBI, has called him 'a sociopath'. There are two introductions: one is by Autonomous Anarchists Anonymous and mainly discusses the reactions to the Unabomber, the other is by the editor of *Green Anarchist*. This talks about 'FC' and his actions and is truly objectionable. For it is one thing to dispassionately decide yourself to kill other people in pursuit of wider social objectives, whether right or wrong, but it is quite another to cheer on the killer from the safety of your armchair. Here we are treated to the spectacle of the *Green Anarchist* editor applauding the Unabomber as if this were some Virtual Reality game. This is not just childish, but despicable, like some impotent demented groupie leaping up and down clapping their hands with sadistic glee at the body count. Coming from someone who would probably run a mile if asked to kill anyone himself, it is far worse than anything in the Manifesto; at

least the Unabomber doesn't boast or gloat over his victims. In these times of unprecedented ecological destruction and subjugation of humans and animals to machines, the motivation, theories and actions of a Unabomber can be instructive – but the glorification of violence is something the anarchist movement doesn't need. 60 A5 pages, £1.50.

Green Apocalypse by Luther Blissett and Stewart Home, Unpopular Books. The introduction by Richard Essex states candidly that the two main articles, 'The Sucking Pit' and 'The Anatomy of a Smear', "chronicle an ugly dispute between *Green Anarchist* and the Neoist Alliance". They also extend it and clarify many of the points at issue. A book review by Essex illustrates some of the charges they level at *Green Anarchist*, and a whole section of reprinted documents published by all sides in the dispute informs/reminds us of who said what to whom – for those who are following it. There is also material on related disputes with the *Lancaster Bomber* and Larry O'Hara, and on an unrelated dispute with Michel Prigent, some of which has taken place in the pages of *Freedom*, to the bemusement of many readers. Some of these arguments are obscure in the extreme to those not well-versed in the issues, and some are irrelevant to the anarchist movement. However, some are relevant and deal with serious charges: that *Green Anarchist* are creating a new variety of fascism, are populist and apocalyptic, are indulging in 'Bakuninist fantasies' and more besides. One valid criticism that comes over is the failure of *Green Anarchist* and some of the others to recognise satire (a weapon which Home and co., despite his more dubious qualities, tend to specialise in) as such, preferring to take everything literally. A lot of the argument is mere point-scoring, generating far more heat than light since the various camps don't seem to be listening to each other, and where some people go in for name-dropping, the Neoist Alliance prefer to show how well-read they are by book-title-dropping. Nevertheless, an illuminating pamphlet and, I'm afraid, a deserved calling to account of *Green Anarchist*. 48 A4 pages, £3.50.

*Radiotext(e)** edited and introduced by Neil Strauss, Semiotext(e). Listening to the radio, assuming a careful choice of station and programme, is an enjoyable pastime and sometimes an essential education. "But there's much more to radio than meets the ear" as the introduction tells us. From satellite broadcasting to microwave ovens to radio astronomy, even your body's own biological radio set which can be triggered by a seizure of the temporal lobe. Scientifically as old as time, conceptually it goes back to the earliest human beings, in the form of 'wireless' messages using fires, hollow tree drums and metal reflectors. The aim of this collection of essays, alternative histories, hagiographics, broadcast transcripts and theories is to expand the concept of radio and to explore it from many differing viewpoints, by contributors from all over the world. There are sections on control and censorship by such writers as José Delgado, Marc Dery and Trotsky; the listener by, amongst others, Hakim Bey and Julia Lokter; free, pirate and guerrilla radio by Tetsuo Kogawa, Abbie Hoffman, Félix Guattari and others; Upton Sinclair and Carola Morales go for paranormal applications; writers like Brecht and Walter Benjamin cover radio's early years; the broadcasts section includes F.T. Marinetti, Emperor Hirohito, Happy Harry Hard-On (lucky old Harry!) and Ezra Pound. Other nuggets are by George Orwell, Theodor Adorno, Margareta D'Arcy and many more. One cannot do justice to such a tome in so small a space, but this is a wonderful and imaginative work to dip into, whether you're fed up with television soaps, can't stand press sensationalism or just want to know how to get on the radio. 350 pages, £9.00. Note: excellent complementary reading is *The Raven* number 12 'On Communication'.

KM

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— ANARCHIST NOTEBOOK —

THE WOMEN AT THE WELL

I wrote in this column last year (24th June 1995) about the parish pump in British history, as a powerful symbol of water as a community asset and of the village pump as a focus of communal solidarity. To indicate the sheer physical effort involved, I cited an account by Ralph Whitlock from Somerset mentioning that water-gathering was "conventionally the responsibility of the man of the household".

A reader wrote to argue, correctly, that it is far more typical for water gathering to be the task of women, and this is absolutely true. It is the engineering aspect that is thought too complex for them. A calibrated water authority, David Kinnersley made this clear in his book *Troubled Water* (Hilary Shipman, 1988) where he pointed to the sheer luxury of piped water that we enjoy. "With these facilities," he remarks, "we escape the drudgery which households have to endure in poor communities across the world where the water they need has to be fetched and carried home each day, often from sources several miles away. This drudgery falls largely on women, as part of the housekeeping task. Once the water is put in pipes the work of managing the distribution network is called engineering and becomes much more of a male operation."

In a small Rhineland cathedral town called Xanten I paused to admire the elaborately decorated cast-iron water pump with its wrought-iron handle. A resident explained to me, "You will find a pump like this in every street, and you really ought to be here for the Peter and Paul day festival when the whole community gathers around its pumps to celebrate the gift of water".

Sure enough, in another street I found that the exclusion of traffic had enabled the town to commission a series of life-size bronze figures of people waiting to draw water from the pump. Apart from the children around their skirts, they were, of course, all women. It is a theme with resonances all over the world. In the 1950s, when the wave of self-criticism among architects and town planners began to rise, a favourite anecdote spread around by the architect Constantinos Doxiadis concerned the women of a North African town who met at the well to collect water or at the river to wash the family's clothes. When water became available from a tap in the home or from a standpipe in the courtyard, these daily communal contacts were lost.

Now I doubt if, after childhood, either Doxiadis or Le Corbusier, who also related this history, had ever been obliged to draw water from the well or to play a part in the routines of endless laundering. Nor have I ever understood the precise message that the story was intended to convey. Were architects and engineers to refrain from replacing the drudgery of daily life for fear of disturbing traditional patterns of female seclusion? Was it wrong to liberate women from servitude to back-breaking labour?

All the same, it is true that — as we saw in a British context (24th June 1995) — the daily work of collecting water has always been one of the agencies for cementing social bonds on the basis of shared common needs. It is also true that in the sexual division of labour throughout the world women, as household managers, are expected to be the procurers of water and to manage the quantity required for the needs of the family for feeding, personal and domestic cleanliness and sanitation, child-rearing and the family laundry. In many cultures they are also horticulturalists, responsible for keeping food crops alive. To them too falls the task of toilet training for children, protecting them from water-borne disease, maintaining family health. All these tasks depend on water, and on continual assessment of its suitability and safety.

Yet, at the same time, most societies have a tradition that the technology of water supply is a matter too complex for women. As David Kinnersley explained, it "is called engineering and becomes much more of a male operation". A story from West Africa illustrates the way

in which the social roles of the sexes distorts decision-making about water:

"At a village meeting in Bangu, East Mamprusi District, discussions on the siting of a well were nearing completion. The meeting had decided on a site in a valley. Then, almost as an afterthought, the extension worker asked the women for their views. Gradually they spoke up and pointed out that the men had chosen the valley site because they knew that it was going to be easier for them to dig a well at the valley site than at an alternative, but nearer, site. If the well were dug in the valley, women would have to carry water uphill every day, the journey from the other site would be shorter and less steep."

In this instance the well was dug at the nearer site, with more short-term work for the men but a lesser daily burden for the women. A precisely similar story was told me by Geoff Sands, a builder employed by a relief agency in El Salvador, a country ruined by decades of civil war. The local community leadership agreed with the proposal of a northern agency to fund "the site works for the installation of a hydraulic ram pump — work for the all-male building team but otherwise pointless and now dismantled — at the same time as the women in the community were having to walk long distances to collect water from a defective standpipe system.

There is a body in the Netherlands called the International Reference Centre for Community Water Supply and Sanitation, and one of its workers, Christine van Wijk-Sijbesma, undertook the formidable task of collating nearly eight hundred reports from all over the world. Here analysis is an outstanding testimony, not merely to the handicaps that women face, but to their endurance and ingenuity in doing their utmost, not for their individual needs but for those of the family.

On the issue of man as engineer and woman as water-carrier and sanitary orderly, she cites the importance of women professionals as agents of women's priorities in the management of water:

"Women in a Karachi squatter area responded to the efforts of a concerned woman architect-planner to get them to undertake the improvement of their own community. Despite male community worker statements that only men did that sort of thing, the inspired women harnessed the efforts of their out-of-school adolescent boys to carry rock fill from a nearby hill, and dredge the stagnant canals in the neighbourhood. The women were right there directing the work all the way."

But there are far less spectacular ways in which women are the carriers of water wisdom. They have the melancholy knowledge of which children died and which survived. Women all

around the world decide how to use any particular source of water at any time of year, and through experience they "make reasoned decisions based on their own criteria of access, time, effort, water quantity, quality and reliability". The World Health Organisation continually reminds us that 80% of all disease in the 'developing countries' relates directly to unsafe drinking water and lack of adequate hygiene. Women don't choose to provide the family with contaminated water, to tolerate inadequate and dangerous latrines for the men and still less satisfactory provision for themselves, nor to allow the children to shit all around the home and to have no means of cleaning themselves.

This is the climate of deprivation throughout the world of the poor, including that of families in the rich world where the application of market forces to water supply has imposed a climate of dirt, improvisation and furtive faeces disposal on people who know perfectly well about basic hygienic precautions.

The worldwide survey from every continent continually stresses this fact:

"There is a great deal of evidence that in all cultures women, through their daily experience and observation, have acquired basic and practical knowledge of environmental hygiene on which participatory programmes can build. Reference has already been made to their traditional practices of source selection, in which they make reasoned choices and often distinguish water quality according to use and to the characteristics of the source. An exception in this respect is tap water,

(continued on page 8)

From Brian Behan to the Speaker of the House of Commons

Dear Madam Speaker,

I write to beg your permission. To chain myself to your railings. I will be demonstrating my support for SID. Who he. Shut It Down. It being the House of Commons. I know how reluctant the turkeys will be to vote for Christmas. But facts must be faced. In these hard times we need to save every penny. We must cut out sleaze. As we are now ruled from Brussels all of your members are plainly redundant. More dignified outlets can be found for their talents (perhaps a YTS course) rather than living off the state. I am sure as an ex-Tiller Girl you must be sick and tired of presiding over the longest running farce since *The Mousetrap*. My action will be as follows. Given your written permission: to chain myself to the main gates of the House of Commons, to wear a t-shirt on which will be emblazoned Shut It Down, this to take place at 2pm on Friday 15th March. As I am a peaceful and law-abiding citizen I need your consent before completing the good work begun by Guy Fawkes. If I do not hear from your office I will take your silence as assent. A nod is as good as a wink to a blind alsatian. I look forward to hearing from you. Every good wish

Brian Behan

Dear Mr Behan,

Madam Speaker has asked me to thank you for your letter of 15th February about your intention of chaining yourself to the railings of the Palace of Westminster on 15th March. I understand the police have been in contact with you and outlined the consequences should you decide to go ahead with this action.

I hope you have now decided to change your plans in the light of what you were told and that you will find another way of making your protest.

Assistant Secretary to the Speaker

Dear Madam Speaker,

I am disappointed in your response. After all, think of me as a male suffragette. As a woman I expected much more sympathy and solidarity from your good self. Would we have womens' lib without wimmin chaining themselves all over the place. Of course I have no intention of throwing myself under a horse.



Brian Behan (right) in a scene from his play *The Begrudgers*, to be staged at the Battersea Arts Centre on March 21st and 22nd (Studio One, 8.30pm, tickets £7.50 / £6 concessions).

"Ireland's literary answer to semtex, Brian Behan, the Dublin-born, Brighton-based playwright, will be at the BAC for two nights only as part of the Irish Festival. The theme is a 1950s encounter in a Dublin pub between poet Paddy Kavanagh and his fellow Irish roustabout, Brendan Behan. Hardly a single Irish icon — from the Faith to the Fenians — escapes terminal abuse."

Although I understand the Empress of Russia died under one. Mine is a more restrained protest. You will know as well as I that this House of Commons refused women the vote until they, like me, took action. So you owe your august position to fellow chainees. I have had no official contact with the police. A person who claimed to be PC Pitcher did ring. However, as he refused to give me his number it may well have been a hoax. Being a public figure like yourself (the Home Office have described me as a prominent fomenter of discontent) I am in receipt of many strange calls. A year ago I had a policeman ring who insisted on calling me Gerry Adams. I reported this matter to John Street Police Station, Brighton. It was cleared up with the help of their Chief Inspector, who by the way helped to catch and convict a rogue who murdered two children. Without visual or written evidence I cannot confirm that the police have been in touch. I am aware that ignorance of the law is no excuse, but if you can help a lame

dog over a stile. You see I have a very large meeting on 5th March. This will be at Sussex University. I will be asking the students to support my actions. You see, it is of the utmost importance that I can convey to the gathering of some thousands the legal position. It is hoped that Tony Benn will be there to defend parliamentary democracy. A friend of mine has written to Tony asking him for a room in the House to address members on SID. He has as yet had no reply. If you see Tony as you wander the corridors of power, will you ask him to let us know what is happening.

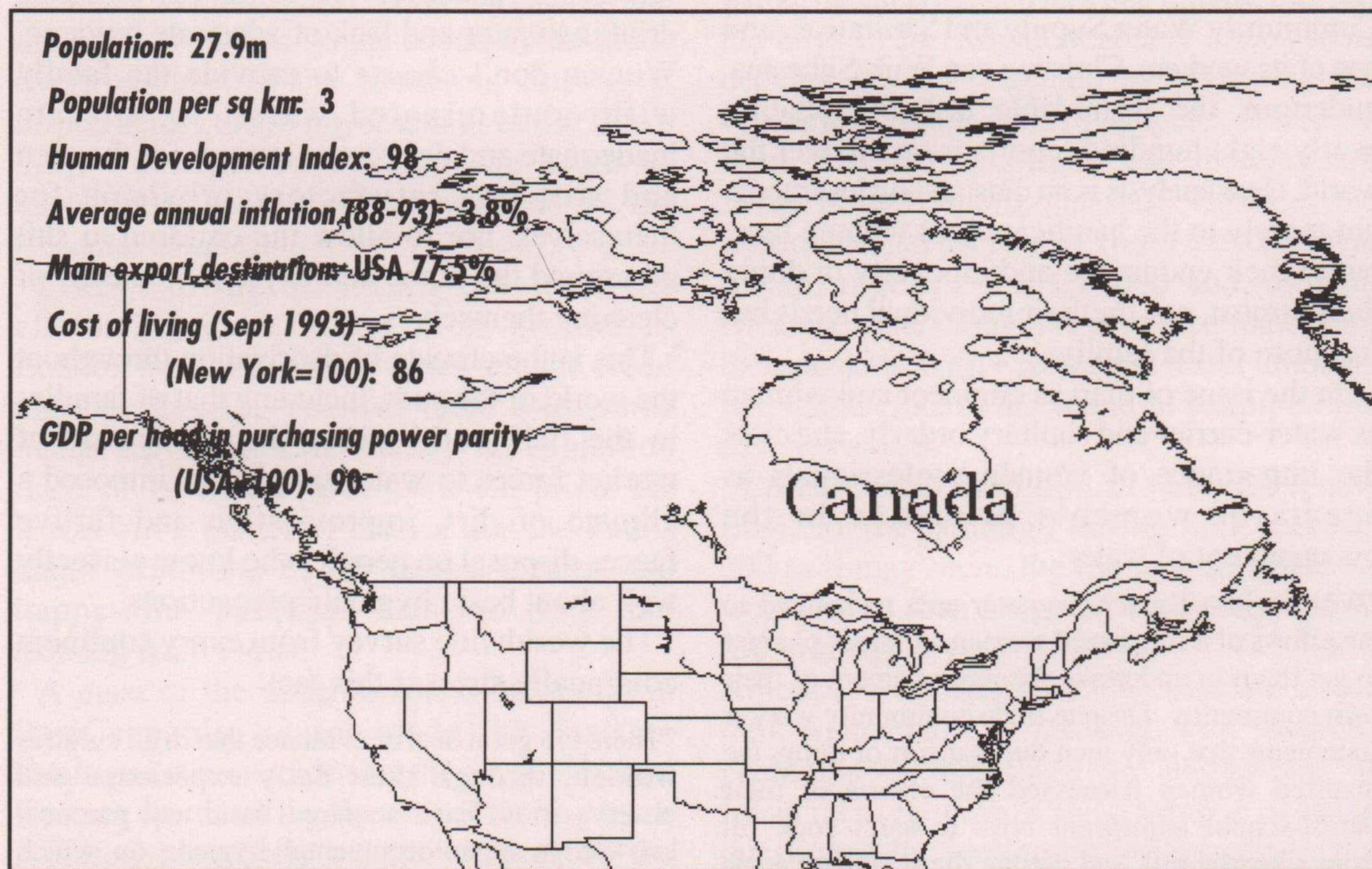
Brian Behan

Dear Madam Speaker,

... I will be with you or near you on the 15th March. It is my intention to picket the House of Commons with my slogan SID (at 2pm approximately). I have been assured by PC Pitcher that, providing I walk at a reasonable pace, all is in order.

Brian Behan

Focus on ... CANADA



The results of the NAFTA are now becoming felt in Canada. One obvious effect is the increase in exports, up in the past three years from less than a quarter to more than a third of GDP. This has increased the country's economic dependence on the US, which absorbs about four-fifths of Canadian exports – something of a mixed blessing for a nation long ambivalent about its relationship with its powerful southern neighbour. Such dependence is, however, an inevitable result of growing exposure to international market disciplines.

In a nutshell Canada has been pawned to the international money markets with an accumulated debt standing at \$850 billion. The percentage of this which is held by foreign interests exceeds that, for example, of either Mexico or Brazil and in each case it is these money markets which are calling the shots in getting the government to impose structural adjustment programmes. Canada, Mexico, France: the pattern is consistent.

What has happened in Canada is that just over a year ago the financial evaluation companies Moody's and Standard and Poor threatened to call in the debt unless the federal budget deficit was cut. Paul Martin bowed to pressure and last February announced the austerity budget the markets wanted.

THE FEBRUARY 1995 BUDGET

A profound economic crisis has now hit the country largely caused by the budget which has provoked the most serious recession in 30 years. Pressures from the US and Canadian banking system have brought about higher interest rates and budgetary debt has taken off given interest charges on public debt. The results are as predictable as they would be in any third world country – 45,000 civil servants have been shown the (federal) door, western cereal producers are going to have to start to consider the possibility of facing the global market on their own two feet and the state is selling off the public silver in the form of the railway system, Canadian National, which is to be sold on the international money markets.

Bell Canada (telecommunications) has laid off 10,000 (one quarter of its staff), the construction industry has been paralysed and bankruptcies have gone as high as 7,000 per month at times. In many Canadian cities property value has fallen by as much as 40% and in Ottawa unemployment is at 10.6% (the highest in twenty years). Montreal has had to get rid of many of its municipal administrators. Quebec has seen a rise of 60% in the numbers receiving benefit over a period of five years whilst 17.4% are living below the poverty line. It seems unnecessary to continue.

Despite an overall 9.4% unemployment rate and weak domestic demand, opinion polls show strong public support for the austerity measures announced by Ottawa and many provinces in the past year. However, some

independent economists, such as Mr Jim Franke of the Conference Board of Canada, a business and policy research group, point out that more is in the pipe line. He predicts that spending cuts planned so far will reduce total debt to only 95% of gross domestic product by the year 2000, from 100 per cent today. "We are only on step two of a 10-step ladder," he says. "The really tough slogging is yet to come." He also points out that most cuts announced so far have not yet taken effect. Whether public opinion has the stomach for all this will depend on what happens when the axe falls and what is now talk of closures of schools, hospitals and university departments becomes a reality. Perhaps it is unlikely that the reaction will mirror recent events in France but already there is the instance of Alberta, the first province to slash its budget drastically, which recently bowed to opposition to planned reductions in healthcare spending. However, within the logic of the system financial market pressures on Canada's debt-laden public sector make sustained spending cuts unavoidable.

THE PROVINCIAL RESPONSE

The response on a provincial level has been more of the same. Alberta is one example and was first off the mark in 'slimming' the economy to make it more efficient, more competitive, more 'modern'. Under the conservative Ralph Klein hospitals are being sold off to private US establishments and workers are taking 'voluntary' redundancy. Ontario usually leads the way but the New Democratic (NDP) government of Bob Rae, which ran Ontario for five years until June, tried to buy time with a 'social contract' with the trade unions to save jobs and limit spending, rather than slash both. Other provincial premiers were chopping away. Klein was the fiercest. In a 1993 election campaign, he promised to cut spending by 20% in three years, nearly a third of it from health care. Now, though, Ontario has a new Conservative government. It is making up for lost time. Michael Harris came to power there last year, beating both the NDP and the Liberals. He pointed to a provincial debt that had tripled to C\$97 billion (\$70 billion) in a decade of Liberal and NDP rule, and promised to eliminate the deficit in one term, even while giving a 30% tax cut over three years – a Thatcherite dream no less. 20% of hospitals

have gone and despite the empty assurances of the NAFTA the long term goal would seem to be to harmonise the Canadian health care system with that of the US.

The new conservative government has proposed labour law reforms which will significantly weaken trade unions' bargaining power as part of the government's self-proclaimed "common sense revolution". The draft legislation, which the government expects to push through the provincial legislature quickly, is designed to improve the business climate in Canada's most industrialised province. And all this to halt opposition to spending cuts aimed at reversing Ontario's spiralling public debt. The cuts include a 21% reduction in welfare payments, closure of 25 'halfway houses' for released prisoners and sharply reduced funding for women's shelters. These measures were broadly welcomed by business, but drew public protests.

WINNERS AND LOSERS

So the people who will have to pay are single mothers and other poor people on welfare: they found their cheques cut in October 1995 by 21%. A second chop came on November 29th, when the finance minister, Ernie Eves, announced cuts of C\$6 billion over two years, spread across almost every field of spending. A tenth of that is to come out of transfers to municipalities, which will presumably pass it on by charging for services and leaving holes in the road. Schools, already hard hit, are expected to trim another C\$40 million without

touching classroom costs. Universities and colleges must find as much, which means heavy increases in tuition fees.

The federal government, meanwhile, says *The Economist*, is revving up its own chain-saw. On 1st December 1995, its human resources minister, Lloyd Axworthy, announced reforms of unemployment insurance that will especially hurt seasonal workers such as lumberjacks, fishermen and some teachers. The current law was drafted in richer days 25 years ago. Mr Axworthy, by repute the farthest left of federal ministers, has tightened the rules to save C\$2 billion, most of it, supposedly, to be spent on job creation schemes. A cold Canadian winter indeed.

Resistance to all this can only simplistically be bracketed into the separatist category. More traditional forms have taken place in, for instance, Toronto where demonstrations targeting the issues have taken place. Essentially Canada along with all G7 countries seems too firmly locked into a global economy for solutions to be found which go beyond the public versus private debate of the establishment as the French are also discovering. Some factors in the Canadian economy which may give cause for hope have been reported in *Freedom*. Whether these will prove sufficient to make some impact on a growing economic crisis with global roots will be interesting to see.

sources:

Financial Times (6th October 1995)
Le Monde Diplomatique (December 1995)
The Economist (19th December 1995)

HAVE LIVING STANDARDS DECLINED?

Recently a spate of articles have been appearing attempting to convince the public that living standards have never been higher. My first reaction was sarcastic laughter, but after wiping the tears from my eyes and regaining my composure I began to apply the old Hegelian rule of searching for the truth in your opponent's viewpoint.

The articles compare the present with the 1950 and '60s and indeed they do have a point. In 1950 some 35% of the population lived below the poverty line, today it stands at 17%. Furthermore, pensions and unemployment insurance benefits were minuscule, welfare was for families only and government medical insurance did not exist.

Compare the cost of living with the rise in the minimum wage and you find the price of food and basic clothing has remained stable while the cost of most manufactured items declined. A host of new appliances has arisen and the new versions of older products are often far superior. My parents bought a new fridge in 1958 costing \$200, some \$1,100 in today's money. But you can buy a new and better fridge for \$700. In 1965 I bought a hi-fi for some \$60 – equal to \$300 in today's money. It is easy to find a CD, cassette player with AM-FM radio for less than \$200. What has increased in price are government services (at one time they were free), public transport and housing costs in the major cities.

There is also the idea that husband and wife both work since it takes two people to maintain the middle class lifestyle that one worker was once able to afford. What is overlooked is what constitutes a middle class lifestyle has changed. Back in the '50s people lived in a 750-900 square foot bungalow, owned one car, had one black-and-white television, sent their kids to the state-run school and went to the lake for vacation. Today middle class means a 2,000 square foot house, two cars, a van-load of electronics, private school and vacations in Hawaii, Spain and Florida.

Perhaps what we really feel when we think our living standards have declined is the situation in the last ten years. Here the statistics seem unambiguous for, depending on the country, wages have stagnated or declined. However, when cost decline and improvement of manufactured goods is

factored in and we start to question how the increase in the annual cost of living is measured, wage decline becomes less evident. Without doubt a great many people have suffered throughout the '80s and '90s, enough of them to drag the general wage level down. While the majority might be better off, a large minority – say, one third – is much poorer.

So why does everyone feel worse off? Why the nostalgia for the 1950s, '60s and '70s? Is it Boomer Generation narcissism? Or premature senility? The truth is, the quality of life cannot be measured only by cost of living indexes, wage rates or lists of new appliances. How can you quantify security? 35 years ago there was virtually no unemployment, and when hired you could stay there for life. Yes, it's fine making \$15 or \$20 an hour, but when you don't know if you'll be in the street next month ... Then there is personal security. When I was a small boy my friends and I would be gone all day, wandering for miles. People would invite us in for milk and cookies and we would never consider refusing. Who would dare let their kids do that today? Yet we weren't exceptional, that's the way life was and it never entered anyone's head that someone could harm a child.

How do you measure loss of community? In the town I grew up in everyone knew everyone else, but this is no longer the case. No one locked their doors, people left their car keys in the ignition when they parked. You'd be crazy to do that now. There was almost no vandalism, but today the park benches are broken up and graffiti is splattered everywhere. Schools were still local and small. My high school had an enrolment of 400 students. Its consolidated heir has 1,500 alienated kids bussed in from miles around.

How can you measure environmental degradation? Cities have had the hearts ripped out of them by expressways and superfluous concrete office towers. Suburbs eat into the countryside like a cancer. And there is the ever-present and insufferable noise.

That people believe they are worse off is heartening. It is proof that they realise there is more to life than money, gadgets and statistics.

Larry Gambone
Montréal, Canada

Scientists and our well-being

Dear Editors,
John Wood (letters, 9th March) answers my rhetorical question "What can scientists contribute to our well-being today?" by pointing out that "genetic engineering" is the only "realistic chance of effective treatment for thousands of inherited disorders".

What about the many more man-made 'disorders' that afflict especially the prosperous nations with all their 'advanced technology' and for which scientists engaged in R&D (Research and Development) are at the origin. As somebody pointed out when it was suggested that the 'pigeon rustler' in Trafalgar Square was selling contaminated birds to a pie manufacturer, their plump country cousins were also eating contaminated grain, acorns and grass, thanks to the scientists who have provided the chemical firms and, through their salesmen, the ever-lazier farmers with the apparent wherewithal to increase output per acre with fewer workers and bigger pollution-belching tractors.

Your correspondent then launches an attack on the likes of me for the "parroted chestnut about 'the scientists' being responsible for nuclear weapons". But he then goes on to reveal how unscientific he is when he justifies the development of the atom bomb in the USA on the grounds that "otherwise Nazi Germany was likely to get the bomb first". Who in Nazi Germany was developing the bomb? Hitler, Goering, Himmler or perhaps scientists.

I am also accused of being among our "technophobic moralists". Not at all, I believe

in technology so long as it benefits humankind. Today R&D is largely financed by the military-industrial, chemical and pharmaceutical empires *only incidentally* for our well-being. They are in the business to *make money for themselves and their shareholders*.

One last thought for the naive John Woods of this world: can you imagine if those scientists engaged in R&D were to find solutions to wear and tear with machines, with humans, with building materials, etc. Do you think that in a capitalist world the 'discoveries' would be marketed or suppressed?

As to my criticism of the Einsteins and Rotblats who became pacifists after having contributed to the development of the bomb, it is of the scientist seeking facts, the 'truth', but *not responsible as to how his 'discoveries' may be used for good or evil*. Because he is a scientist and the decisions must be taken by the politicians.

The anarchist Malatesta way back in 1929 (in *Risveglio*, Geneva, 30th November 1929, in *Malatesta: Life and Ideas*, Freedom Press, £5) had no illusions. Science, he wrote, "is a weapon which can be used for good or bad ends; but science ignores completely the idea of good and evil". And he concluded: "We are therefore anarchists not because science tells us to be but because, among other reasons, we want everybody to be in a position to enjoy the advantages and pleasures which science procures."

I agree!

Libertarian

Where Bartok is Banned

Dear Comrades,
Bela Bartok was given a very small but extremely informative exhibition by the British Library at the British Museum. In a single glass case a very good selection was made of Bartok's life and work, from his early ethnographic days in Erdely (Transylvania) to his final days in New York. With the aid of headphones one could also listen to a well recorded, well put together 'tape loop' with reminiscences from his son and other people who knew him, like Yehudi Menuhin whose account of hearing the news of Bartok's death was especially poignant. The young violinist walked through New York and looked for a visible sign of some loss in the world which might have marked the passing of this outstanding man, but there was no sign he could see.

The recording has also included Bartok himself playing a piano piece for children - clearly and patiently, for children like to savour such moments, not like some virtuoso ratters who wish to overwhelm all opposition. Bartok even managed to make the same mistake as any child would of replaying a small passage for the quite adequate reason of wanting to hear it again.

I am writing these words at the worst possible time for many Hungarians, who are subjected to torture and imprisonment in Slovakia, where the playing of Bartok's music is a punishable offence, where, according to a *Visions of Poesy* contributor who has recently visited Pozsony (Bratislava), people heard speaking Magyar are summarily arrested. Had it not been for our comrade's visit we also would not have known.

The dates of Bela Bartok show very clearly the upheavals of Central Europe. He was born in

Nagyszentmiklos (now Sirnicolou More, Romania), worked in Nagyszollos (now Vynokradiv, Ukraine), then in Pozsony (Bratislava, Slovakia). Every change of name denotes a pogrom of sorts. One never knows which is the worst danger to humanity, the tin-pot state like Slovakia or the superpowers.

A.N. Reader

1 in 12 Library Collective

Dear Freedom,

I am writing to you on behalf of the 1 in 12 Club to inform you of the establishment of an anarchist library within our Club premises. You may have seen our pamphlet *What is the 1 in 12 Club*. Although membership is open to anyone supportive of the guiding principles of the Club, the principles themselves are the basic tenets of anarchism: mutual aid, self-management and co-operation. As such the 1 in 12 Club is run by and for the membership (which now numbers over one thousand) at our weekly Sunday meetings.

Anyway, to the point. We have been working for the last five to six months renovating a room in the club for use as an anarchist library and archive. We are at last ready to begin collecting books, magazines, papers, etc., for the benefit of Club members. Any books from individual comrades would be very gratefully received.

Matt Hannam

1 in 12 Club, 21-23 Albion Street,
Bradford, West Yorkshire BD1 2LY

THE WOMEN AT THE WELL

(continued from page 6)

which frequently is considered to be safe when it looks clean even if it comes directly from a river without treatment. Projects should not keep users in ignorance of such issues, but need to discuss them as part of local decision-making on the choice of technology ..."

I have often heard criticism of the work of aid agencies, whether unofficial bodies (NGOs) or governmentally-financed bodies, that they move into an area with a package of promises of expertise, but arrogantly ignore the traditional channels of communication by way of dominant chiefs or headmen, local land-owners and money-lenders, in a way that the one-time colonial administrators would never have done. The evidence contradicts this assumption. The successors to old empires have been not only a series of territorial wars and the economic imperialism of cash-crop production for the export market, but also a range of vast engineering projects which are notoriously damaging to local populations.

The unofficial aid workers, even when funded by national or international government agencies, have learned through experience that to change the situation anywhere you have to enlist the support of the humblest of local people, and that this always means the women.

Unlike the employees of international conglomerates involved in enormous water-engineering projects, they, while hired to propagate simple techniques of local water management, have to be concerned with winning agreement and support. They have also to ensure simple and acceptable routines for day-to-day management, without dependence on spare parts for which no budget or ordering procedure exists which is accessible to villagers. With no brief to intervene in the existing structure of power, influence and access to land, they have to do what they can within the cultures and societies that have sought their aid.

They rapidly learn that their allies are the women, who carry the daily burden of household management and, in many societies, of horticulture or agriculture too. Liberation will begin at the well.

Colin Ward

ANARCHIST COMMENTS IN BRIEF

THE BITER BIT May I start with a lighthearted comment which will not be lost on any teachers among *Freedom's* readers. Apparently the experts who were preparing the official report about the poor standards in maths of more than half the nation's 11-year-olds got their 'maths' wrong! According to the Education Editor of the *Guardian* (13th February), "officials got the sums wrong by double counting tens of thousands of children who didn't make the grade in their written tests". I also noticed recently that schools are proposing to introduce 'mental arithmetic' exams for the young. Why has it taken so long for the experts to realise that if you give a calculator to 6-year-olds why should they also learn their twelve-times table as this old man did, and only accepts free calculators from the likes of *Time*, *Which*, et alia, in case of a loss of memory!

GOOD FOR THE SQUATTERS In spite of the fact that Brighton Council obtained an eviction order against squatters "who set up their own agency at a former greetings card shop," the squatters were determined, according to the *Guardian* (6th March), "to stay and advertise empty properties available for squat". Needless to say, a council spokesman said it "would consider using bailiffs" if the homeless wouldn't leave 'willingly'. With hundreds of thousands of unemployed building workers, not to mention the thousands of empty properties needing work on them to make them habitable, surely the government could direct some of our money from tarding-up useless Trident bombers (about £1 billion, and where's the enemy?) to providing homes for people.

TEACHERS PAID BY RESULTS The latest in the government's *privatisation*, virtually from 'the womb to the tomb' (my older readers will recall the slogan of the welfare state), is a *Guardian* headline (6th March) "Shephard talks of pay by results for teachers".

What is obscene in the lady minister's bait: once again *money*, the assumption that teachers will do better by the kids with the bait

of money. Obviously there are teachers with the same mentality as that creature Shephard (after all, she was a teacher before she discovered it was more profitable to be a politician and Minister of Education), but surely most teachers would not choose the profession if they did not love children and had a feeling of responsibility in the future of their wards.

If schools adopt the 'payment by results' proposed by the minister then schools and teachers will demand to vet the pupils who apply to be enrolled. And as a result you will get the schools who are at the top of the 'league' (like the football teams) who get the bright, privileged pupils, and the rest (like the football teams) will take not only the less 'bright' pupils but also the teachers who haven't made the capitalist 'top grade' under Mrs Shephard's payments by results regime.

ARE YOU 'WITH IT'? If you are, you must be an owner of a mobile phone and use the Internet. I use neither, but then I'm old and not 'with it'. But I do have a phone (going back to before you could dial the number) and its 'magic' is that I can actually hear the voices of dear friends in distant parts now and then, which letter-writing cannot substitute. But am I just an old fuddy-duddy when I am alarmed with headlines in the so-called 'serious' press that "shopping on the Internet takes off" (*Independent*, 14th February) or "with 33.4 million users, the Internet is big business and getting bigger" (*Independent*, 11th March),

and "the mobile phone finally comes of age" (*Independent*, 20th February). "Mobile market decides to grow up" (over eight columns in the *Independent*, 24th February) and their Industrial Correspondent's report on mobile capacity set for revolution by 2005 (24th February).

Dear reader, I've confessed to using the phone when one had to call the operator to get your number and I am still a fan of the telephone. Over the years, apart from letter-writing, I've written about three million words for Freedom Press's various publications, some on an old Olivetti typewriter and most by hand (with a Bic), but I've done an awful lot of other things *to earn a living*. I am skirting an autobiography in order to debunk the idea that the mobile telephone and the Internet will do anything to enrich our lives, above all because we need *personal contact* and *physical contact* to enrich our lives. The Internet cannot.

And the mobile phone (another business racket) increases the power of the boss over his employee who is expected to be permanently at the other end of the line. If not, where is he? Again the mobile phone could be valuable for disabled people, but they are not the ones included in the business sections of the *Independent* which sports headlines such as "The mobile phone finally comes of age" and "mobile phone capacity set for revolution by 2005". The mobile telephone is, above all, yet another means for the employer to have contact and control over his employee. So far as I know, the trade unions have not come out against the mobile phone. Why?

Libertarian

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Against the JOB SEEKERS' ALLOWANCE

Saturday 23rd March

A march and rally called by Greater Manchester Association of TUCs

10am for 10.30 start: Cavendish Street (All Saints), march through City Centre

11.30am: Rally at Mechanics' Institute car park, followed by one-day conference 'Defend the Welfare State' at the Mechanics' Institute, Princess Street

Tuesday 9th April

A march and demonstration in central London called by London Against the JSA

1pm: Geraldine Mary Harmsworth Park, Lambeth Road (nearest tube Lambeth North)

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ACF

OPEN DISCUSSION MEETINGS

Held on first Thursday of every month at 8pm, Marchmont Community Centre, 62 Marchmont Street, London WC1 (nearest tube Russell Square). Entry free.

Thursday 4th April at 8pm ANARCHISM AND RELIGION

On the Feast of the Passover (!) we discuss the role of organised religion. Since the time of Bakunin, revolutionary anarchists have argued that organised religion has an intimate relationship with the state and class rule. It achieves this through mystification, through putting off a better life until the 'next world', through acceptance of suffering and through its peddling of a spiritual hierarchy with an Almighty God duplicated and condoned in the material world.

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Admission £3/£2**

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A programme of free guided walks in the Midlands for Greens, Socialists, Libertarians and Anarchists. All walks are on a Sunday unless otherwise stated. Bring walking boots, waterproofs, food and drink.

April 7th: Walk leader Ray. Meet 11am at centre of Peatling Magna village, Leicestershire (leave M1 at junction 21). Circular walk, length 7 miles, including visit to lost medieval village site.

May 5th: Walk leader Mike. Meet 11am at Whatstandwell railway station car park, Whatstandwell, Derbyshire. Circular walk, length 5-6 miles.

June 9th: Walk leader Jon. Meet 11am at picnic site car park below Derwent Reservoir Dam (map reference SK173893), Derwent Valley, Derbyshire. Circular walk, length 8-9 miles over mountainous terrain.

Telephone for further details
01773-827513

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A series of free guided walks in the Yorkshire Dales. All walks are on a Sunday unless otherwise stated. Bring walking boots, waterproofs, food and drink.

April 21st - Bishopdale: West Burton to Swinithwaite. Meet West Burton village school at 11am. Length approx 6 miles.

May 19th - Airedale: Farnhill and Sutton Pinnacles. Meet outside Bay Horse Pub at Sutton (near Keighley) at 10.45am. Length approx 8 miles.

June 16th - Airedale: Skipton to Flasby. Meet outside Skipton Castle at 10.45am. Length approx 7 miles.

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— 1996 PROGRAMME —

22nd March The Destructive Legacy of Hegel and his Successors on Libertarian Thought (speaker Dave Dane)

29th March General Discussion

5th April no meeting (Bank Holiday)

12th April Through the Anarchist Press and/or The Internet (speaker John Rety)

Anyone interested in giving a talk or leading a discussion, please contact either Dave Dane or Peter Neville at the meetings, or Peter Neville at 4 Copper Beeches, Witham Road, Isleworth, Middlesex TW7 4AW (tel: 0181-847 0203, not too early in the day please) giving subject and prospective dates and we will do our best to accommodate. A collection is made to pay for the £15 cost of the room. Donations are accepted from those who cannot attend regularly but wish to see the continuation of these meetings.

Peter Neville / Dave Dane

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..... Postcode