

# FREEDOM

anarchist fortnightly

Vol. 58 No. 10

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50p

## CAPITALISM IS MONOPOLY

... the only competition is between workers fighting for jobs – and that's bad!

**F**reedom has been saying this for years, and there is no reason to change our tune. As workers' unions get weaker, as real unemployment increases (more than twenty million officially unemployed in the European Union) so the capitalist giants either engage in take-overs or mergers or sell off bits and pieces profitably to others for whom they complete a jig-saw puzzle which gives them a monopoly in a particular field.

No question but that the capitalist system is consolidating and the workers, for various reasons (and we shall return to that problem), are losing out dramatically.

Currently there is a perfect example of capitalist competition: in the media. There is only one aim in a saturated market and it is to drive the competition out of the market. The *Daily Telegraph* and *Sunday Telegraph* have been doing this for some time, and have been quite successful in increasing their circulation, but have not succeeded in driving their main enemies, the *Guardian*, *Independent* and their Sunday sisters, out of business. The circulation of the latter has gone down a bit, and of the *Telegraph* has gone up but at a price. The country is littered with *Telegraph* vouchers. You can buy it seven days a week for £52 a year. Yet the enemy is holding out. As one writes, it appears that the real boss, Conrad Black, brought it back into private ownership plus the £19.6 million it lost competing. And sure enough, as we write the *Sunday Telegraph* has increased its price from 70p to 80p. Not a small increase.

That's the latest example of capitalist competition as we write. Anyway what is a mere £19.6 million for one of the *Sunday Times* annual 'Britain's Richest 500' said to be worth a mere £250 million?

What is much more prevalent and significant for workers and all who are trying to influence the dis-

possessed in our society is the growing trend for take-overs and amalgamations, apart from the way mutuals and building societies are joining the banking mafia, and it is all for the benefit of the top cats with a few left-overs for the original shareholders.

In the last month or so, BT has concluded a £12.5 billion merger with the American telecommunications group MCI. The Bank of Scotland is into Sainsburys the grocers. Imperial Chemical Industries (ICI) have paid £5 billion for Unilever's "speciality chemicals business" (whatever that means). The *Independent* acclaims that racket "with one bound, ICI breaks free of its old image". What can we expect next?



Illustration taken from *The Tradition of Workers' Control* by Geoffrey Ostergaard, a forthcoming title from Freedom Press

Then of course there is the Alliance & Leicester *et alia* all going into banking and doling out millions of pounds to their members to keep them quiet as they get absorbed by the banks and the speculators.

Lastly (but the main reason for this piece) is without doubt the £20.6 billion deal between Grand Metropolitan and Guinness, two giants in the booze

industry and much else. For all the details read the broadsheets for 13th May. There will without doubt be thousands of redundancies not only down below but at the top. The latter will walk with a millions pounds and a boost to their private pensions. The former, who knows?

From reading the detailed reports one realises how the capitalist system runs the racket. The media here and in France have reservations about the merger. A headline in the financial *Guardian* (13th May) suggests that "French vow to wreck marriage plans" since LVMH, the French luxury goods group, markets champagnes and brandy, like Guinness and their new partners. We are convinced they won't succeed since *they belong to the same racket*. Listen, those of you who still believe that capitalism is competitive *by definition* rather than when it wants to defeat an enemy (that is, a potential competitor). One learns from the *Guardian* that LVMH (the French racket) is "the biggest shareholder in Guinness with 14.2% of the equity, which will become among the largest holders in the new business with 6.6% of the combined business."

But wait for a second, for we obtained more 'news' from the *Independent's* (13th May) business and city page about "Guinness' 34% investment in the Moët, Hennessy champagne group" – that is the LVMH group – belly-aching about the Guinness merger. Do you have to underline the racket that is here exposed for *Freedom* readers? Surely not!

And for the same reason we go on exposing the capitalist racket but also attack our fellow workers who have the power (since they are the real producers – even of the whisky and champagne sold for vast profits by Guinness here and LVMH in France) but seem to be more prepared to fight their fellow workers for jobs rather than their exploiters.



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## THE GREAT GROUNDSWELL DEBATE

### A DIFFERENT VIEW OF 'THREE STRIKES'

A recent Nottingham anti-JSA newsletter described DSS workers in Brighton walking out in support of an occupation of a job centre. It then called for "similar imaginative action". Great. This suggests the possibility of some positive links between anti-JSA activists and workers in the DSS. A while ago the 'outing' of Dennis Taylor, JSA supremo in the East Midlands, was well received by DSS workers in Nottingham. The possibility of positive links again? But then came 'three strikes'.

When 'three strikes' was first discussed in Nottingham last year it was claimed that it was not intended as an attack on every individual DSS worker, that it didn't encourage violence against individuals and that anti-JSA activists were keen to build links with activists in the DSS. But that's not how DSS staff saw it. One woman CPSA steward refused to go to an anti-JSA meeting to discuss 'three strikes' because she was frightened to do so. I think this meant the loss of a potentially useful ally. DSS management were quick to take advantage, of course. And the negative attitudes towards claimants amongst some DSS workers must have been reinforced, making the job of challenging these attitudes by others in the DSS much more difficult.

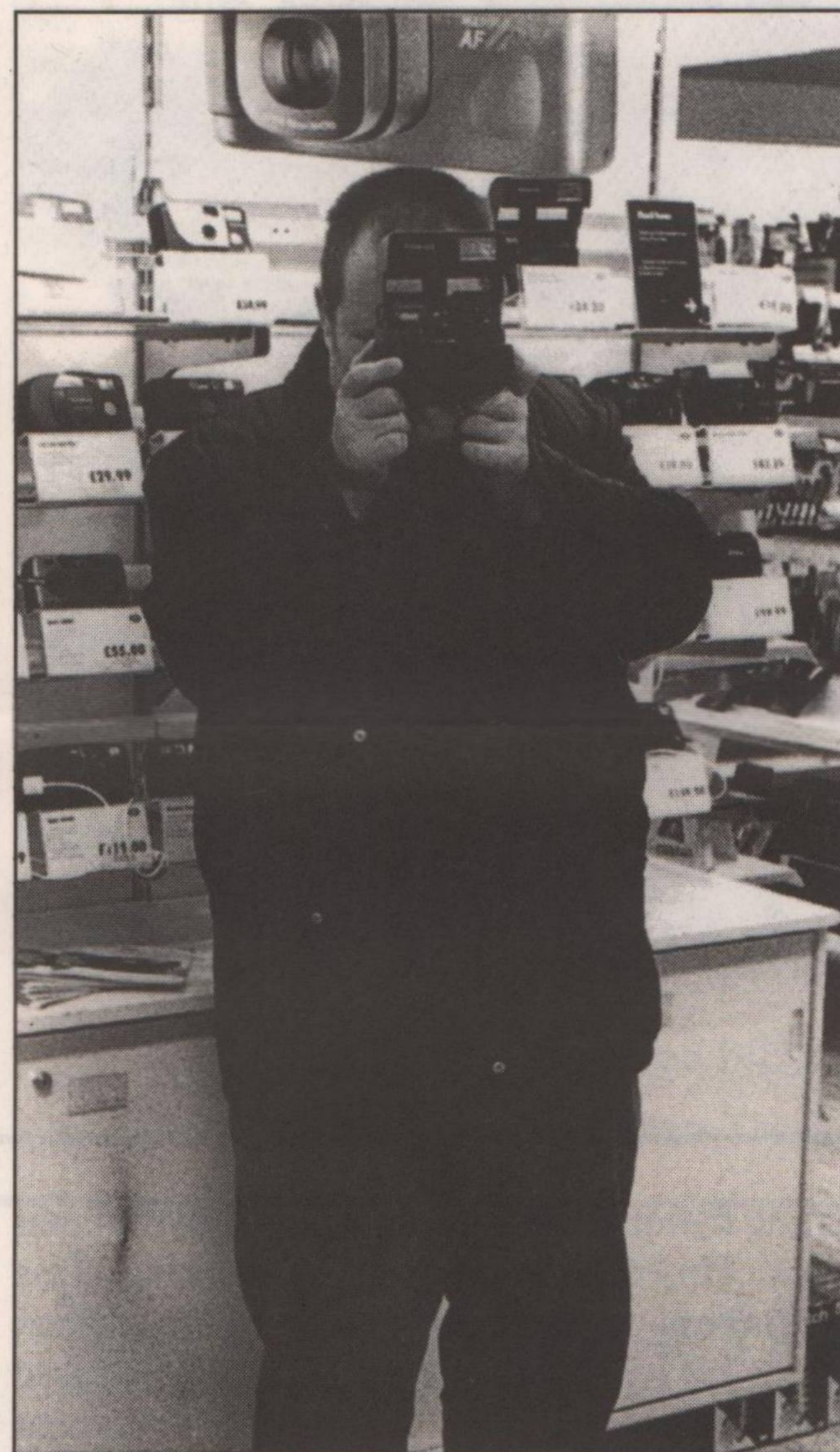
Superficially, the argument for 'three strikes' seems simple enough, offering a way of both making those on the counter responsible for their actions and giving power to the unemployed. However, I'm not convinced.

For a start it's very much about targeting individuals. This is at best naive. A DSS worker refusing to co-operate with the JSA would either be shifted or sacked, leaving the JSA intact but with more intensive management supervision. The further argument that DSS workers should give up their jobs in the interests of 'integrity' (and I've got a leaflet arguing this here in front of me) is similarly unreal. To do this you'd have to be able to live without benefits for six months or be sure of another job straight away. Let's get real. That the anti-JSA campaign itself finds it hard to mobilise anyone outside the usual milieu of political activists surely says something about the general lack of political confidence and involvement within the working class.

I'm not saying here that people shouldn't take some responsibility for what they do. But, however difficult it might be to achieve, it is collective action that is needed, and in working towards this we need to be honest about the real constraints at work (fear of the sack, of not getting support, whatever).

More than this, there are some fairly practical objections to 'three strikes'. Firstly, I know from experience that it doesn't take much to get riled by the person on the other side of the counter. Conflict is endemic to the dole office, JSA or no JSA. As such can we be sure that the individuals 'outed' are those genuinely hassling claimants? Do we simply believe the claimant? Or will the DSS worker be given a right of reply by some Anti-JSA People's Tribunal? In the bigger scheme of things, does it matter (the necessary 'murder'

and all that)? There are issues here of (namby pamby?) natural justice (unless anti-JSA activists aren't being entirely honest when they say they're only out to target the real bastards). Secondly, are there not other complicating factors at work, like gender (man



objects to a female DSS worker for sexist reasons) and race (racist objects to a black worker)? How will the Anti-JSA Tribunal deal with such instances? Do these complications matter? Thirdly, although it is denied that 'three strikes' will encourage violence against individual DSS workers, I'm not so sure. In a context where cross-counter exchanges are often already fraught, I'd have thought that 'three strikes' would have made such violence more likely – and for what political gain and with what price paid? I agree that the CPSA's narrow concern with the safety screen issue should be criticised – it hardly gives a positive message out to claimants – but with claimants being encouraged to finger DSS workers I'd be inclined to hide behind a screen I reckon.

But mostly I'm concerned about 'three strikes' as part of a strategy for building a 'social movement' against anti-claimant legislation and practice. The starting point here has to be the fact that claimants are often economically vulnerable, organisationally fragmented and politically weak. They have no labour to withdraw and, unlike the poll tax, there's nothing they can refuse to pay. Claimant organisation has been thin on the ground over the last fifteen years. I struggle to see how the 'three strikes' policy relates to all this. In the light of this vulnerability, fragmentation and political weakness, I simply cannot see 'three strikes' acting to mobilise significant numbers of claimants. It does, though,

alienate potential allies. In fact, it strikes me as a bit of a rhetorical stunt, a substitute for the real long-term hard work of building a grassroots movement.

Building such a social movement would involve building alliances with other working class people. For example, it might involve getting workers to oppose the use of Project Work in their workplaces, or linking up with people in dispute. It would certainly involve building links with DSS workers, even if only with small numbers at first. During the 1980s anti-snoopers campaign in Nottingham, information about the whereabouts of snoopers was regularly given to the then Claimants' Action by CPSA activists. It was this (admittedly fragile) alliance that made the campaign effective. Even if the majority of low-grade DSS staff were utterly antagonistic to claimants, there are still a small number of DSS workers with whom useful and supportive links might be made. Ironically, supporters of 'three strikes' recognise this, even whilst 'three strikes' undermines the possibility of developing such links.

With some support from DSS staff the job of organising occupations and other direct action, 'outing' management (responsible both for supervising the JSA and giving low paid and increasingly regulated benefit staff a hard time), and getting hold of useful information would surely be easier to accomplish. A positive approach to building solidarity would make at least some kind of collective action over the JSA by CPSA members more likely, and it would mean that CPSA activists would be in a better position to challenge the anti-claimant behaviour of some of their colleagues (which in part is what 'three strikes' is about).

Throughout this struggle, the CPSA have largely evidenced the kind of narrow sectional self-interest characteristic of British trade unionism. Hence the emphasis on Health & Safety issues. To be fair some CPSA activists have publicly opposed the JSA, and the CPSA on paper is opposed to it. Translating this into explicit anti-JSA will be difficult given the practical and ideological effects of the anti-trade union laws (and sadly it ain't so simple as saying 'fuck the trade union laws'). There is criticism of the CPSA to be made, but this needs to be done in a way that doesn't close down opportunities for anti-JSA activists to communicate with ordinary DSS workers. When these activists call for 'imaginative' support from DSS workers they need to show that they can be equally imaginative. Sure, building alliances between different groups of people can be tremendously difficult, but you don't change people's minds if they think they are being threatened and perception is at least as important as intention. Instead, what we need here is a willingness for some kind of dialogue, one which acknowledges the different concerns and constraints at work.

Tactically, the challenging task of organising amongst claimants needs to be complemented by the equally challenging task of encouraging support and struggle from within the DSS.

Of course, I'm not denying the very positive work being done by anti-JSA activists, informing claimants of what is happening, encouraging opposition, organising actions and events. But if the strategy is seriously to build a 'social movement' against the oppression of claimants, rather than just a small network of political activists offering an elite 'outing' service, then the tactic of 'three strikes' can only be counter-productive. **Rob Peutrell**

### VIVA LA PAPARAZZI-MAN: REVENGE OF THE JOBLESS ONES

Who is the 'Paparazzi-Man'? We know him (or them) by his works. Every week now seems to record some fresh outbreak of photo activity in some part of the country. Barry Reamsbottom, boss of the CPSA (civil servants' union and bullying victimiser of union activist Lee Rock) is about to be targeted by the 'Paparazzi-Man'. Alastair 'Bully Boy' Mathieson, the Edinburgh claimant adviser guilty of continued harassment of claimants, was snapped at his desk in March by claimant direct actionists. This followed a series of snaps taken at Burnley Job Centre in East Lancashire in February, some of which have appeared in *Freedom*.

Last year, the Nottingham anti-JSA put out a poster with a mug-shot of JSA chief Dennis Taylor. Taylor is responsible for implementing the Job Seekers' Act in the East Midlands. Also last year the Manchester anti-JSA group took a photo shot of Jennifer Wall, deputy manager of Cheetham Hill Job Centre.

The 'Paparazzi-Man' is clearly a creature first conceived of in Scotland, later to be used in Nottingham, but christened in Lancashire at the foot of the Pennines. In a way 'La Paparazzi-Man' resembles a post-modernist Ned Ludd figure, a revenge of the jobless ones in the late twentieth century to match what

E.P. Thompson called "an army of redressers" of General Ludd. A post-modernist Groundswell, to contrast with the traditionalist Luddites of the early nineteenth century.

#### PAPARAZZI POLITICS

'Three Strikes' is a controlled formalisation of the conduct of the 'Paparazzi-Man'. In one year of his life who has the 'Paparazzi-Man' targeted with his camera for 'Three Strikes' treatment? In Nottingham Dennis Taylor, JSA implementation manager (JIM) – this action seems to have full approval, even from Rob Peutrell, and some DSS workers in Nottingham. In Edinburgh Alastair Mathieson, a claimant adviser with an appalling record of abusing claimants. In Manchester Jennifer Wall, deputy manager – in her case we had reports from staff on her conduct as well as direct experience ourselves. She has reportedly upset both staff and claimants. She had lied to the Manchester anti-JSA group about the existence of a pilot scheme at Cheetham Hill Job Centre. As reported in *Freedom*, she refused to allow demonstrators to use the Job Centre for their job search.

At Burnley Job Centre Mrs Duffy, the manager, withdrew the benefit from Reg Hall, *(continued on page 2)*



## — THE GREAT GROUNDSWELL DEBATE —

**VIVA LA PAPARAZZI-MAN:  
REVENGE OF THE JOBLESS ONES***(continued from page 1)*

an anarchist. This was condemned later by the chairman of the tribunal who said the Job Centre had put out false information. Mrs Duffy has twice physically attacked demonstrators. She has tried to manipulate the police into removing pickets from the front of the Job Centre and has pressed the police to prosecute the activists.

All of the above have been quick to call the police. This was so in last month's demo at Bolton Job Centre — they are all following Employment Service advice to get the police involved and urge them to make arrests. At Bolton there is the scandalous case of Jean Johnson reported in the last issue of *Freedom*. Jean was set-up by the management at Bolton and taken off benefits. The North West Against the JSA is now calling for an inquiry into the procedures at Bolton, and the 'Paparazzi-Man' now has the manager on file. The 'Paparazzi-Man' interviewed the manager on 30th April about Jean Johnson's case and he was struck by the man's complacency. The manager said he couldn't fix an interview over the scandal "because we are in an election period". I always thought the administration and the executive roles were separate in this country, but it now seems that functionaries in the dole are becoming an arm of political power.

It seems to me that the Groundswell groups have been remarkably restrained. The targets of the 'Paparazzi-Man' are still in single figures one year after he was conceived. All of the above — Taylor, Mathieson, Wall, Duffy and the Bolton boss — would seem to be well worthy of his attentions.

**PUNISHING THE POOR**

Rob Peutrell's analysis of 'Three Strikes' is a solemn, sensible and serious account. It conjures up a picture of dole workers and claimants joining hands together and skipping down the yellow brick road to peace and freedom. It is an exercise in syndicalist wishful thinking, which was a feature of modernism and is now well past its sell-by date.

What support there *has* been from staff for the campaign against the JSA has mostly been sly and surreptitious support.

At Heywood in Lancashire two dole clerks crept out to sign a petition away from the gaze of their bosses.

Last year, and this year, Employment Service memos were sent anonymously to *Freedom* and Groundswell. At Liverpool earlier this year CPSA members told Groundswell of their fears of management, fears which are preventing them doing anything to fight the JSA.

The great power of the jobless ones is that they have little or nothing to lose. But people with bits of jobs are fearful of losing them.

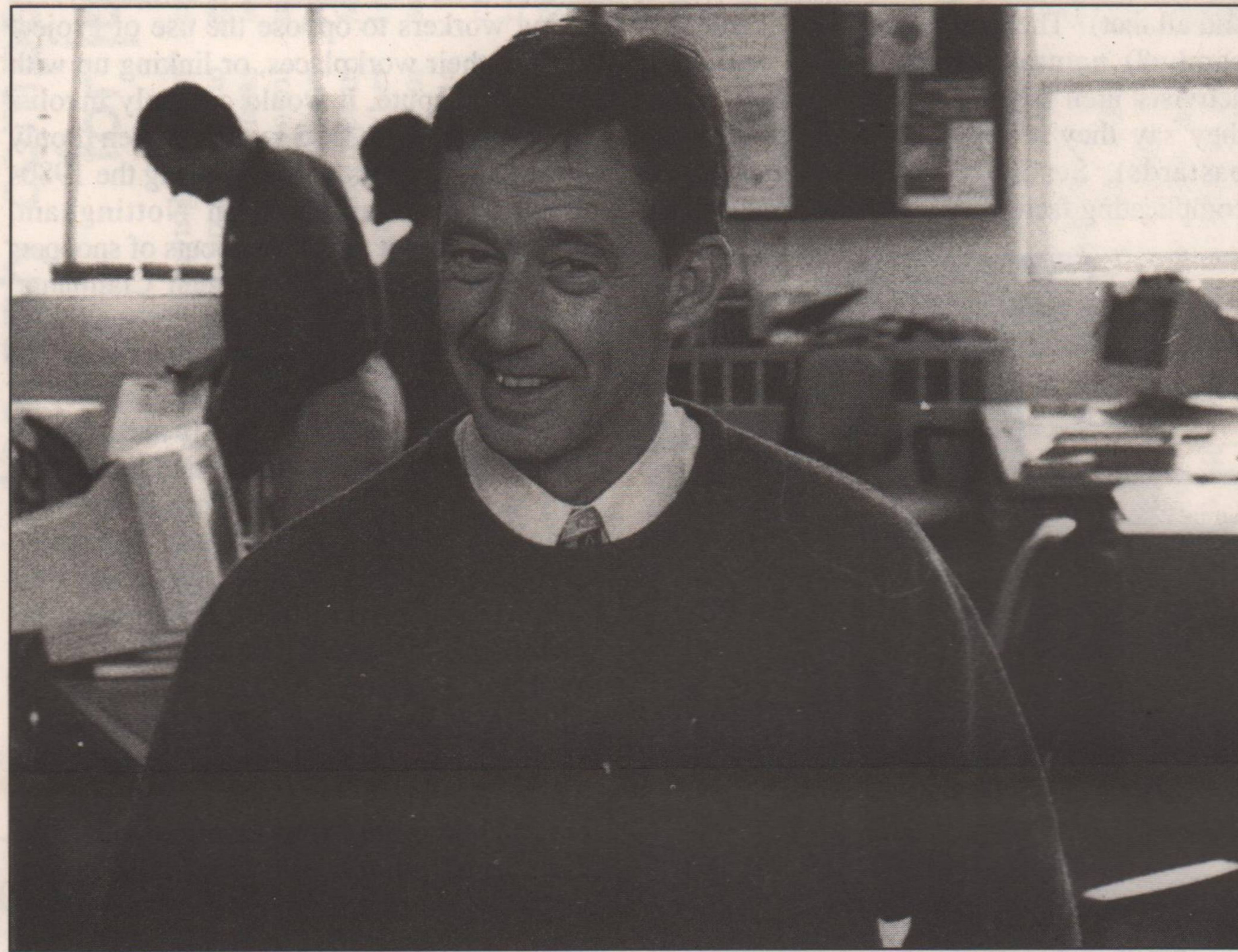
There is some support from CPSA members in Brighton and London, but in the north and in Scotland we have more support from

security guards than the staff. Even the police are more friendly up here. Is this surprising when union bosses in the Scottish CPSA are urging their members to seek injunctions from the courts against anti-JSA activists because the police are reluctant to act.

This month when the case of Reg Hall from Burnley, Jean Johnson from Bolton and a woman from Dukinfield were put to the CPSA and PTC union bosses at the North West TUC, all these union gaffers could say was: "Our members have to obey the law and carry out the requirements of the JSA". So much for Jason Slosh and Tony Gallagher, no compassion for the victims of their member's malpractices.

It is not just that the dole staff in these cases are carrying out the law like some blinkered servant/slave to the state, it is that they are short-circuiting the law in order to inflict maximum pain and take more people off benefits.

People who short-circuit the law in this way should not be surprised if they risk electrocution themselves.



'Smile, you're on candid camera!'

**GIVE CLAWS TO THE WEAK**

The cheerful syndicalism of Rob Peutrell is shop-soiled modernism. It belongs to an age of big unions and big factories, where an illusion of class unity could be imagined. Since the miners' strike of 1984-85 its flaws have become more evident. The modernist era favoured by the fascists and the marxists and the nazis at its zenith. Syndicalism, or rather anarcho-syndicalism, was our attempt to come to terms with modernism.

Post-modernism, it seems to me, is shifting the focus of social activity away from mass man and mass action towards more innovatory and imaginative radical direct action — see Reclaim the Streets, the Liverpool Dockers, as well as the many anti-JSA campaigns by Groundswell.

Let's try and do what the marxists do and give an historical analysis. Let me quote Ignazio Silone's account in 1938 of the switch from traditional society to modern mass society:

"Moving from the artisan's shop and the small plant to the great factory, the worker in time undergoes a considerable transformation. His mental horizon is broadened and his class consciousness increased, but at the same time he loses his taste for freedom and his readiness for individual action. The worker in the great factory is apt to be bolder and stronger in mass actions, whether peaceful or violent, whereas he is generally unable to act alone or in a small group. If you look at the newspaper accounts of the anarchist or syndicalist violence which was a frequent occurrence in various countries ... around the final decades of the last century and the beginning of this one, you will see that it was the work of artisans, intellectuals — generally students — or of peasants. If by chance you also find a factory worker, he is probably an ex-peasant or an ex-artisan. The factory worker is the mass-man par excellence."

Silone then goes on to show how the Spaniards, with their rural roots, resisted fascism more vigorously and effectively than the German working class with their disciplined communist and socialist parties and unions.

It seems to me that post-modernism, if that is what it is, is transforming society away from big factories and mass-man towards a more fertile field for anarchism. The 'Paparazzi-Man' with his cheap Olympus Trip camera, as Orwell said, "gives claws to the weak".

Mack the Knife

**BUY THE  
CAPITALISTS OUT**

Towards the end of his life, Frederick Engels said Marx often told him the best way to get rid of the capitalists was to buy them out. I was reminded of this recently when reading a statement written by David Friedman (son of Milton) some thirty years ago. He compared the total annual wages of American workers with the value of the stock on Wall Street and found that the former was about 50% of the latter. From this, he concluded that if workers decided to live at a 'hippie level' of lifestyle for two years, they would own a controlling interest in Wall Street, and in five years own all the corporations outright. Nor need they make such great sacrifices. By simply putting aside 10% of their income, they could do the same in ten to twenty years (today this would involve even less effort, since pension funds already account for about 25% of Wall Street stocks, something not the case a generation ago). Friedman concluded, however, that since workers weren't doing this, they must be more or less satisfied with the capitalist status quo.

Such a solution to the problem of corporate ownership has never been tried or even suggested as a possibility, so it is no wonder that workers have not expressed a great deal of interest in it. Revolutionaries have always promoted expropriation and moderate socialists, fearing civil war, proposed nationalisation with compensation.

Worker-buy-outs would be scoffed at by old-time socialists, and for good reason. Workers were too poor. As Marx pointed out, workers live at a subsistence level and there wasn't any discretionary income with which to purchase industry. This situation has changed radically since World War Two. All full-time jobs give a wage above subsistence, and in Canada the poverty line begins when one has less than 42% discretionary income, i.e. if you spend more than 58% of your income on food, clothing, utilities and shelter. The people living at subsistence and less are those on welfare or single low-wage part-timers.

Alternatives to buy-out? Expropriation means civil war. The revolutionist expects workers to risk their lives for what they can get by foregoing a few vacations or a new car. Which is more realistic? The social demo-

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7th June, and the last  
day for copy intended  
for this issue will be  
Thursday 29th May 1997

cratic nationaliser runs up a huge government debt. This debt is paid for by working class taxpayers and the state-owned industries become models of inefficiency and corruption. And then the next government turns around and de-nationalises. Wouldn't the populace prefer worker-ownership to state ownership and a peaceful social change to violence?

All that is needed to accomplish this task is to set up a fund (or better yet, funds) with the sole purpose of buying up industry. We already have the example of pension funds which invest in existing industry, Quebec's trade unions Solidarity Fund which invests in new businesses and the democratic process found in cooperatives. The idea would be to combine all of these aspects into one and create democratically managed cooperative funds. One member, one vote. Industry bought by these funds would then impose a board of directors comprising representatives of the community, plant workers and consumers. The final goal would be to turn all major corporations into worker-consumer co-ops. If, at the same time, the government sector — most of which consists of social services — was converted into mutual aid societies, a potential 75% or more of the economy would then be owned and controlled by the working population.

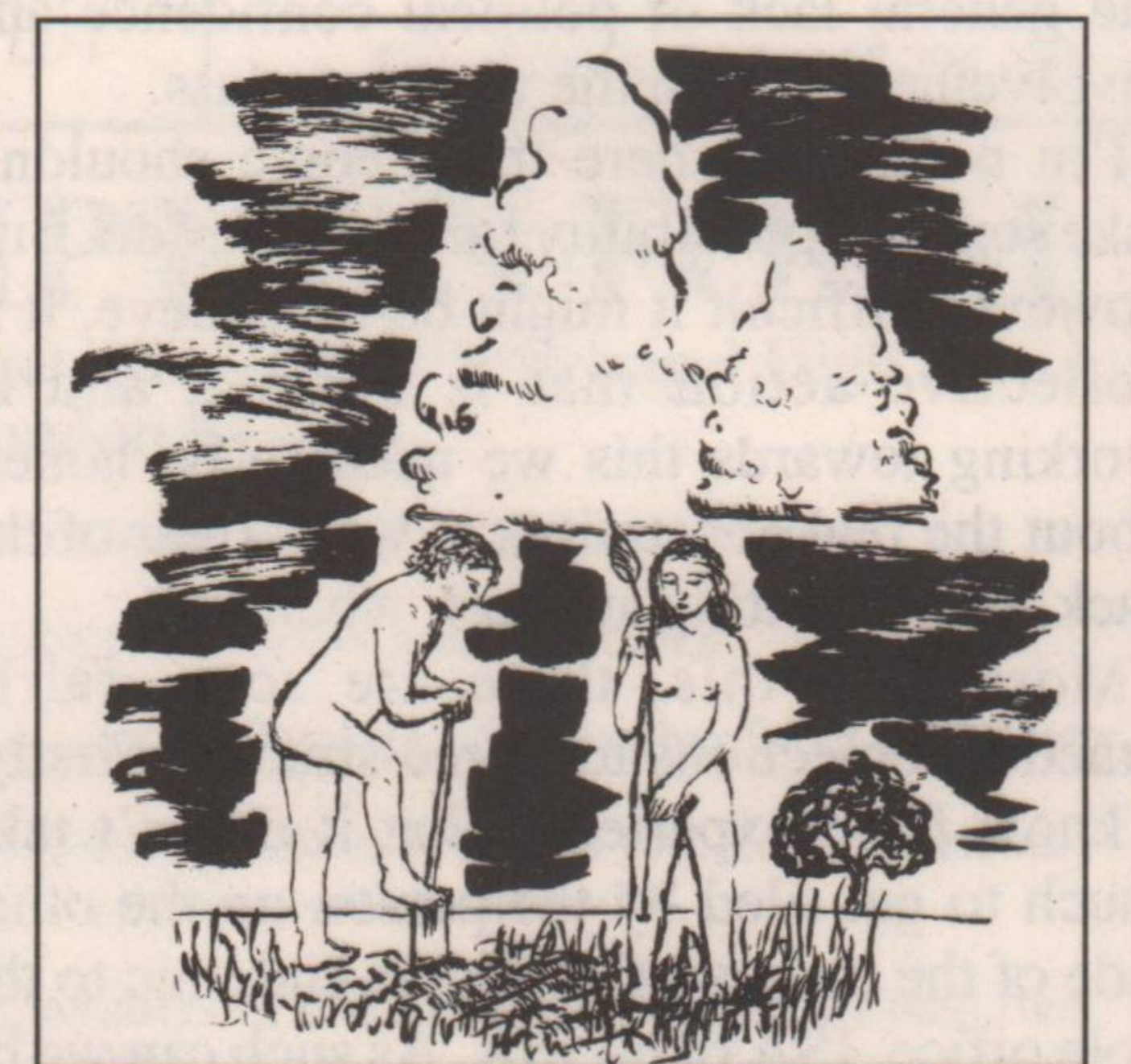
Consider if all the energy spent in the last fifty years by the left to convince the population of the virtues of statism (not to mention the futile efforts of revolutionaries) had gone into setting up cooperative funds and propagandising on their behalf, we would probably have abolished capitalism by now.

Larry Gambone

**THROUGH  
THE  
ANARCHIST  
PRESS**

a column in *Freedom*

by John Rety  
with drawings by Emily Johns



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## NORTHERN IRELAND

SOUND BITES FROM A  
WAR/PEACE PROCESS

Well, the election is all over, but the really big news is that Derry City FC failed to win the double, going down two-nil to Shelbourne FC in Dublin. I took my two kids on what is known locally as a 'Fanta' bus, after the popular soft drink. Ours was a no-alcohol bus and the journey was the highlight of the day because the match itself was a bore, in awful weather conditions, and our team lost. For an anarchists the day offered a real challenge. On the one hand football is still a manifestation of popular working class culture in Ireland and as such likely to be of interest to anarchists. But how do we respond to the loutishness and boorishness, mainly due to people being pissed out of their heads? Is it all part of the day out? Does it mean that it is not possible for large crowds of people to move about the country, going to football matches without fighting, pissing in the streets, wrecking buses and being generally abusive? In an anarchist society would football exist and if it did how would we all behave?

Then we have the political and security context in which Derry City FC exist. A team from a city in the UK plays its football in the league of a neighbouring state reflecting the majority political aspiration of that city which returned John Hume as MP comfortably, with the Sinn Féin candidate second. A number of buses flew tricolours. On our way home our bus was stopped by the RUC and the driver was told that a loyalist crowd were waiting to attack buses on the edge of the city at the working class housing estate of Newbuildings. We decided to cross the border at Stabane and travel north on the republic side of the River Foyle entering the city by another route. Many other buses and cars didn't and were stoned and bricked. One man I spoke to in my local chippie afterwards said the crowd were waving Scottish flags. He wondered to himself what it meant that his father was Scottish. I wondered what it meant in terms of the Union. The man also wondered what the RUC were doing and then he answered himself. Nothing. Okay, so the election is over and Sinn Féin have two MPs and Mo Mowlan has kissed a few babies on the streets of Belfast, but what do we do now?

Dave Duggan

DONATIONS  
April 1997

## Freedom Fortnightly Fighting Fund

Dalkey, JCl, £1; Upton, NC, £8; Wolverhampton, JL, £2; Bristol, RS, £1; Newport, NF, £11; Toronto, ND, £10; London, NB, £4; London, AC, £5; Crawcrook, PR, £10; York, AM, £1; Bolton, RC, £6.

Total = £59.00  
1997 total to date = £454.00

## Freedom Press Overheads Fund

Upton, NC, £8; Reading, AJY, £2; Wolverhampton, JL, £2; Canterbury, GH, £7; Bristol, RS, £4; Toronto, ND, £10; London, NB, £3; London, WW, £1; London, AC, £6.

Total = £43.00  
1997 total to date = £339.00

## Raven Deficit Fund

Toronto, ND, £10; London, NB, £4; London, AC, £5.

Total = £19.00  
1997 total to date = £254.00

ANARCHIST COMMENTS  
IN BRIEF

## MORE NEWS FROM THE BRAVE NEW WORLD

Those of us who still write letters with a pen, and indeed take advantage of the telephone, are surely understandably alarmed when the *Independent* (5th April) devotes a whole page of its supplement to 'Behind the Net Curtain' summarised as follows: "For the first time a whole street has been wired. Gossip is traded not over the fence but down fibre optics". The guinea pigs, 78 people in 28 houses in a street in Islington, have been wired up for six months, free of charge of course, on the Internet and the only demand is that they should keep a record, a diary of the use they make of this intrusive monster.

It seems to me a crazy experiment because in the first place how many of these folk were in touch with each other anyway? And if they were not why should they feel that with the Internet they have an obligation, because of the experiment. Just guinea pigs for some advertising gimmick in due course.

## WHY NOT JUST HAVE A GAME?

The latest example of man versus machine is the news that Kasparov, the world chess champion, has lost to the computer. So what? Apart from its weight - 1.4 tons - the computer can't do more than what humans have programmed into the monster. And it is said to be able to do millions of operations in a second in reply to the human opponent, but that probably 99.9% of them are worthless. And in between sessions humans, having observed what the human moves are to the steel monster's reactions, can actually modify its moves, apart from the fact that it is completely dependent on all the millions of possible moves fed into its inhuman guts by humans, who also have to feed into it its opponent's latest move. In the western world are we so blasé and bored stiff with ourselves and each other than we not only seek to colonise the Moon but also to produce a mechanical chess player than can produce millions of responses *per second*. After all, Kasparov actually won one or two games.

## WHAT ABOUT A ROBOT CATWALK

To emphasise my concern as to what money-making man will get up to to cash-in on 'the market' or human stupidity, the latest was featured in the *Independent's* magazine. The "new kid on the virtual catwalk" is about 'Jill'.

Who's Jill? Read on:

"She's a microchip. Conceived by a research team headed by George Stylios at Bradford University's Centre for Objective Measurement Technologies (COMT), Jill is as yet still a novice: she can model only two versions of a simple cotton top and skirt, standing upright. Thousands of calculations per second will be needed to make her move with realistic catwalk grace, including the swing of the cloth draping her body. The skirt alone takes 40,000 separate computations to mimic the fabric's tensile strength, its fluidity, its resistance to bending or stretching and the effects of gravity."

Surely one is entitled to say that we are living in a technological world gone mad? Let me see the real, live Jills on the catwalk. Fashions are so scanty these days it's worth following the fashions for the delightful Jills.

## THE FAT CATS ARE GETTING EVEN FATTER

We can hardly keep up with these gents as the take-overs and mergers add to salaries of the winners and the redundant at top level. The only losers are the wage-earners who are made redundant as a result of the mergers. And of course top bosses get their 3.3% increase like every employee and old age pensioner. Mine was about £50 for the year, just as P&O chairman Lord Sterling's 3.3% was a mere £184,000 which brought him up to £771,000. My pension, with the increase, has risen to the magnificent total of £3,263. I'm expected to live on a *sixtieth* of the salary increase paid to the P&O Lord Sterling. And they are not ashamed. He would consider himself not as a fat cat. After all, Andrew Reagan, who had serious intentions of taking over the Co-operative Wholesale Society, was talking about *looking for a £6 million a year salary chap to take over*. Yes, he came unstuck, but that's the kind of world these people live and dream in.

"Barclays chiefs defend £2.8 million paid to BZW head" (*Independent*, 23rd April) and apparently this was for three months' work. But it was defended by the chairman and chief executive on the grounds that "an investment bank had to be run by the best people, and they were expensive ... most of Mr Harrison's 1996 payment was buying out the bonus he would have received from his previous employer, Robert Fleming". And to think that the media have been concen- trating on political sleaze. Sleaze, corruption by whatever name you choose, *is* capitalism pure and simple. If you

don't like it, don't just belly-ache but protest wherever you can to make people realise that capitalism thrives on deceit, on corruption. If you don't believe that capitalism encourages corruption, what about the official recognition that "international fraud costs the European Union more than £40 billion a year, largely because regulatory discrepancies between countries are exploited by professional criminals". We are not talking about peanuts. And in spite of that the European Union have no answer. How could they have the courage to admit that their system, capitalism, is corrupt by definition? Because it is. **Libertarian**

## EUROMARCH '97

Anarchists will be participating, along with thousands of other trade unionists, in the climax of the Euromarch '97 in Amsterdam on 14th June (see also page 6).

The march has legs setting off from all points of Europe, all converging in Amsterdam at the same time as the EU heads of government conference on the 14th.

There will be a bloc of libertarian / class struggle unions marching in Amsterdam as a bloc including the Swedish SAC, Spanish CGT, French CNT, SUD, CGT proofreaders and Italian syndicalist unions, all headed by the OUB of Holland.

The Hull Trades Council are organising a group to travel on North Sea Ferries (if you want to come at a much reduced rate please telephone 01482 898775, evenings, and ask for Guy). It is important that our vision of European working class unity is counterpoised to that of the bosses' Europe of single currencies and austerity.

END UNEMPLOYMENT  
SCRAP THE JOB SEEKERS ALLOWANCE  
VICTORY TO THE LIVERPOOL DOCKERS  
**THE AMSTERDAM  
EUROMARCH '97**  
comes to Hull on  
**Saturday 24th May**

- Assemble at Queen Victoria Square, 10.30am
- Rally at Cenotaph, 11.30am
- Party from 12.30 to 4.30pm at St Stephens Square (at the back of the bus station).

ALL FREEDOM READERS WELCOME





## — ABOVE THE PARAPETS —

**BLACK DEATHS IN POLICE CUSTODY**

The story of Rodney King, the African-American motorist viciously assaulted by officers of the Los Angeles Police Department, has echoes across the Atlantic. A *Guardian* report on the case in January 1992 commented,

"Many of the themes in this story are familiar to British readers. Police out of control. Civilian supervision which is non-existent or ineffective or both. Loudmouth police chiefs with eccentric views. Pretensions to professionalism which cloak an introverted bureaucracy. A macho 'canteen culture' among street cops. 'Super-aggressive 22 year olds' who see the public as their enemy. Calls for 'community policing' no one really believes will happen ..."

Also familiar to discerning British readers is the pretence on the part of the liberal media that the police are 'out of control', when in fact they are implementing policies with wide support in elite circles.

Since the Los Angeles riots of 1992, some of the themes of the Rodney King case have become even more familiar over here. The side-handled baton used to beat Rodney King is now to be seen carried by police on the streets of London and elsewhere. They were initially ruled out by Kenneth Clarke while Home Secretary on the grounds, said Clarke in November 1992, that "its wounding potential is significantly greater than that of the conventional truncheon. The manufacturers claim that blows have impact levels up to nine times greater than the truncheon". The new baton has been implicated in the deaths of two black men in London since its introduction.

The police forces of Britain, even the Metropolitan Police in London, are not in the same league as the LAPD or the LASD (see *Freedom*, 12th April 1997). The level of violence meted out in the United States is considerably greater. However, there is no room for complacency. There is evidence of entrenched racism within the police towards black officers; black people are much more likely to be stopped than white people, and once stopped they are much more likely to be

arrested; and there is also considerable evidence of widespread police brutality towards and harassment of black people. The trend, despite efforts at 'community policing' appears to be towards an LAPD style of operation. This can only endanger black people further.

In 1995, the UN special rapporteur on extra-judicial, summary or arbitrary executions expressed concern regarding "the fact that foreigners seem to be disproportionately involved in the allegations of extra-judicial, summary or arbitrary executions" in the UK. In March 1996, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination said that "among the victims of deaths in custody [in the UK] are a disproportionate number of members of minority groups"; and "allegations of police brutality and harassment are reportedly not vigorously investigated and perpetrators, once guilt is established, not appropriately punished".

The Committee also expressed concern that allegations of such behaviour towards black people did not appear to be investigated as vigorously as allegations against white people, and furthermore that police officers guilty of such offences against black people were sentenced more leniently than those guilty of brutality against and harassment of white people. The Committee pointed out that in the period October to December 1995, six black men died in police custody.

Over the ten years to 1996, 576 people have died in police custody. Between 1991 and

1995, fourteen of those who died came from ethnic minorities – 18% of those who died in custody. Compare this to the proportion of black people in the general population – 5% – and the proportion of black people in the prison population – 15%. (Some of these deaths should not be counted against the police as the figures include accident victims who die while the police are waiting for an ambulance to arrive, and other such cases. Some deaths are cases of suicide or were caused by neglect: these *should* be counted against the police, who have a duty of care for those in their custody.)

Inquest, the organisation which campaigns on behalf of relatives of people who die in police custody, said last year, "In virtually every case in which we consider death to have occurred from the use of undue force, the victims are black or ethnic minority. Of the fourteen black deaths in custody since 1991, half have been due to the use of undue force".

Since 1981, there have been six findings of unlawful killing by inquest juries in cases of deaths in police custody. No police officer has ever been prosecuted. Two deaths which have caused great anger have been those of Brian Douglas and Wayne Douglas in south London. The two men, who were unrelated, both died in police custody after the new-style baton was used in their arrests. The death of Wayne Douglas led to a riot in Brixton in December 1995. Kenan Malik commented after the riot: "There is within black communities a deep sense of grievance, of accumulated

wrongs done by the police. What has added to black resentment is the feeling that they can achieve no redress. Again the issue at the heart of the protest – the death of a black man in custody – is ignored, and the cycle of frustration and anger followed by violence continues."

Solicitor Raju Bhatt, who has represented a number of families in such cases, commented: "It is as if all those involved within the relevant authorities – the Police Complaints Authority, the Crown Prosecution Service, the police force itself, and ultimately the Home Office – appear to believe that exposure of police officers who go too far might endanger confidence in law and order". Confidence in law and order has been endangered – among black people – by the current impunity enjoyed by police officers who kill. The anger caused by these deaths, and by the wall of silence built up around them by the authorities, will not go away. Eventually, unless there is proper redress, there will be another Cherry Groce, another Wayne Douglas, another Rodney King and another LA riot. This is not something that anyone in the black community can look forward to. The damage done by these protests is often done to the black community itself. It is not for nothing that the Black Panthers used to counsel patience, organisation, education, and community development rather than rioting.

The Irish rightly still pursue the case of the fourteen killed on Bloody Sunday on 30th January 1972. They ask for some form of apology for the killing of these unarmed civil rights demonstrators. Black people do not make the same demand in relation to their dead, the black men and women killed by racist policemen. Instead, they demand the prosecution of the officers involved. In all the current election posturing, black people are noticeable by their absence. The issues which are closest to their hearts, such as the issue of black deaths in custody, are never spoken of. White Britain may pay dearly for such silence.

Milan Rai

**THE CONCEPT OF MUTUAL AID ACCORDING TO**

(extract from training courses for militants in Sevilla) CNT May 1996

The concept of mutual aid is one of the foundation stones of anarchist philosophy and one of the principles on which a future, hypothetical, libertarian society would be built. But when we talk about it we often ignore how the term came about and why Kropotkin launched into a furious debate with Darwin's disciples.

In order to explain his theory of natural selection Darwin drew on the inspiration of a number of writers of his time. When the young Charles Darwin set sail on *The Beagle* on his scientific trip around the world he took with him a book by the geologist Lyell about the age of the planet earth. Reading this book made him think in other ways about the problems he faced with his theory of evolution, an idea which made the heads spin

of many intellectuals and scientists of the day.

Lyell demonstrated that what could be seen in the different geological strata, in mountains and no longer existent oceanic basins showed us a planet that was millions of years old even whilst the Bible believed it to have been created by God only some 6,000 years earlier. This date was given precisely by the clergy down to the day, the hour and the minute and was worked out by adding up the ages of men mentioned in the bible from Adam up until the birth of Christ. This version was completely unchallenged by the scientific community up until the eighteenth century and could only be challenged by adopting an atheist position – quite inconceivable for a respected person.

The problem arose when scientific expeditions seeking the lost ark, the Tower of Babel and Sodom and Gommora did not find, for example, Noah's ark but rather the fossils of extinct species or marine animals in mountainous areas. Lyell's idea of an older world was more in keeping with these discoveries than the official creationist Biblical version. Millions of years of existence would allow species to evolve and die out, mountains to rise up out of the sea and the oceans to cover the continents. But, what was the mechanism that produced the changes in these species?

In the Galapagos Islands Darwin studied, amongst other animals, chaffinches, and he observed that they varied from one island to another depending on the specialisation that they needed at the time to get their necessary food intake. This was one of the factors that led him to formulate his theory of evolution. Two years after his return in *The Beagle* Darwin read Malthus's *Essay on Population*. Malthus decisively influenced Darwin and was responsible for the introduction of the principle of 'the struggle for existence' and the

discovery by Darwin of the principle of 'survival of the fittest'. Benjamin Franklin had given Malthus the idea that if there were no limiting factors one species could have covered the whole planet and if this was not the case it must be because the various animal and vegetal species were in some way in conflict with each other. Malthus continued to develop this idea. Since there are always born too many children to sustain – or so he thought – food production would never be sufficient for all so that it was inevitable that a large number of people would die in 'the struggle for life'. Those who survived would be those who had acquitted themselves the best in this struggle.

Thus Darwin finally found the mechanism which he had been seeking – the survival of those individuals the most adapted to the struggle determines evolutionary change. Man is an animal who has descended from other, older species. All species evolve. The process of specialisation comes from environmental adaptation.

Some time later, in 1862, a young prince and officer in the Tsar's army, Peter Kropotkin, set off for Western Siberia and the North of Manchuria with a body of Cossacks from Amur. The five years that he would spend in this desolated area were dedicated to producing physical maps of that part of Asia correcting the cartological errors of Humboldt with reference to the mountains and rivers. Later, on behalf of the National Geographic Society, he was to investigate the glacial deposits in Finland from which he would deduce his theory that the last ice age covered Europe more comprehensively than had previously been thought. This discovery was his greatest scientific pride.

Kropotkin had been well educated thanks to his privileged social status. When, in 1862, he

rode across the vast wastes of Siberia he read Charles Darwin's book *The Origin of Species* published in 1859. In his observations he sought, as he says himself, this bitter struggle between individuals in the same species, this nature of tooth and claw. But he didn't find it. Instead he found a factor in evolution – mutual aid.

In order to understand how one can see the same question from two so very different perspectives we must remember which cultural backgrounds the two men came from and the worlds that they observed. Darwin was an Englishman influenced by Malthus who lived in a country that was over-populated during a period of industrial revolution and the home of modern capitalism. He carried out his studies in the tropics where we find concentrated the greatest number of animals and plants per square metre. Kropotkin, on the other hand, was in an immense area, scarcely populated, agrarian and with vast amounts of unexploited resources. Siberia is an inhospitable place with a low number of species and where climatic and ecological disasters are frequent and capable of wiping out large numbers in one fell swoop.

For that reason Russian scientists like Danilevsky, who studied population dynamics, and the zoologist Kessler felt that although Darwin's theory was sound, the emphasis he gave to terms such as 'struggle for existence' and 'survival of the fittest' derived from a parochial mindset unable to look beyond its own frontiers. The theory of natural selection fitted into the tradition of Thomas Hobbes, David Ricardo, Adam Smith and Robert Malthus. It was an essentially Anglo Saxon viewpoint which tried to explain in a scientific way all those disasters which were being experienced by capitalism and colonialism. In this way the slave traders and industrialists

(continued on page 5)

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— ANARCHIST NOTEBOOK —

# HAPPY HOUSES?

On the day after the election I had a telephone call from one of the trade papers of the housing industry for an instant forecast of the result of the change of government in the field of housing. This was a little difficult since the one thing of which we cannot accuse the Labour Party at this election is that of breaking promises, as it has made so few.

What seems likely is that John Prescott will introduce a bill to revive council and housing association housing programmes, to be financed by a phased release of £5 billion held by councils from the sale of former council houses, which they were prevented from re-investing in housing by the Thatcher and Major governments.

Conservative policy was to remove the supply of housing from local authorities and put it into private hands by the sale of individual houses to individual tenants, or the take-over of estates and the development of new ones by 'the private sector' which includes both speculative private landlords and housing associations (seen by government as private, even though they rely on loans from the Housing Corporation, a government body).

We have moved a very long way from the 1950s and 1960s when Conservative and Labour governments were elected on the promises of both to promote the building of so many hundreds of thousands of local authority flats and houses. These vast programmes collapsed in a sea of disillusionment as a result of paternalistic management, grotesquely inappropriate design and inadequate maintenance.

In the mid '60s, looking for an anarchist approach, I wrote a long article in *Anarchy* called 'Tenants Take Over: a new strategy for council tenants', which argued in detail for the transfer of local authority housing to co-operatives of tenants. In the early 1970s I was asked to expand this argument into a book (now long out of print).



The Mulberry Housing Co-op in South London

The 1970s brought a wave of detailed confirmation of my criticism of housing management. My worries were confirmed by a frank account by a life-long socialist, Tony Judge, of his experience as Chair of the Housing Management Committee of the Greater London Council from 1974 to 1977. He said that "the impression, often confirmed as accurate on deeper examination, is of a vast bureaucracy concerned more with self-

perpetuation than with either efficiency or humanity" and he bitterly criticised "the insufferable paternalistic attitudes of councils and officials to their tenants".

People on the political left ignored his criticisms, just as they ignored mine. People on the political right did not. The Thatcher government's sale of local authority houses to sitting tenants was immensely popular (this of course was *not* what my book had advocated

- I actually had a chapter called 'One by one, or all together?'). By 1984 the community housing advocate Nick Wates was remarking that "the painful realisation that housing policy has been a key cause of the Labour Party's downfall is beginning to sink in".

For me, dweller control is the first principle of happy housing, and, like Proudhon, I make an absolute distinction between owner-occupation and landlordism. I also favour self-build, which I want to see transforming the lives of young unemployed people. Above all, I am waiting to see co-operative housing expand to become the *normal* way of renting a house or flat. When I wrote about tenants take-over there were about two housing co-operatives in Britain. Today there are well over a thousand.

Policy under the last government was steadily moving towards the alleged economies of scale in housing, making housing associations into replicas of local authority housing departments and showing less and less sympathy for the more costly option of housing co-ops. The important study of *Housing Co-operatives in Britain* by David Clapham and Keith Kintrea (Longman, 1992) finds clear benefits in co-ops but concludes that "their growth is likely to be constrained by the lack of political will to create a framework within which co-operatives can flourish" since their values "are not widely held in a society dominated by the ideologies of market liberalism and state socialism".

The change of government is unlikely to alter that. The demand for different values has to spring from below.

There is another aspect of housing about which much was said when Labour was in opposition. This is the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act of 1994 aimed at the criminalisation of travelling people, gypsies and squatters. Are those Labour MPs who declared their fierce opposition to it just a few years ago intending to demand its repeal?

Colin Ward

## PETER KROPOTKIN

(continued from page 4)

were able to justify their exploitations and massacres. If they imposed themselves on the populations of other countries it was simply the result of a natural law.

The theories of Malthus were on the other hand received with much scepticism by Russian Darwinists who felt that the time when Russia would be densely populated was a long way off. This was an agrarian society where the system of communally owned lands, the Mir, showed a different co-operative society which had little in common with the blood and competition as described by the English.

For Kropotkin the struggle for survival had two opposing sides. On the one hand the struggle between individuals of the same species competing for limited resources. On the other the struggle between individuals and their environment which led to co-operation within the species. When ecological circumstances dictate, it is necessary to collaborate. For example faced with meteorological adversity individuals have no cause for competition. Neither of these two factors contradict the principle of natural selection.

Kropotkin affirmed that there was a huge amount of war and extermination in nature. But at the same time there was a huge amount, perhaps more, of mutual aid. The more social and co-operative species met with greater advantages in the struggle for existence than those achieved by isolated individuals. Kropotkin emphasised the importance of collaboration in order to redress the balance which had moved in favour of the capitalist version of the war of all against all as elaborated by Hobbes. Mutual aid in the struggle for survival could benefit isolated individuals as well as the species as a whole.

In 1888 Darwin's principal disciple Thomas Henry Huxley published in the journal *The*

*Nineteenth Century* his article 'The Struggle for Existence in Human Society'. Kropotkin called this article 'atrocious' since it depicts life as a succession of struggles between gladiators whose survivors are the strongest and most astute. Kropotkin's reply was published in the same journal as a series of articles and later published as a book called *Mutual Aid*, a term he borrowed from Kessler to demonstrate the ideas he was propounding. Huxley chose not to reply to Kropotkin despite being invited to do so by the editor. Perhaps not surprising as the work of the Russian was solidly based. But the author's interests in writing the book were not exclusively scientific.

Between 1872 and 1874, Peter Kropotkin moved towards anarchism, renounced his title and his military career. His propaganda activities earned him several years in Russian prisons until he was able to escape to Europe where he was to live in England, France and Switzerland. In the prison at Clairvaux where he spent three years from 1883 to 1886 he felt the need to re-formulate the term 'struggle for existence' and he brought together the materials he would need to refute Huxley's position along with the more radical Darwinists. Kropotkin sought to justify anarchism with reference to nature. If it was true that life was no more than a struggle between individuals what sense could anarchism have?

This meeting of science and ideology led Kropotkin to attack not so much Darwin as his disciples of the Hobbesian tradition and the apologists of liberal capitalism. In *Mutual Aid* he not only criticised the gladiatorial vision of the struggle for existence but also the ideological implications of Darwinism: justification of racism, the state, and the disasters and miseries of the industrial revolution. Darwinism was a bequest from capitalism which demanded the

hardening of living conditions for the people and the existence of a state which was dedicated solely to putting down those elements of the working classes who would not accept their role as inferior beings.

Kropotkin attacked Hobbes and all those who like him saw primitive humans as ferocious beasts, grouped in small families fighting each other for territory and women until the day when a wise man would arrive who would impose harmony. T.H. Huxley repeated these arguments claiming that this state of war only ceased on the day when a few intellectuals, during one of those rare times that they took off from raping and despoliation, came up with the fine idea of creating the state. Kropotkin and the anarchists maintained to the contrary that human life outside of society was impossible and that society predated humanity. The anarchist argument amounts to the claim that integrated societies existed before *Homo sapiens* existed - a fact which palaeontology has verified. Our prehistoric ancestors *Homo erectus*, *Homo habilis* and *Australopithecus* lived on the Earth and in societies for more than four million years whereas *Homo sapiens* has roamed the planet for a mere 100,000. All the anthropological evidence points to them as being essentially co-operative animals.

For Kropotkin there was no point where society was founded. There was no contract, neither in Hobbes's sense nor in Rousseau's. Society precedes humankind. Kropotkin, in *Mutual Aid*, laid out hundreds of examples of mutual aid among insects, birds and mammals and in societies that were primitive, barbarian and civilised. He pointed out that from an historical perspective along with war there has always been society and co-operation and that it has been the function of the state over the ages to eliminate communitarian institutions that have evolved with the people. Kropotkin claimed, along with Bakunin, that the origins of the state were perverse. The state is founded on violence and it is wrong to confuse the notions of the state and society - precisely the

opposite of the position adopted by Huxley and others. The state is no more than a political institution which exerts a monopoly on institutionalised violence and is the obstacle *par excellence* which prevents the realisation of a free and equal society. The state is intrinsically violent, society isn't. The state is not the normal structure of the community but is rather a vehicle to protect the interests of the dominant classes. And in so far as it separates and atomises social beings it also destroys the bases of solidarity and mutual aid as they exist among the people. The state is strong because society is weak.

The works of Kropotkin and other Russian Darwinists met with little institutional interest. Apart from *Mutual Aid*, which was written and published in English, nothing else was translated into Russian. During his lifetime only James Knowles, the director of *The Nineteenth Century* and H.W. Bates the secretary of the London Geographical Society and who called *Mutual Aid* a necessary representation of authentic Darwinism gave him any support. In general Kropotkin's arguments were ignored in academic circles because he was reproached for his ideological interest which seemed to deny the scientific objectivity demanded.

However, the same charges can be levelled at the social and racist Darwinists of the nineteenth century who sought an ideological justification for capitalism in the works of Darwin. Despite the rejection of the scientific community, paid by the state, *Mutual Aid* was widely circulated in workers' and syndicalist circles with hundreds of thousands of editions published, often read out loud for the illiterate. Its influence in the first third of the twentieth century in Spain was of great importance for the building of anarchist groups and organisations and the CNT in particular. It corresponded to a beautiful idea: that co-operation and solidarity are as strong as competition and the struggle between species. Those who will survive own their survival simply to our voluntary co-operation.



# A LONG HOT SUMMER IN AMSTERDAM



On the 16th-17th of June 1997, the 'EuroTop' is happening in Amsterdam. At this summit of European heads of state in the Dutch Bank in Amsterdam, work will be done on extending the creation of an economic power-bloc. At the whim of the free market, social services will be privatised and wiped out. Inside the EU's impenetrable structures, policy will be made behind closed doors. This tiny group of state leaders will hand over an all-encompassing power to capital; at the same time throwing overboard all possibility for grassroots democratic alternatives. More and more state control – within, on and outside of Europe's borders – is meant to ensure that this process all flows smoothly.

The government leaders have great plans for this EU-summit. They intend to conclude the 'Treaty of Amsterdam' (also known as 'Maastricht 2'). This treaty should agree upon, amongst other things, the scrapping of the right of veto in the council of ministers, and the implementation of new rules on foreign and defence policy, for the courts and the police.

Amsterdam city council sees the 'EuroTop' as a blessing. Amsterdam gets the chance to clean up its Sodom and Gomorrah image of sex, drugs and slums and to present itself as a respectable, economically successful city of the world. To spoon-feed the heads of state this image and to ensure that the summit comes off smoothly, thousands of extra cops are being drafted into Amsterdam and large areas of the city are being turned into security zones. Within these security zones will be a strict compulsion to identify yourself, and the streets will be 'cleaned up' of homeless people, illegal foreigners and other 'undesirable elements'. A glimpse into the future perhaps?

Fortunately, there's plenty of individuals and organisations who won't take all this sitting down, who want to use the event to display their contempt and set out forth their resistance. People from other countries who want to support this resistance will be very welcome. There's already a number of actions and events prepared for the 'June Days'. Below

is a partial list of events. These are being organised by a broad spectrum of individuals and groups. Each group is responsible for its own activities. Although these activities are being co-ordinated as much as possible, it was deliberately chosen not to have any central control. This way there's room for all sorts of spontaneous initiatives. During the 'June Days' there will be a number of info-points around Amsterdam, where you can get an action calendar and other related information.

Unfortunately, it isn't possible to organise sleeping places for everyone, you'll have to sort that out yourself. Any ideas of your own you have are more than welcome, so we can show in a wide variety of ways our objections to EU policies, and our desire for a different, just world.

It promises to be a long hot summer...

## A Partial list of activities during the 'EuroTop' In Amsterdam

### June 14th: Demonstration against unemployment, poverty and social deprivation

From the middle of April onwards, thousands of people across Europe are marching on Amsterdam, to protest against the neo-liberal policies of the EU. These marches are coming together in a show of strength on June 14th in Amsterdam.

### June 11th-17th: The Top from Bottom

'Platform Towards Another Europe', a co-ordinating body of different progressive

organisations is organising discussions, actions and theme-days under the banner of an alternative conference, with speakers from various countries. Workshops include unemployment, poverty, social deprivation, feminist Europe, pacifist Europe, Europe and the South, environmental Europe, etc.

### June 15th: Demo/action at the 'border hostel'

The Autonomous Centre is organising a cycle demonstration (probably) to the refugee prison in south-east Amsterdam. The exact time and place is still to be announced.

### June 13th-15th: Days of Chaos

A massive 'Stop the City' to bring Amsterdam to its knees.

### June 16th: Demonstration at the Gay Monument

Demo as a protest against the disgraceful verdict of the European Court allowing Britain to bar its citizens from consenting SM sex. Organised by Gay And Lesbian Amsterdam under the slogan 'For Sexual Diversity in Europe'.

### June 12th-13th: UNITED conference

The biggest NGO meeting of the European Year Against Racism. Themes are 'Fortress Europe', 'Everyday Racism and Institutional Racism' with speakers from various countries. (English language).

### June 15th: EuroRave

LegalizE street party 'against European drugs policy and the other shit they planned for us'.

### June 17th: EuroBlow

Take en masse to smoke out the Dutch Bank in protest at EU drugs policy.

### June 17th: Anarchist demo

Angry people rage hard to the Dutch bank. Meet 2pm, Dam Square. Bands and parties.

## NEWS FROM CANADA: SPRING 1997

**14th November:** An inquest of the Surete du Quebec has totally excluded the possibility that any premeditated action was responsible for the June riot in Quebec city. Anarchists had been blamed for the violence.

**21st November:** Five to ten thousand students demonstrated in Montreal against cuts in funding to higher education. Up to now twelve colleges have been on strike for about two weeks. The strike is now winding down.

**22nd November:** The Federal Government's *Erasmus-Dussault Report* has been tabled, stating that native people must have "full control" over justice, education, social services and finances in their communities. Native leaders say the report is "the last chance" for a common solution to the problem of aboriginals.

**12th December:** A Montreal waitress has put the first dent in the 'Teflon' Prime Minister's armour. In a televised 'Town Hall' interview with the PM, Johanne Savoie, accused Chrétien of lying about abolishing the hated 'Goods and Services Tax', something he vociferously denied. But video footage shows him categorically stating his opposition to the tax. The exchange has weakened Liberal Party credibility and made Ms Savoie a heroine to millions of Canadians.

**30th January:** The Quebec government has 'forbidden' native people and the anglophone minority from seceding from Quebec should it declare independence. The government would use "all of the power at its disposal" to stop partition. "Only the people of Quebec have the right to declare independence" (aboriginals and anglophones not being people, one is led to assume).

**1st February:** The last hippie squatter colony on Vancouver Island is being forced out. Sombrio beach is being turned into a provincial park and the colony, more than twenty years in existence, has to go. One resident born there, Sachi Trillium, said when interviewed, "There is no place for people like us to live".

**2nd February:** Inuit and Cree are not frightened by the Quebec government's hard (and hypocritical) line on partition and reiterate their refusal to become part of an independent Quebec. Inuit in Quebec are considering joining their brothers and sisters of Nunavut – part of the North West Territories which becomes autonomous in

1999 – should the province secede from Canada.

**25th February:** Pension fund shareholders, led by Montreal broadcaster Yves Michaud and backed by the trade union federations, are attempting to change the structure of the banks. The shareholder revolt threatens to cap salaries of senior executives, abolish low-interest loans to executives, limit directors to ten years membership and prevent anyone who provides services to a bank from becoming a board member. One bank, the Laurentian (owned by the DeJardine credit union), has agreed to the proposals.

**1st March:** The Ontario Conservatives have let their populist mask slip, revealing the authoritarian centraliser underneath. They are proposing to unify all the communities in the Toronto area into one vast mega-city as a tax-saving measure. Citizens – including the well-known philosopher of urbanism, Jane Jacobs – are outraged at this loss of local control. Demonstrations have been called to protest this autocratic decision.

British Columbians are suing their government for lying to them. In a decision handed down by the provincial Supreme Court, they have the right to sue the government for stating, prior to the election, that no government deficit existed when in fact it did. Should the politicians lose the suit, they will have to call a new election.

**3rd March:** 80% of voters in the Toronto region rejected the mega-city in a referendum. Conservative support, which had remained high throughout the period of government cut-backs, has now deeply eroded.

**4th March:** With a tip of the hat to *Brave New World*, the Quebec government has revealed plans for a 'citizenship card' which would serve as an identity card, drivers licence and health care card. Libertarians attacked the idea as smacking of an "internal passport" and a danger to individual liberty.

**12th March:** The Conservative government of Alberta wins re-election with a landslide – some sixty out of eighty seats – proving that rolling back government is still popular in that province.

## MAY DAY IN FINLAND

May Day 1997 was the biggest anarchist march of '90s in Finland. After the two main leftist parties have stopped their marches in Helsinki, the May Day march has become a happening of radical left. Last year there were about 75 anarchists in the group, but this year there were about 150 anarchists with their own sheets and flags. A few magazines and one television news programme noticed that nationwide. Though the weather was really anti-revolutionary, our spirit was high. Nothing really big happened, but one thing is for sure: anarchists has become big part of Finnish May Day tradition.

A few years ago anarchists were banned from marches around the country, but now they are the main organisers at least in Oulu and Helsinki. One reason why the march got so big in Helsinki this year is that the marches has ended in many parts of Finland and in some parts the anarchists are not allowed to march with other (so called) left (at least in the city where I live this has happened).

This year's march collected about five hundred people in Helsinki and with anarchists there were for example Communist youth, SKP (Finnish Communist Party = suckers) and a few other groups, but also many individuals, who mostly marched with anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists.

At the same weekend we held a nationwide anarchist meeting which was also quite cool. There were people around the country and members of different groups (SAL, Solidaarisuus, Peppi-AFL, etc.). At the same time the first Chiapas solidarity group was also grounded. So I think we can consider that May Day as one step towards revolution again – the state and capitalism are on their knees soon!

Miikka

ABC Finland <amr@pelu.jns.fi>

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## CULTURE AND ANARCHISM

by

Harold Barclay

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## Rich and Poor

To repeat what I said in a previous article, "the first phase of the General Ejection is now over". As we have now many more readers since I wrote the following on 29th April 1995 for *Freedom* (also appearing in *Through the Anarchist Press*) it is mainly for their attention that it is summed up below.

**W**arily the anarchist watches as the pent-up emotions come to the fore. Individuals and communities suddenly see a chink of light. The poorest of the poor among us band together, find comradeship, shelter, good food and company. It is unbelievable that side by side of ostentatious wealth and riches such a layer of consistent poverty should exist in this advanced capitalist country. That the self-appointed, or even anointed, executive is making heavy weather of the distribution of undoubted wealth – surely the easiest task of all – has resulted in pitiful lives overall of individuals and communities. In this world of persistent surplus, no system, however incoherent, however despotic, however vicious, can or will be seen to fail completely. The four-year-old children weaving your carpets for a rupee a day, the thousands of unpaid mining your copper at gunpoint, are in terms of capitalism only an economic entry and merely signal that the system works, even if the soap is made from the bones and skins of the holocaust victims. The shareholders ought to be pleased.

**A**certain kind of elation is however observable. In my own locality alone anarchist ideas are becoming common currency. How this is happening nobody knows, for the formal copy-book anarchist movement is practically non-existent.

**I**t is nonetheless a very dangerous period and our best hope still remains that by now, through some curious system of political osmosis, there are enough anarchists in place in all professions, trades and interest groups whose combined wisdom and weight as citizens of influence can counter-weight the doctrinaire executive.

**T**here are no difficulties unsolvable in a functioning anarchist society. "Consider yourself part of the furniture" (Lionel Bart). Accept the simple tenet that the welfare of the community is all inclusive.

**I**n this material world human beings are beginning to realise that co-operation and mutual aid, together with a say in what it is necessary to produce, is a thousand times more efficient than the hit-and-miss methods of capitalism.

**N**evertheless, there are enough hidey-holes for those involved purely in their private pursuits, and these might not wish to abandon these same pursuits just for the sake of an abstract idea: the good of the community. Let the anarchists remind others and themselves that nobody can survive the first years of their childhood without the constant care and attention – dare I mention love – of their fellows.

**G**roup thinking has always been difficult, but anarchist societies do not grow on trees and you cannot have an anarchist society without a society of anarchists. There is no fear, except the word fear itself. We live in a makeshift world of free materials and free labour. We have made this country into what is best described as an open prison. The population is groping towards anarchy. Don't let them be fobbed off with some capitalist lookalike.

John Rety

## But does not nature abhor anarchism?

Dear *Freedom*,

I'm sorry guys and gals, but you're going to have to really spell it out to this sceptic if you want to convince me that anarchism can ever be more than a utopian ideal. I was grateful for the article 'Workers of the World Unite' (*Freedom*, 26th April) expounding the essential difference between socialism and anarchism. I'm sure the interested factions of the public would like more of that kind of analysis, but as for libertarianism, surely it has been demonstrated time and time again that human nature never allows it to happen in real life.

Look at Albania: the most recent example of how humans abhor power vacuums and always fill them with power-mongers. Call them natural leaders if you like – opportunist exploiters if you don't – wherever there is a breakdown of an existing power structure there are always those waiting to move in and take over. Often of course the heirs to power are active in the process of ending the existing power structure. If they are effective in galvanising resistance and protest you may be sure they are effective leaders who will ensure no vacuum exists once the old order is removed.

But if there is always some naturally dominant person – or high achiever reacting to childhood insult – determined to express himself (more often this kind of aggression is seen in males rather than females) is this not centralised, hierarchical power either in action or in the making? And does it not mean that there is a natural impediment – if not prohibition – on the kind of disseminated and localised power structure that anarchists advocate? At the very least it means that to set up an anarchist state we would have to go against human nature, which is to say animal nature.

But to do so is not just a case of civilised, cognitive-led transition of outlook and behaviour, it is about altering a biological foundation, not just of individuals' relationships with each other, but of evolution itself. Dominance and submission didactics (yes, it takes two to tango, as Robert Tresselt

pointed out) and the existence of hierarchies merely reflect the fact that evolution requires differentials for its purchase. Everywhere you look, whether it's at humans or at life in general, you see examples of inequality: health, age, strength, height, speed, experience, perspicacity. We are all born unequal and we continue through life unequal because we are humble organisms subject to natural laws. It is predictable that these inequalities should give rise to hierarchies. And it seems inevitable, judging from nature's evidence, that where competition intensifies because of population density, the polarities become more extreme. One extreme polarity is fascist capitalism. Another is communist socialism.

The best we can do is to use these power structures to off-set and compensate for differentials rather than exaggerate and increase them. I have received the impression that anarchism seeks to replace centralised hierarchies with disseminated local seats of responsibility, which to me, for the reasons just enunciated, seems counter-intuitive and therefore the stuff of fantasy.

To me, the most constructive approach to dealing with the inevitable injustices and miseries of being alive would be one which brought about the decimation of the human population. Think what a devastating effect on wage-slavery a world population of two billion would have! The minimum wage would go through the ceiling and even official government 'unexploitation' figures would be slashed. There would, of course, still be differentials and hierarchies, but co-operation would for a time become a more effective survival strategy than selfishness, so anarchism would certainly have a better chance than it does in a population of six billion in which co-operation is a luxury that few can afford. For as Woodrow Wilson said: "You can't love your neighbour on an empty stomach". And my sense is that for anarchism to stand a chance you certainly would have to love your neighbour – or at least give him the benefit of the doubt.

Ewtor

## Not a question of 'secrecy'

Dear Editors,

Your correspondent 'Emma Goldman aka Emily Johns' complains (*Freedom*, 20th April) about what she quite wrongly refers to as the "almost obligatory use of pen-names in *Freedom*" and asks why, yet at the same time suggests that some contributors may be "ashamed of their opinions and thoughts". I'm surprised the editors didn't add a comment asking 'aka Johns' why she thought the anonymous contributors would bother to write (and be accepted by the editors) if they were ashamed of what they were writing.

In the following issue (10th May) one reader

explains that he remains an anonymous contributor (though he signs his letter Sam Fielden) since he does not wish the "security services and economic league" to get him "blacklisted". Fair enough, and I trust Sam Fielden is a pseudonym.

The whole point is that Emily Johns is a professional communicator (an artist, whose excellent drawings illustrate John Rety's *Freedom Press* title *Through the Anarchist Press*) and obviously, as well as being pleased with her drawings, she seeks maximum publicity for herself for commissions.

Surely the difference with *Freedom* is that it is a journal of propaganda and agitation and what one is putting forward are ideas *and not personalities*.

Today the media – the broadsheets just as much as the tabloids – are daily creating personalities at the expense of serious discussion, and with equal facility destroying them when a new personality is about to be launched (if I can give an example that immediately comes to mind, surely it is Swampy – see how long he lasts).

One of the advantages of anonymity is that you don't read or you do read an article because it has been written by, say, Emily Johns because of her immature letter in *Freedom*.

As one of your contributors who knew Emma Goldman in her old age in London, she exploited all her past notoriety to bully the weak and resented the young who stood up to her.

VR

## Humanism defined

Dear *Freedom*,

I must pick up a couple of points in Donald Room's generous review of my book *Humanism: What's in the Word* (10th May).

He says that there are 90 pages in the book and 217 names in the index. In fact there are 96 pages and 434 names.

He says that my work "tends, of necessity, to concentrate on such uses of the word as may be found by looking up *humanism* in indexes". In fact it consisted of reading through hundreds of articles and lectures and pamphlets and books by these and very many other authors.

He says that all humanist manifestos, including the one at the end of my book, "include references to 'the highest good' or some such", and he adds that "the very word *humanism* seems to prevent people from being straightforward atheists". In fact my Manifesto of Modern Humanism includes no such thing, and one of its articles is atheism.

NW

## Left, my foot!

Dear Editors,

It is remarkable and depressing how the recent election has already given rise to myths – myths which look likely to shape the mainstream political discourse for the next few decades.

There is, of course, the obvious one. Though *this is the first time ever* that Labour has been elected (from a period of opposition) after moving rightwards without a subsequent redress (on all previous occasions – 1924, '29, '45, '64 and '74 – Labour, whether by electing a left candidate to leadership, by supporting a general strike or by the passage through conference of a programme opposed by the platform, the party has moved leftwards in a way that has made the press political pundits claim that she has gone deliberately into the wilderness, turning her back on prospects of power for the foreseeable future). The myth has got round that Blair got Labour elected by moving the party to the centre.

There is an associated myth (perhaps a subordinate section of the former myth) growing up (chiefly, but not solely, as people talk about the Tory leadership elections) that Labour was moving in 1983 to the far left (though most who say this seem to have no clear idea what that means), that the country in '83 didn't vote for Foot because of this, and that is a lesson that the Tories now need to learn. That this will prevent them choosing an outright Eurosceptic.

Obviously a leftist is not best qualified to comment on the question of whether a Michael Howard / John Redwood led Tory Party is electable. We may concede that the media pretended to believe that Foot was a far leftist and also took umbrage at his sartorial nonconformity, and that that meant that it showed extreme hostility to Labour in '83, and that this would have cost Labour hundreds of thousands of votes at the very least. But it by no means follows that the press, which is by and large owned by such right-wingers that John Major was seen as no better than a socialist, would regard a Howard/Redwood led party as too extreme and so would refrain from supporting it.

L. Otter

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meet every Wednesday fortnight at Hark to Topper, Oldham, at 8.15pm  
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For further details contact:

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Anyone interested in giving a talk or leading a discussion, please contact Carol Saunders or Peter Neville at the meetings, or Peter Neville at 4 Copper Beeches, Witham Road, Isleworth, Middlesex TW7 4AW, giving subject and prospective dates and we will do our best to accommodate.

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