

FREEEDOM

anarchist fortnightly

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7th June 1997

50p

Blair appoints a millionaire to set the minimum wage ... **WHAT ABOUT MINIMUM WAGES FOR THE RICH?**

Tony Blair and his henchmen have not lost much time in making it clear for all and sundry that New Labour's first concern is to make capitalism more efficient and at the same time more acceptable to those who are its permanent victims. Anarchists are convinced that you cannot square the circle. Making capitalism more efficient means more wage-slaves without a job.

Surely one is justified in making such sweeping comments when one sees the various tycoons and fat cats who have either declared themselves pro-New Labour or who are being brought in by the Blair government to take over the re-organisation of a number of key economic and social services. At the same time as they were 'liberating' the Bank of England to decide what our official money-lenders will want for their 'services', they were recruiting the Deputy Governor, formerly leading light in the CBI (the bosses' 'union'), to advise the government. And there are a number of others, including the chairman of Barclays Bank and the ministerial role given to BP chairman Sir David Simon. The latest, as we write, is Peter Jarvis, described as the "brewing boss who will head the low pay commission that will set the minimum wage". He is retiring this summer as chief executive of Whitbreads and receives a payment of £27,736 towards his pension to top up his annual salary of £598,794. According to the *Guardian* (20th May):

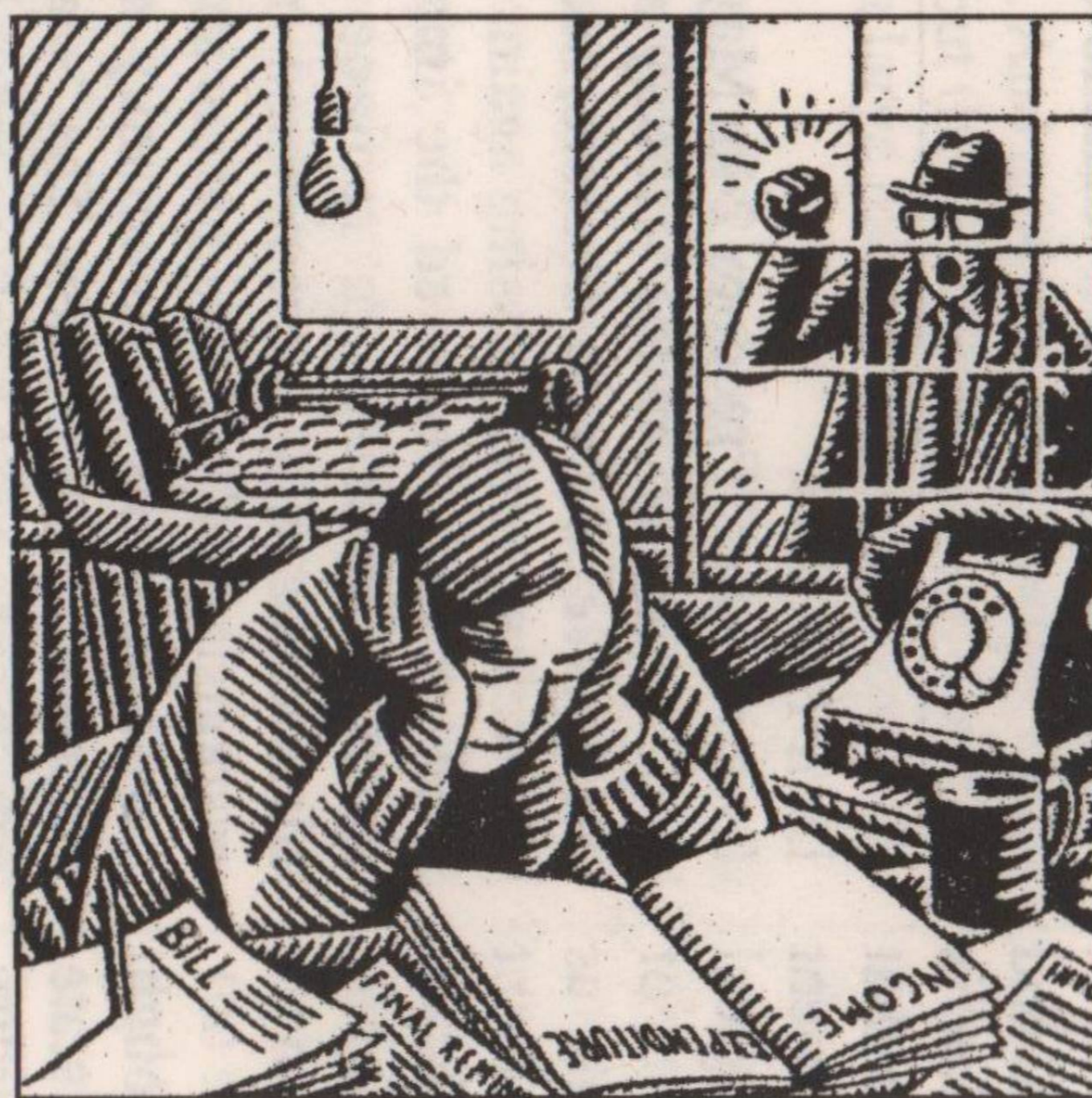
"At the same time, he was granted options on 176,990 Whitbread shares during the year, while he scooped a profit of £441,374 from exercising existing share options.

The report also reveals that Mr Jarvis, aged 55, was given a housing loan of £16,569 during the year by Whitbread."

The *Guardian* writer has calculated that if Mr Jarvis worked a 40-hour week "as does the average British male worker" then, if one tots up his

pay, pensions contributions, housing loan and share options profits he makes (you can hardly say he *earns*) £521 an hour, which is about 122 times the rate being proposed by the TUC which is £4.26 an hour for the minimum wage.

Obviously Mr Jarvis has, like many other big business tycoons, seen the way the political wind has been blowing and had expressed all kinds of favourable remarks about New Labour's proposals for a minimum wage. Indeed, he had already expressed the view that a minimum wage "was not a bad thing". Of course that remark can be taken in more ways than one, and no reference to a limit to the 'fat cats' *maximum* wage.



For, after all, within the capitalist economy there can be no solution to the problem of the low paid if nothing is done to curb the excessive spending power not only of the top 30% but also of the 40% in the middle. Taxation could be effective for those in the middle, but the top cats, if they haven't already done so with most of their fortunes, will certainly use the offshore tax-free havens if the New Labour lot seriously propose to tax them, to quote Denis Healey when Chancellor, "until the pips squeak" - but he never did.

The Tories always accuse socialists (but no longer New Labour, which after all has just recruited the billionaire boss of the *Daily Mail* and other journals) of being envious of the rich and successful. If one is one of the homeless living in a cardboard box in the streets of the richest cities of the world, one can understand that envy is an obvious reaction. But socialists and anarchists don't envy the rich, who flaunt their wealth and their bad manners and their ignorance, *we just despise them*.

Anarchists and genuine socialists in all countries seek to divest the rich of their fortunes (not their lives) and the capitalist financial system of its power over the world economy. This can never be done by governments playing with statistics and promises since all governments, at least in the western world, *believe in capitalism* and that it can be reformed (made gentler) and do not see that even the injustices, the lack of freedom, the ghastly poverty, the lack of health services worldwide are the result of that capitalist system.

Anarchists are regularly accused by the 'practical' socialists, journalists, etc., of living in the clouds, or are completely ignored. When will they listen to all the men and women of good faith wanting to bring about a better world which is not richer in motor cars, holidays in the Bahamas and take-away goodies thanks to Sainsburys and the rest of them, but richer in leisure, love, co-operation and community. We only have one life and those of us at the end of ours can give warm, practical and generous advice to the young. Anarchism is not utopia. Anarchism really tries to make sense of that curious phenomenon called life which we had no say in at the beginning but must be in control to the end. And this means no votes for the politicians to start with, and certainly no thought that capitalism is good for our health and happiness.

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ACTING THE GOAT

NORTH WEST EURO MARCH '97

Last week the dole bosses of the North West must have wondered what they'd done to deserve the fate that met them. Dole offices in town after town around Manchester were struck dumb by scenes reminiscent of the Theatre of the Absurd or the Surrealist Cinema as this the North West leg of the Euro March pranced in and out and up and down the dole queues like a band of travelling players.

This was organised disorder by the jobless ones. The staff in each Job Centre tried vainly to carry on business as usual, but with goats leaping around and megaphones blasting and rows breaking out here and there around the office – not to mention La Paparazzi Man chasing the manager and trying to get the best side of his face for the camera – the ordeal was too much not to grab their attention.

I myself was reminded of Bertolt Brecht or Dario Fo's plays. The opening words of Brecht's *The Threepenny Opera* (based on the English *Beggar's Opera*) kept running through my mind: "Here is an opera for beggars. Since this opera was conceived with a splendour only a beggar could imagine, and since it had to be so cheap even a beggar could afford it, it is called *The Threepenny Opera*".

Imagine Openshaw dole on a bright Tuesday morning: the dole queue is corralled in an orderly straight line, the staff are stamping dates on signing-on cards, suddenly a gypsy-looking man rushes down the dole queue dragging a nanny goat. Gasps from behind the

counter, and everyone is gobsmacked. Enter a security guard complete with tattoos on his neck who grabs the goat's tether-chain. Anger flares, for the English will tolerate many things in this life but not public maltreatment of animals. "Assault, assault" cries the crowd. The security guard weakly drops the chain and is surrounded by protesters from the Euro March in their white and green T-shirts. Then the narrator begins to explain the reasons for this performance, as the nanny goat having done her job of opening the scene and seeing a few houseplants in the distance, stalks off to enjoy a few perks.

Then follows a routine with the manager arguing that this kind of thing is not on inside an English dole, and panic buttons are pressed but nothing happens, no police appear. Paparazzi Man pops up and starts taking photographs. The narrator's delivery ends as he thanks the audience and staff for their attention. There is some applause and some heckling. As the performers leave the stage/dole Paparazzi Man demands a publicity photo with the nanny goat, called Doris, in the foreground. As he takes the shot the security guard, called Steve, determines to steal the show from Doris and drops his pants and does a quick moon before the camera. Here is a man who's more animal than Doris, for even she is gobsmacked by this turn of events.

Animals have a funny effect on the English. They bring out the best and the worst in them.

RITUAL OF OCCUPATIONS

It all started in Bury on Monday 19th May. There the dole office was hijacked for half an hour. The *Bury Times* reported that their mascot, Edna the kid, "joined them in laying siege to Bury Job Centre in the town's Silver Street".

The *Bury Times* declared that the "demonstration at Bury Job Centre was in protest at what marchers say are two unwelcome attacks on the unemployed – the controversial Project Work scheme and the Job Seeker's Allowance (JSA)". Mrs Hart, the manager, protested, but to no avail.

The North West towns now influenced by the North West Against the JSA are strung around Manchester like Andalusian pueblos. Burnley, Bury, Rochdale, Oldham, Ashton, Dukinfield and Tameside all have active groups. Central Manchester has its own Manchester Anti-JSA Group.

Openshaw in north Manchester does not have its own group, and was occupied for the first time on 20th May. Oldham has a group, but has not occupied the Job Centre before. It was a surprise for the manager, Phil Lowthian, when last week it was stormed. When Mr Lowthian was told that our demo was tame stuff compared to what the French would do, he said: "But it's not right though, intimidating people in this way". Someone replied: "But this is only the beginning!" He was given a copy of the Groundswell Survival Guide.



Bury Job Centre: the calm before the storm

'JSA GETS MY GOAT'

There was a massive police presence at Ashton dole, both inside and outside. Some suspected that they had been tipped off, owing to the raid in Oldham the day before. There was an unsuccessful attempt to get the goat in, but it was rebuffed by three burly coppers.

Later the march entered Manchester city centre. It was the day the bailiffs had moved against the protesters at Manchester Airport's second runway. There the trendy lefties joined the marchers, but the numbers were rarely more than fifty.

Lunch was at the Friends Meeting House, and a marcher's meeting was held at the Town Hall at which Doris was smuggled in to sit at the head of the table. The next day there were occupations at the regional central office of the Employment Service, Ontario House, in Salford. Salford Job Centre was also taken over while a meeting was held. Farnworth Job Centre was besieged on Thursday 22nd May.

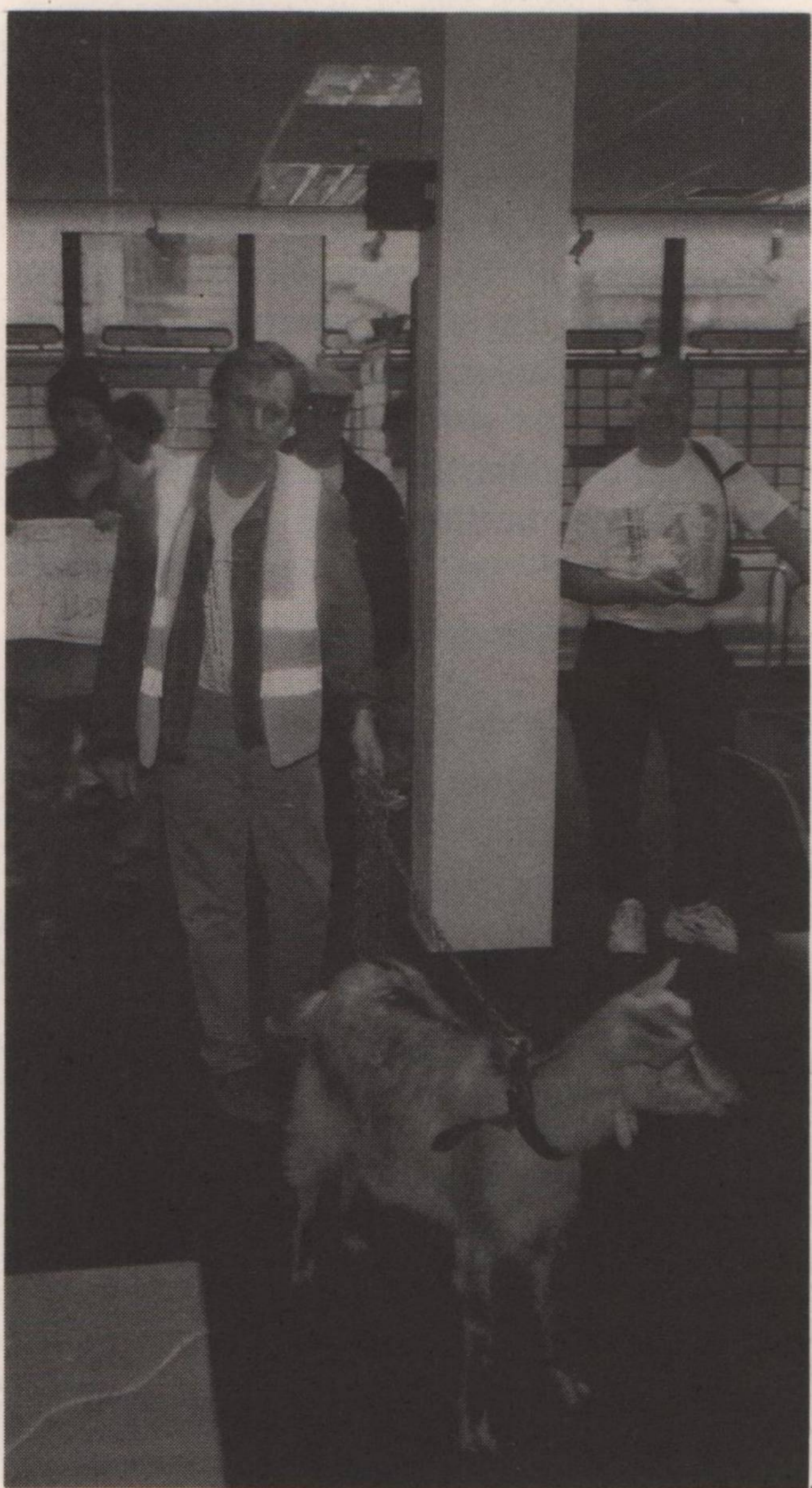
Got back home to find *Manchester Metro*, the free newspaper, had been asking about a goat in Openshaw Job Centre – there seems to have been more interest in the goats and the fact that a seven year old nanny goat led some of the occupations than in the principles of the Euro March themselves.

Some protesters did shout "JSA gets my goat". Others argued that the goats represent the capriciousness of governments – caprice meaning goat-like or tricky.

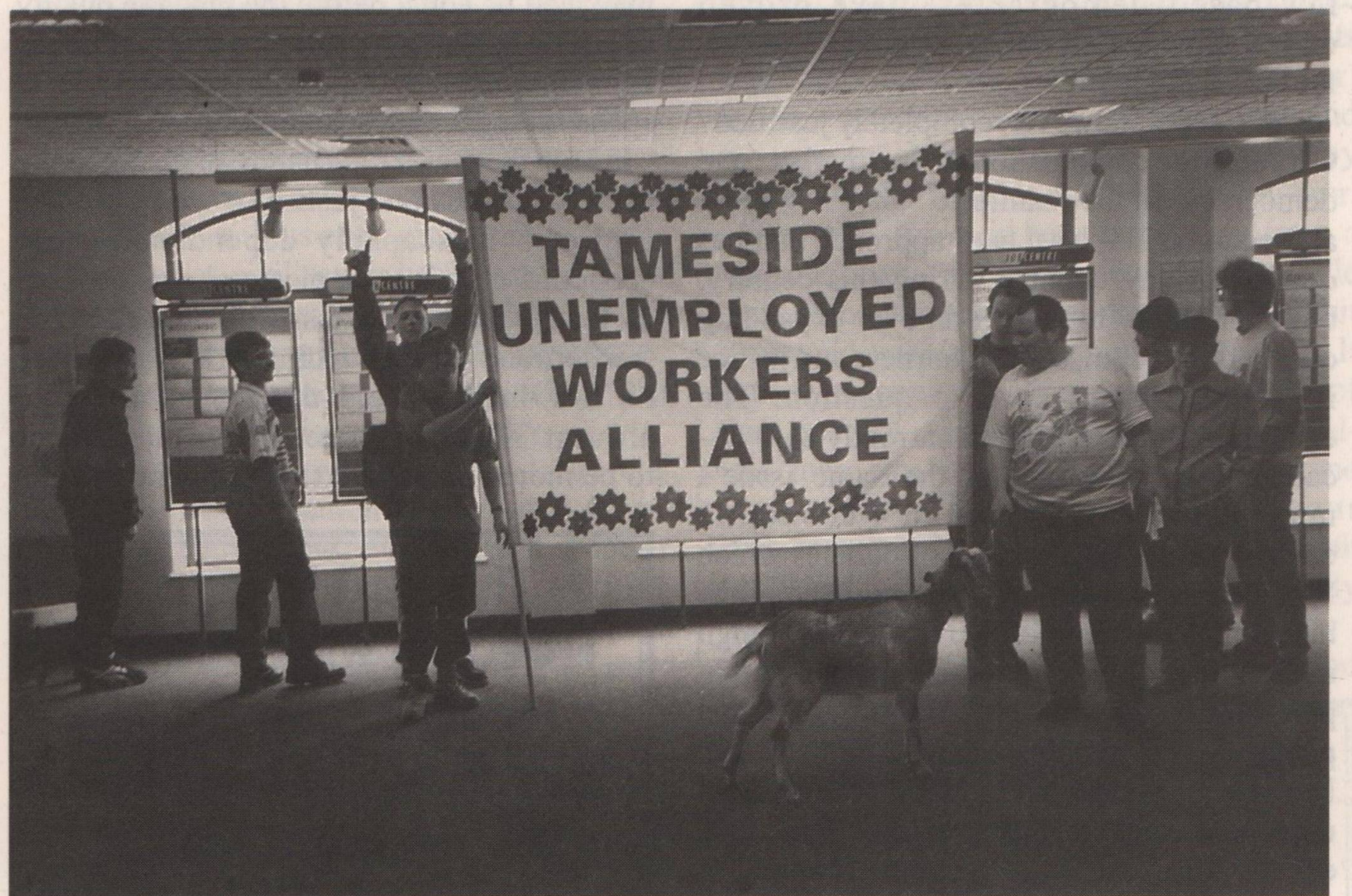
A few stuffed shirts may think goats lack gravitas and detract from the serious purpose of the march, but the goats were popular with the great British public and, in the weeks to come, may themselves succeed in opening up serious social and political issues.

The marchers declared their support for the Manchester second runway protesters and joined in the protest with the Liverpool dockers on Saturday 24th May.

Unemployed worker



Bury Job Centre: leading the way



Oldham Job Centre: 'Project Work, you've got to be kidding!'

ANARCHIST COMMENTS IN BRIEF

BOB MAXWELL, ALL IS FORGIVEN The government has discovered a £1.5 billion retirement fund surplus in the pensions funds for the 420,000 retired miners and is proposing to give them an extra £5 a week, which will deal with half the bonanza, and will keep the other half which "will be deposited in the government's coffers as guarantor of the scheme". A miners' union representative described this as a scandal when there are more than 30,000 miners or their widows receiving a weekly pension of less than £1.

Arthur Scargill, the NUM leader (now without miners), condemned the arrangement and declared: "I can see no difference between a crook like Robert Maxwell stealing £450 million from the Mirror Group Newspapers pension fund and a government 'taking' £742 million from a surplus generated by the miners' pension fund". But the Department of Trade and Industry (now Labour and with Margaret Beckett) said "it had no plans to return the money to the mineworkers' pension fund".

One question to which I would like an answer: the pension fund which can not only pay the 420,000 miner-pensioners but also a discovered £1.5 billion bonanza is apparently based on a capital pension fund of £10 billion. Like all of us, the miners are also dying and there are virtually no new miners since there are now virtually no coal mines. The question is, what will happen to that £10 billion pension fund? Who gets it?

HOW THE MIDDLE 40% LIVE A feature article in the *Independent Weekend* (17th

May) about 'Cupboard Love' was not what I expected. It was about the way builders are having to make rooms in houses larger in order to cope with the growing accumulation of things people buy in this age of consumerism. If you have lived for half a lifetime in one place inevitably you do accumulate many more things than you need or use. We all have this problem. But the article in question gives, as an example of this problem, Essex personnel manager Gillian Harris who, believe it or not "buys a new jacket and skirt every month, spending up to £100. There are currently fifteen jackets in her wardrobe, but when they reach their second birthday they are thrown out and she replaces them. She can't bear to work out how much she spends on clothes in a year. A certain female newspaper editor had so many clothes crammed into her fitted wardrobe, the units collapsed under the weight of excess Versace. She moved to a bigger house with more wardrobes."

Surely there could be no more telling criticism of the capitalist system than one that makes it possible for, after all a mere personnel manager, to afford to behave so disgustingly?

A NEW GENERATION OF FAT CATS 'Five Little Rich Girls' declared the *Independent on Sunday* (18th May) and not-half-they-ain't! The commercials alone apparently bring in millions of pounds, and when they sing and pull faces and stick up two fingers, more millions. But this is a disease. Take the footballers. Who has heard of slaves transferred to new masters for millions of pounds? And who among the capitalist tycoons in the past even

thought of going to a football match, let alone buying up the ground and the players for millions?

McLIBEL NOW ON THE SMALL SCREEN The headline in the *Guardian* (16th May) reads "It's been the longest civil trial in English history: two anarchists against the might of McDonalds. And now it's a mini series". Alas I missed it, but the *Guardian* feature did them proud with a large picture of them outside the law courts.

However the television producer declared that it was two belief systems on trial. "What struck me" he was quoted as saying, "was how similar those parties were. Capitalism and anarchism are both forms of religion. There were times when I could understand both sides at the same time. What was going on in court was often mutual incomprehension."

Well, so be it.

THE REFERENDUM PANACEA Referenda are worthless so long as they are limited to a 'yes' or 'no' and so long as society is divided between the super-rich, the well-to-do and the poor. And apart from that they can only be worthwhile and fair at a local level. Both right and left political parties are in favour of referenda when they are convinced they will win.

In an anarchist society we too would be in favour of referenda. The right way to take decisions at a local level among equals. Now, a referendum would be on a national basis in a divided (both economically and socially) society. And that would be worthless.

Libertarian

NEW LABOUR AND DEMOCRACY

In weighing up the possibility of seeing Tony Blair either as a 'One Nation Social Democrat' or 'The Man of the Radical Centre' the *New Statesman's* first 'manifesto' in the 14th March issue came out in favour of the latter. It argued persuasively that many of Blair's legislative commitments, which currently appear simply as a list through which he attempts to push all the right electoral buttons, could be given the cogency they lack by being structured around a big idea – that of democracy. It further suggested that, as the gel which could bind the disparate strands of New Labour's thinking together, democracy's time has come because it is the twin ideas of the "advanced and regulated market economy", now wholeheartedly embraced by New Labour, and democracy, which have been left standing amongst the wreckage of this century's often tragically failed political ideas. 'Law-based markets, combined with law-based democracies, have proved unbeatable in delivering freedom, choice, fairness and justice'.

Is this belief, however, completely justified? Certainly the combination of free markets and democracy, as the manifesto stated, could be argued to be the 'least bad' approach that has dominated any country during this century, but their ability to deliver an ever-expanding degree of freedom, choice, fairness and justice is, I think, more open to question. The economic situation Britain currently enjoys – called, by the second of the same issue's manifestos, a "benign economic environment" – is a product of policies which New Labour is committed not only to continue but to manage more effectively. This benign environment, however, co-exists and was in part built on growing extremes of wealth and poverty. The manifestos, in common with New Labour, make no mention of how these unjust extremes of income will be remedied, except to affirm that the redistribution of wealth via the tax and welfare systems, is off the political agenda.

And yet one of the most basic determinants in a free market society of not only the freedom, choice, fairness and justice available to us but also of our sense of social inclusion and responsibility, is our spending power as consumers.

For instance, the desire to live in the countryside is not restricted to individuals with large amounts of disposable income, but the fulfilment of that desire is. Furthermore, the planning and building restrictions in force, combined with the self-interested NIMBYism of those who can afford the prohibitive house prices, actively prevent types of land use and methods of building which would enable those on low incomes or those who simply want to pursue an alternative lifestyle from making lives for themselves on the land and thereby reducing or even eliminating their cost to state and taxpayer.

Even more seriously, perhaps, although we may well be equal before the law, the quality of justice to which we can gain access depends upon the amount of money we are able to spend on legal representation.

In both these cases the nature of the freedom, choice, fairness and justice to which we can aspire is inescapably dependent on our economic muscle. Our electoral equality can, in fact, obscure the disparities in effective freedom and choice which exist between those on low incomes and those who are more affluent. A re-invigorated democracy, if it is to be more than a diversion of attention from

the real centres of power in our society and if it wants to stimulate the interest and the active participatory concern of citizens in the workings of their community, region and country, must be committed to increasing the amount of real and meaningful control that individuals have over the choices and decisions – political, social, economic and environmental – which concern them.

The potential for such control to transform lives and communities isn't theoretical. Its practical implications can be seen in action in any number of the self-help community projects which have been growing rapidly in recent years. Through credit unions, food co-ops, Local Exchange Trading Systems (LETS), self-build projects and community enterprises, people have been able to assume responsibility for improving their own situation regardless of economic power. Economic relationships have also become human ones based on co-operation and trust. Economic benefits have been channelled back into the community not into the coffers of distant shareholders. Transparent organisational structures have enabled those who participate in them to exercise direct influence on decisions and developments. And the skills and abilities of all have been utilised, thus providing everyone with a sense of ownership and inclusion.

In every one of these examples, and in the many others which could be detailed, the willingness of people to take action themselves rather than waiting for a paternalistic state to act for them is predicated upon the principle of social and economic self-determination. Where this principle is operative, inequalities of income do not place the same crippling limitations on the range of choices open to people, nor on the possibility of their assuming full control and responsibility for their lives, as is the case when they are defined simply in terms of their roles as sellers of labour power on the one side and consumers on the other.

Far from being the social sibling of "advanced and regulated market economies" the radical extension of democracy could, as suggested by Colin Ward, "result in devastating challenges not only for government but the controllers of capital and finance".

Duncan Hunt

Rich and Poor



The above is written in runes (the earliest known form of the Northern Lands variety) and reads the name of this paper. I have dispensed with the second 'e' because the rune sound is adequate with one 'e'.

There is no advantage of using runes by writing or printing it or reproducing it in the many technological forms available, because each rune is unique in its making and how it is incised into wood. Except for its simplicity. Although runes should be recognisable to the practised eye, no rune, no single stroke is ever the same. It is a true work of art for it is unique and therefore uncopyable. Engraving into wood is, of course, a skill. Wood is grainy, letters had to be vertical strokes avoiding curves.

The rune stick was held in one hand while the other hand wrote into the wood. The above rune was written from right to left, so the right hand held the stick while the left hand wrote. Eastern 'tribes' wrote from left to right, so obviously they wrote with their right hand. But many remaining 'boustrophedons' suggest that the writers were ambidextrous.

Not that many examples remain. The religious censorship of the last two millennia saw to that. Nevertheless, they were an excellent and enjoyable tool, embodying the possibility of, for example, the reproduction of sound.

But they were also useful for the leaving of simple messages such as 'Gone to new pastures' or 'Must invent an oven to put your dinner in'.

Only a few monuments remain and hardly any with literary content. There is a Norse verse, though, a single line which says: 'SVA EK RIST OK I RUNUM FAK' which means 'Thus I carve and in runes I paint'.

I cannot pretend that runes at the moment are any more than a prehistorical curiosity which somehow survived with all its meaning knocked out of it by the prevailing powers. But to quote an enthusiast who believed "that the reading of old runes is akin to the raising of spirits" and add to that old description by Erik Moltke in his monumental (excuse the pun) work *Runes and their Origin*: "To see the runes you need a good light from the sides. With a skirt over your head, lift the material a little to one side and you will get an excellent oblique light." Moltke solved a rune which baffled others with the help of a big black skirt of the kind they wear in Valdres in Norway. Also worth remembering, he cautioned, that photographs – especially if taken in the wrong light – have been known to lie. Don't rely on photographs unless you know that the photographer also knows about runes.

Finally, from an anarchist point of view, the alphabet mirrors society. Many independent societies, many alphabets and variants. Firmly governed state, one alphabet.

John Rety

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is now available

The Raven

No. 34

Language and Communication : 3

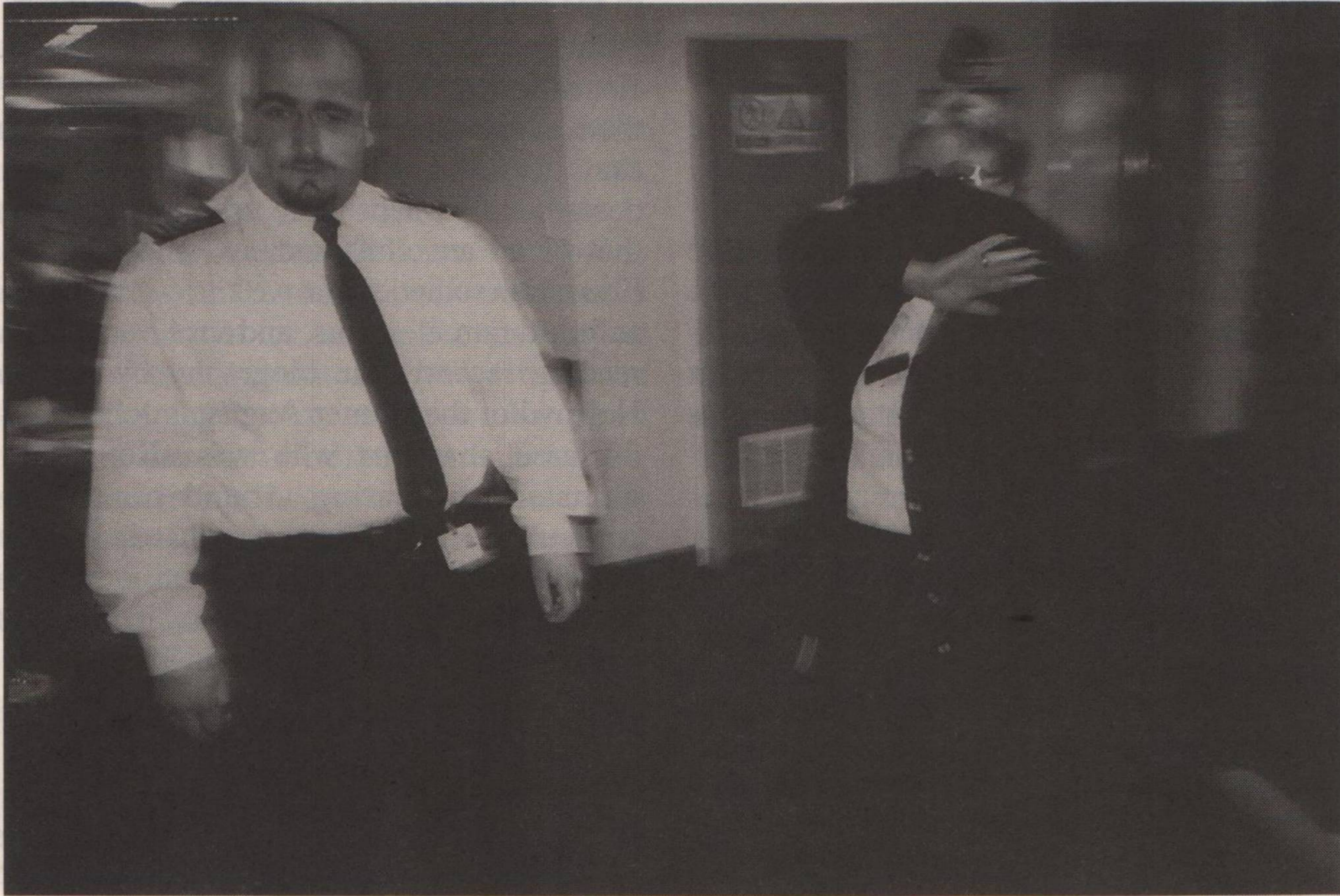
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Thursday 12th June 1997

DOLE QUEUE DAYS



'Paparazzi Man' strikes again!

UNION USES LAW AGAINST DIRECT ACTIONISTS

Both the bosses of the Employment Service and the civil servant's union, the CPSA, are seeking legal advice to stop Groundswell direct actionists in Scotland entering Job Centres. They are also looking at ways to prevent Edinburgh Claimant's Group from displaying three hundred posters in the city of Job Centre clerk Alistair Mathieson sitting in his office, labelled "UNWANTED - ALISTAIR 'BULLY BOY' MATHIESON". The poster claims Mr Mathieson has been harassing claimants.

A report in *The Herald* (3rd April 1997) states: "Lawyers from the Civil and Public Servants' Association are seeking interdicts [injunctions] to ban group members from Job Centres, but so far they have been unable to positively identify individuals, who use false names in all their publicity literature". The Benefit Agency is also considering legal moves against the group. The problem is that when the group raided the Job Centre with cameras flashing, they were wearing ski-masks.

Mr David Welsh for the CPSA national executive said: "We are waiting for revised legal advice over what we can do about this sort of thing. Our members were alarmed about what happened".

He added: "It's possible to take court action against an individual, but it's very difficult against a group".

In a statement the Edinburgh Claimants said: "We realise the vast majority of benefits workers are decent people and we work with them. However, there's a small minority of higher officials who, we believe, go out of their way to harass claimants and cut their benefits. Those officials who go over the top, we believe, should be made responsible for their actions".

Events in Edinburgh seem to be heating up.

GROUNDSWELL CONFERENCE: DIRECT ACTION NATIONWIDE

About eighteen groups were at the Groundswell Conference last month in Oxford. Reports of direct actions done and proposed were discussed.

The Oxford group described the occupation of Grand Metropolitan in London last April. Nottingham told of their work on 'Three Strikes', as did Edinburgh. Brighton claimed that claimants disrupted the Project Work scheme for several hours on 2nd April. The five groups representing North West Against the JSA told of their campaigns in Bury, Bolton, Tameside, Burnley and Manchester.

Further action is on the cards later this month at the CPSA Conference, where the southern groups will protest against the national

executive's treatment of Lee Rock. There was full support for putting the national secretary Barry Reamsbottom on the Groundswell 'Three Strikes' hit list.

The 21st July was chosen as a National Day of Action against the JSA. There will be an attempt to co-ordinate this with Reclaim the Streets and the Liverpool Dockers.

Unemployed Worker

New from Freedom Press

CULTURE AND ANARCHISM

by Harold Barclay

In some cultures, people are aware of few alternatives, but those alternatives are open to all. In others there is a wide range of choices, but the range is not available to everybody. The question, which type of culture gives more freedom to its inhabitants, causes thought about what we mean by freedom. This book provokes thought throughout, citing actual examples from the author's encyclopaedic knowledge of different cultures.

ISBN 0 900384 84 0 168 pages £6.95*

TRAVELLERS AND 'COBBLERS'

On Tuesday 13th May the travellers were evicted. On Wednesday 14th May the 'Cobblers' won against Cardiff. A report from Northampton.

On Tuesday 13th May, after a two-day stay, forty travellers and seventeen caravans were evicted from a proposed land-fill site for consumerist waste near Pitsford, Northamptonshire, when fifty police officers with dogs, a helicopter and a towing tractor 'moved them on' as the expression goes.

The travellers went peaceably. There were no arrests, their removal being charted in full colour photography on the front page of Wednesday's local paper (14th May) with further full exposure on page 3.

Thursday 15th May repeated the same full-colour photograph on page 17, with the headline "Police defend hard-line tactics - travellers driven off", and added "No arrests were made and everyone left as requested".

The travellers removed and set up camp at Bucknell Wood on Forestry Commission land near Silverstone, Northamptonshire, still tracked by local press cameras and another full-page exposure on Friday 16th May. This time they had the tardy and unexpected support of a local NIMBY ('not-in-my-back-yard'), a resident of Pitsford who, on reflection, announced to the local press that he preferred travellers to a rubbish dump site next to where he lived. He will try to buy the site to stop the proposed development - which stands to rope in £3 million a year profit for the quarry owner, Bennie. One traveller, known as 'Fluffy', also woke up rather late. "If only we had known about it earlier we could have said we were protesting against it, like Swampy. What's the point in moving us off if they are only going to turn it into a rubbish dump anyway?"

The 'point' surely is Mr Bennie's £3 million a year. Travellers require land, but there's no money in them!

Now let us take the other group, who are happily 'landless' and content to be so, organised and not self-organising, and much more useful to the capitalist consumerist state.

On the same Wednesday 15th May, while the full-colour coverage of the travellers' peaceful eviction engaged readers' attention, Northampton police were engaged elsewhere in town in a far from peaceful pitched battle with young men - euphemistically called 'fans' - at the new multi-million pound Sixfields Stadium. Dozens of vehicles and public toilets

were vandalised. There were thirteen arrests made under Public Order offences, eleven arising from disturbances before the march and a further eight when later that night the violence spilled out into the town. These events, however, did not quite make the front page, nor in full colour. They were obscured by a gloriously coloured 'Special Souvenir Wraparound' entitled "Wembley here we come! It's a party as our boys do us proud! The players and supporters deserve success." The eight-page supplement is guaranteed to get the reader quickly word-drunk and irrational. The 'atmosphere' in the stadium (described by the police as "tense") is described by the newspaper as "brilliant".

The travellers, still in full colour, are pushed to page 17 and, with the "Travellers driven off" the football supplement is filled with picture after picture of bottle-waving screaming youths as they "Party, party, party" at Sixfields "despite the best efforts of some Cardiff yobs to spoil the party atmosphere".

As if this were not enough, Friday 16th May runs a further three-page coverage: "Troublemakers? Not us say the fans". "I think it was mainly the police's fault" says one fan. Another fan's worst dilemma was "Should I watch the match ... or see my child born?" He chose the match. Of course he did. What better flight from reality! In any case, his family had it relayed over the loudspeaker to him at the stadium.

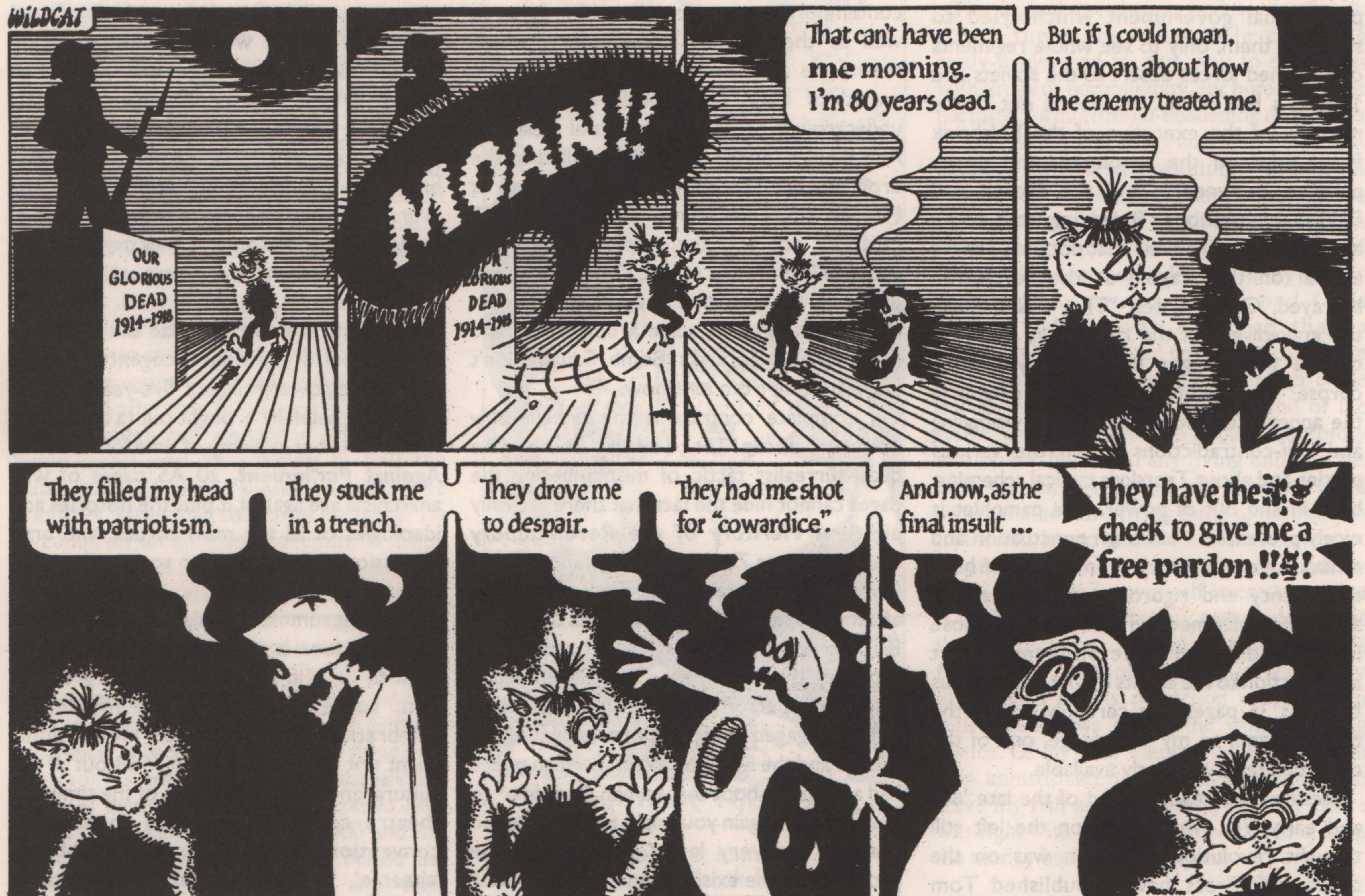
And the travellers? They appear on page 10 at their new site on Forestry Commission land. They are blocking a bridle path.

They will no doubt be closely watched and photographed, for they are a thinking class - a class conscious of its own social existence, its *raison d'être* and organisation.

On the other hand, the mass mindless violence at the Sixfields Stadium will be allowed to fade, for 'fans' are sheltered by the capitalist media and all multi-million pound corporations needful of the continuing passive consumption of their 'product'. For the 'mass' is not aware that it is being organised. "Eat football, sleep football, drink Coca Cola" as the can label directs.

Poor blinded fools. For of such are cannon fodder and jew-baiters made. But that's another story.

DFR



— ANARCHIST NOTEBOOK —

TEMPORARY AUTONOMOUS ZONES

I've a big agenda of books I would like to read or write and for ordinary reasons, like a low income, I stay at home but get lured abroad when somebody else pays the fares. This explains why anarchists from several countries, like France, Germany, the Netherlands and Italy, have asked me for my opinion on the views of Hakim Bey.

It is always an embarrassment since for a long time I had no idea about who this person and his opinions were or are. Plenty of us, including myself, are hesitant about revealing the vast scope of our own ignorance. Two sources have explained to me what these questioners were talking about. One, of course, is *Freedom's* invaluable feature 'Food for Thought ... and Action!' and the other is Murray Bookchin's recent book *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism: An Unbridgeable Chasm* (Edinburgh, AK Press, £5.95, post-free from Freedom Press).

Bookchin and I have opposite ways of coping with people whose ideas have some kind of connection with our own but with whom we disagree. His is to pulverise them with criticism so that they won't emerge again. Mine is to follow the policy of Paul Goodman, who had been a subject of the Bookchin scorn. Goodman enjoyed telling a fable:

"Tom says to Jerry: 'Do you want to fight? Cross that line!' and Jerry does. 'Now', cries Tom, 'you're on my side!' We draw the line in their conditions; we proceed on our own conditions."

As a propagandist I usually find it more useful to claim as comrades the people whose ideas are something like mine, and to stress the common ground, rather than to wither them up in a deluge of scorn.

What I learn from Bookchin's book is that Hakim Bey's book is called *TAZ: The Temporary Autonomous Zone, Ontological Anarchism, Poetic Terrorism* [out of print: Editors], that the author's real name is Peter Lamborn Wilson, and that his book has a whole lot of notions that wouldn't appeal to people of the Bookchin/Ward generation. And after his demolition job, Murray asks: "What, finally, is a 'temporary autonomous zone'?" He explains it with a quotation from Hakim Bey describing how:

"The TAZ is like an uprising which does not engage directly with the state, a guerrilla operation which liberates an area (of land, of time, of imagination) and then dissolves itself, to re-form elsewhere / elsewhere, before the state can crush it."

And he goes on to quote from Hakim Bey's essay how in a TAZ we can "realise many of our true desires, even if only for a season, a brief Pirate Utopia, a warped free-zone in the old Space/Time continuum" and how "potential TAZs" include "the sixties-style tribal gathering, the forest conclave of eco-saboteurs, the idyllic Beltane of the neopagans, anarchist conferences, and gay faery circles" not to speak of, as Murray quotes, "nightclubs, banquets" and "old-time libertarian picnics" – no less.

Murray Bookchin, naturally, comments that "having been a member of the Libertarian

League in the 1960s, I would love to see the Bey and his disciples surface at an 'old-time libertarian picnic'!" And he makes some down-to-earth comments on Hakim Bey's praise for "voluntary illiteracy" and for homelessness as "in a sense a virtue, an adventure".

Rightly, in my view, Murray remarks that:

"Alas, homelessness can be an 'adventure' when one has a comfortable home to return to, while nomadism is the distinct luxury of those who can afford to live without earning their livelihood. Most of the 'nomadic' hoboes I recall so vividly from the Great Depression era suffered desperate lives of hunger, disease and indignity and usually died prematurely – as they still do today in the streets of urban America."

He wins us over to stern realism, but that one concept of Temporary Autonomous Zones is so familiar to me, and probably to him too, that it's worth considering outside the Hakim Bey context. Plenty of us must have been in situations when we reflect that we all have certain experiences that seem to us to be the way things would happen if we were living in an anarchist society.

I think it was as long ago as 1970 that a reader of *Anarchy*, Graham Whiteman, was writing there about the equivalent of temporary autonomous zones that he perceived in the vast rock or pop festivals that started

happening in 1967, notably the event at Woodstock in New York State in August 1969. There were plenty more closer to home in the subsequent 25 years.

But once the phrase Temporary Autonomous Zones lodges in your mind you begin to see them everywhere: fleeting pockets of anarchy that occur in daily life. In this sense it describes a perhaps more useful concept than that of an anarchist society, since the most libertarian societies that we know of have their authoritarian elements, and vice versa. I was reading recently the biography by Michael Holroyd of the painter Augustus John, a self-declared anarchist who was also rather a monster in creating around himself the particular version of anarchy that appealed to him. Holroyd is describing John's return, in his 73rd year in 1950 to St-Rémy in France, to a place he had left in a hurry in 1939:

"French feeding wasn't what it had been and the wine seemed to have gone off. But in the evening, at the Café des Variétés, he could still obtain that peculiar equilibrium of spirit and body he described as 'detachment-in-intimacy'. The conversation whirled around him, the accordion played, and sometimes he was rewarded 'by the apparition of a face or part of a face, a gesture or conjunction of forms which I recognise as belonging to a more real and harmonious world than that to which we are accustomed'."

The old painter's last phrase describes rather beautifully the sensation of what another *Freedom* contributor, Brian Richardson, calls "golden moments". His unaccustomed glimpse of a more real and harmonious world is the meaning that I am inclined to ascribe to the words about Temporary Autonomous Zones.

Colin Ward

Just as, after the collapse of the Soviet Union the Russian government has installed former Communist Party *apparatchiks* as the new capitalist bosses of newly-privatised industries, so Lenin, after the Bolsheviks seized control of the Russian revolution, installed former capitalist bosses, along with party bureaucrats, as the new state *apparatchiks* of newly nationalised industries. Laurens Otter's *1917* (£1.25), published appropriately in the eightieth anniversary year of the revolution, sets out the main events, examining and criticising the roles of Lenin, Trotsky, the Bolsheviks, the Mensheviks, the other key players and the soviets, from an anarchist standpoint. He shows how the soviets, having been a catalyst for the uprising, were seen as a threat by the provisional government which tried to suppress them, only to see whole regiments of its armed forces desert to the soviets and Trotsky's Red Army. He points out that a majority of the executive of the Bolshevik Party opposed the revolution and draws parallels between it and the French and English revolutions. Referring to Lenin's apologists who maintain that not until Stalin's arrival on the stage was the revolution betrayed, Otter writes: "They called Stalin the gravedigger of the revolution. But who calls a gravedigger before they have a corpse?" Important observations are made in the appendices about the internal wrangling and self-contradictions within the various parties and about Trotsky's cynical scheming, both in and out of power. The pamphlet is nicely presented – although punctuation and syntax suffer, in places, from a lack of both consistency and rigorous editing – and it should be welcomed and read widely by those interested in an accessible anarchist introduction to the events of that momentous time. At 36 pages it is certainly one of the cheapest and, to my knowledge, one of the only such texts currently available.

Recalling the heady period of the late '60s and early '70s when many on the left still thought revolution in Britain was on the cards, AK Press have republished Tom

FREEDOM PRESS BOOKSHOP READERS' ROUND-UP

Vague's *Anarchy in the UK: the Angry Brigade*. Previously published in separate parts in *Vague* and *Zigzag* magazines, it now appears revised and expanded in one book running to 162 pages with photographs and illustrations throughout. Apart from being a chronology of the Situationist-inspired Angry Brigade's activities and communiqués with the background of all the participants – on both sides of the law – plus their friends, associates and beliefs, the fact is that it is compiled from contemporary accounts and news articles, as well as the author's commentary, which means we are also whisked back into the world of May '68, Bloody Sunday, the underground press, the Industrial Relations Act, hippies, punks and strikes called at the drop of a hat. Not to mention Ted Heath as PM. Something for everyone here, for £6.95* capturing not only the desperation but the sense of history and revolt. Oh, those liberal days when it took three, rather than one man and his shadow, to make a conspiracy and when Scotland Yard's Bomb Squad didn't know its arse from its elbow.

In complete contrast is the unbelievably skimpy pamphlet (even using the quasi-surrealist tactic of misnumbering the pages cannot hide the fact that there are only eight), *A Herstory of the Revolutionary Cells and Rote Zora: armed resistance in West Germany* by Pirate Press. They started at around the same time, but whereas the Angry Brigade confined themselves to attacks on property these women – sorry, wimmin – killed one person and kidnapped another. When engaged in operations against these groups and the RAF, the West German police had a maxim: 'shoot the women first'. 50p* to you, but then again you might prefer to spend that on the very last *Class War* to be produced by the existing Federation – official.

Yes folks, get your souvenir final issue of the organ that ejaculated ferociously and repeatedly all over Thatcher's pinny. As reported previously in *Freedom*, both it and the Federation are to fold and their membership is now considering which direction to go in. This issue (no. 73), which may well become a collector's item, is very different from the usual tone, being highly introspective and analysing the entrails of its life in an eight-page 'open letter' lament. No typos or spelling mistakes to speak of, and only two swear words make it barely recognisable, but there are plenty of photographs from over the years, including one of the Spice Girls (!) and one of *The Girlie Show* presenters (?) flashing tits – or at least bra – in an article about women and *Class War*. The other main piece is on the state of the left. The end of an era? They may think it's all over ... not while *Freedom's* still going it's not.

Anarchists are certainly glad the election's all over, but if you want a cogent argument against the powermongers' five-yearly fix the ACF have helpfully brought out (a bit late for the last one but in plenty of time for the next) *Against Parliament*, 20 A5 pages of why anarchists are against it plus the histories and ideologies of all the main parties, and brief discussions of a dozen or so of the minor ones, all for £1.

Now that summer is here no further excuse for celebration is really necessary, but if you want to do it in style and there's a group of you, some ideas from the master of celebration, Welfare State International might not go amiss. Born in 1968 out of the cultural and political ferment of the time as a theatre company dedicated to escaping conventional middle class building-based 'theatre', it seeks to return to popular

working class outdoor events like mummers' plays, carnivals, the fairground and Feast of Fools, and other such subversion-as-entertainment traditions of folk theatre and song. Welfare State International (WSI) is now acclaimed worldwide for its spectacular, ambitious and often controversial performances – and justly so, as you will know if you've ever seen them. *Engineers of the Imagination: the Welfare State handbook* (revised and updated edition) is not just a history of WSI and how they organise but a rich guide to their basic techniques, resources and skills which provide plenty of ideas about how to organise and execute a whole range of events, be they music and dance, sculptures and other structures, celebratory feasts, street theatre, processions, fireworks and large-scale puppets. It even suggests how to use the landscape and weather as an integral part of your event, and there are scores of illustrations and photographs to help with your giant dragonfly, straw man, fireworks and lantern/torch processions, etc. Issued by Methuen at £12, its 272 pages are edited by Tony Coult and Baz Kershaw, two long-time fans of WSI. The appendices contain not just a chronology of their performances but a guide to the legalities of staging outdoor event, various statements and manifestos, a list of suppliers, even a music score and more. Enjoy.

No room for more than a brief mention of Murray Bookchin's *The Third Revolution: popular movements in the revolutionary era* (Volume One), 406 pages, Casell, £16.99; and also *Anarchist Studies 5/1*, White Horse Press, £6. Main features are Bakunin and Marcuse; Feyerabend, Dawkins and cultural diversity; Sexuality, anarchism and science. Merry Christmas.

Four Eyes

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Twenty-first Century Anarchism: Unorthodox Ideas for a New Millennium
 edited by Jon Purkis and James Bowen
 Cassell, £45 (paperback £13.99)

TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY ANARCHISM

The good news is that commercial publishers are still producing books about anarchism. The bad news is that many of them still aren't worth it. Here is a new example.

Historical anarchism had an ambiguous connection with historical millennialism; it could be said that for anarchists, as for other socialists, the Revolution (rather than the Second Coming) was to establish a Kingdom of Man (rather than God) on Earth, to last for ever (rather than a thousand years). Historical millennialism has been replaced by modern millennialism; the millennium is no longer a religious doctrine of a period of divine rule, but an arbitrary moment inaccurately calculated from the dubious beginning of an obsolete calendar which has no real significance but provides a convenient opportunity for a media event. Historical anarchism has been replaced by modern anarchism; this is no longer an audacious ideology of political insurrection against authoritarian oppression followed by libertarian utopia, but a cautious tendency to symbolic or cultural gesture against marginal manifestations of the twin forces of capitalism and bureaucracy. Hence this collection, projected into a period which doesn't begin for a couple of years.

Twenty-first Century Anarchism appears in a series which includes new works by such veterans as Murray Bookchin and Colin Ward,

but it marks an attempt by a dozen members of a younger generation – most of them associated with the Anarchist Research or History Workshop or Anarchist Discussion movement – to stake their claim for fresh territory. The editors' introduction pays tribute to the anarchism of the past, though in terms which suggests little acquaintance with it, then moves forwards with the claim that "this book is part of a new theoretical and practical tradition" including "post-modernism, chaos theory, ecologism and feminist post-structuralism". We have been warned.

The actual essays are disappointing. Dave Morland discusses human nature, but refers to political and philosophical debates rather than to scientific research. Steve Millett criticises the welfare state, but fails to offer a viable alternative. Lindsay Hart defends radical direct action, but ignores much of its past history and present practice and evades its weaknesses and dangers. Jude Davies discusses popular culture, but takes it all too seriously. Karen Goaman and Mo Dodson discuss symbolic actions which consist of little but tinkling symbols. Paul Rosen gives a personal view of popular music which ends in welcome silence. John Moore writes about the American writer Fredy Perlman almost as pretentiously as he did himself. Jon Purkis

discusses transport in particular and consumerism in general, but ends with questions rather than answers. James Bowen discusses work and technology, with a similar result. Judy Greenway discusses "twenty-first century sex" mainly from the point of view of homosexual and feminist activists, and ends by sensibly confessing that she doesn't know what it will be like. Colin Wisely's conclusion ends in total confusion.

There is a useful but unreliable editorial apparatus. The Contributors' notes are infected by irritating frivolity. The Glossary is ambitious but often absurd. The Bibliography and Index are full and valuable.

The editors claim that "this collection makes a valuable contribution to contemporary anarchist literature". It certainly presents a fair sample of current anarchist writing and thinking, at least in the Anglo-American academy, but also represents a sad waste of opportunity. The silly title and subtitle are belied by the fact that the essays are rooted firmly in the discourse of the past decade. Most of them are so badly written, in various forms of what the editors themselves describe as "irrelevant academic gobbledegook", that the good points are largely obscured. The old anarchists were often crude, but they were always clear. And the essays are also so

narrowly focused, in both time and place, that they seem to belong to a private programme of career advancement rather than out in the cold air of the real world. Again, the classic anarchists were often rhetorical, but they wrote with passionate intensity about serious problems. This book shows no awareness that the significant political and social struggles of the future will consist not of token resistance to technological advance or modish displays of deviancy from flexible norms in England's green and pleasant land and the other gardens of the west, but of bitter battles in the wide open economic empires of Asia and Africa, Eastern Europe and Latin America, where capitalism and bureaucracy show a much more inhuman – or human – face.

Even back here on the home front, the book's deliberate rejection of the past (uncannily echoing the programme of the New Labour Party) involves the failure to confront or at times even to mention such fundamental issues as class and race, property and land, education and health, law and crime, war and arms, organisation and administration – power. Anyone who is genuinely interested in the subject should return to twentieth century anarchism – including Bookchin and Ward (especially the latter's lecture on 'Twenty-first Century Anarchism' in his new booklet on *Social Policy: An Anarchist Approach*) and some of the other writers in the old movement – and reconsider some of its unorthodox ideas about the present millennium before venturing too confidently and clumsily into the next one.

NW

GENUINE ARTIFICIAL GUARANTEED REPRODUCTION

Betty Blake long ago handed in her Union Life membership card awarded for her long service as a union branch secretary, for she lies in her quiet grave having served her time, to quote the Pope, as "a servant of the servants of ..." And yet what I most remember of her was her inevitable neat and so tidy council flat and the vases of plastic flowers for, as she stated, she did not like 'real' flowers because they got dusty. It is at this point in the act that the card-carrying association, professions and my-grandfather-had-a-union-card rupture that hernia with Sainsbury wine to give wit to their laughter, as still laughing they climb from off the Persian rug explaining with a study of the ceiling why residentialwise they voted for Tony. And yet was Betty Blake so misguided in her choice of values between the environmental cleanliness of the plastic rose or the rude beauty of the flower living out the glory of its short life. I go for the beauty of the living flower and the ballet of the dog pissing on the unprotesting grass or stones, for we compromise in all things and Betty had her neat and so tidy council flat and her plastic flowers and I will take the pissing dog and the living rose, give or take a few homicidal bacteria, for there will always be Brussels-directed bacteriophage to fight in defence, if not of honour then of beauty. We are the age of the great disposable and the sell-by-date, for nothing is meant to endure, not even principles, and a million murdered dead is but a footnote in this generation's lifetime. Economics, the conveyer belt, touching the strike-bruised forelock to Henry Ford and the fast food industry demands that the loose-moneyed class demand instant service in and for their social necessities, but in their art they deem that seven years is too long to wait for the major masterpiece so that the art hucksters smell wealth and nail a tin of corned beef to a board, price it at £10,000 and sink the knee in reverence on the gallery floor while murmuring 'master, master' and everyone is happy, for who is arguing for if you have a free and easy bankbook and a need to be amused, then we should, nay must, wish them well.

Even the heroes and heroines of our contemporary society are manufactured

ready-mades by directors, PR men and scriptwriters, and none more so than the late unlamented John Wayne. Every working actor has a moral right to bullshit their public. They have? Yea even to wearing toupees off stage, off screen, but when they use that ready-made artificial image as propaganda for good or evil then they are no more than worthless tools, be it church or politics, of those who seek to manipulate be it religious faiths, politics or the supermarket shelves. I hold that Wayne as a major figure in the film entertainment industry was a worthless individual, for he took his screen persona of the patriotic, decent, lovable, clean-cut all-American folk hero off the set and into the public arena, and this was a well-paid ham who extolled the glory of war on the screen yet "in the Second World War Wayne pulled every string – with success – to avoid serving in his country's armed forces". On screen Wayne was created by a billion dollar industry as Wall Street's conception of a moving poster version of the lovable stud, and Wayne went all the way with it, but off that lighted set he continued to strut like a castrated rooster. We are all victims of our own personalised image-making and the anarchists are no strangers to this cult, but hesitate when they whisper 'follow and obey'. Men, women and governments fear the carved stone, the painted picture and the printed word, and after two bloody wars Germany is crying enough and seeking to achieve it in some small part by seeking to halt the publication of Hitler's *Mein Kampf*. The publisher, Hagglund, rose from his bed of flu to complain to his home government, while copies of Adolf's turgid 1933 government-issued best-seller are being confiscated by the Swedish police and the money-happy lawyers are rubbing their work-soiled hands as Wayne and Hitler, two useless manipulated ready-mades, make a return bow to an audience already ready, through indifference, ignorance or boredom, to forget these two yesterday's men, for in the world's art galleries there is another tin of corned beef nailed to a board priced at £10,000 and my advice, comrade, is snap it up before the Japanese stock market move in with their

vacuum-sealed safe deposit vaults stuffed with the Monets, Miros, Mondrians, Moyses, Heath Robinsons, Melozzo da Forlis, Warhols, de Staels and the Mad Cow stench of rotting corned beef.



'Get your genuine imitation while stocks last death head'

Duchamp is the accepted master of the ready-made and in 1923 he had the Town and his war-weary frau crying 'instant art' with the unveiling of his *Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors*. Yesteryear's fun thing, but this ensemble of wire, hope and prudishness is long gone, giving place to Duchamp's ready-made urinal. Purchased from a hardware shop in its world tour it, for a short time, graces the floor of the Tate Gallery and one had this vulgar urge to piss on it, except that one's understanding was that this was not the original 'masterpiece' bought over the counter, for you buy another one and it is a genuine ready-made for, like Betty Blake's plastic flowers, it can be washed or made functionalised by pissing in it. In themselves the ready-mades were no more than a harmless sport elevated into an art by the self-styled Dadaist and, like Scrabble, it gave hours of innocent fun, but art it ain't. Not even the surrealists with their happy minor talent could breathe life into it.

The logical conclusion had to be that to shock the moneyed middle class the ready-mades had to give way to excess, as with drugs or pornography, for boredom dulls the taste. As more mind-deadening drugs cater to its mass market, so pornography seeks new excesses until torture and killing with the snuff videos has an established market, for its participants hold that the death of a child is worth the price of a dollar or a wank. In 1995 Damien Hirst was awarded the funny-money Turner Prize for his *Mother and Child Divided*, which was no more than a ready-made slaughtered cow and a calf. Slice the salami how thou wilt, it can never come out of the meat grinder as 'art', and of the 'prize' and the rest of the circus I am lordly indifferent, but to kill any living thing for the mob's amusement is evil and immoral. I will accept that to kill a living thing of necessity is justifiable, but to amuse a cultured mob, nay.

But morality is artificial and ready-made by every society in its own self interest, so what is morality? Necessity! my casual pleasure is the drunkards' need. The starving woman kills for food for her hungry child, and her society of its need for its protection uses its own self-created laws to kill the woman crying justice. Of my own simplicity I will hold that it is unjustifiable to kill for amusement, so serve my fish and chips. Maybe Betty Blake was right with her plastic flowers. Hirst, keep the money but don't kill again.

Arthur Moyses

The situation in Albania seems to be changing fast and by the time you read this it may be more historical than intended. The following is translated from *Umanita Nova*, 13th April 1997.

Umanita Nova: At the moment there is a lot in the papers about Albania but we can't tell if what we are reading corresponds to the truth. We'd like to hear from you about the real causes of the Albanian insurrection.

Mark Sotori: It all began with the bankruptcies of the pyramid financial companies. People came out onto the streets spontaneously to protest peacefully and to demand compensation for their losses. To begin with these popular demonstrations were peaceful. Then the police began to attack the demonstrators. The people were forced to take up arms faced with the violence of the Berisha state. The people, in arms, quickly gained control of the situation. There was not only limited resistance from the military. Many soldiers refused to open fire on their neighbours, on the people, and instead deserted to the popular revolt. Then the committees were formed charged with organising the counter-offensive against the Berisha regime. In the extreme confusion we found ourselves in, and unrelated to the popular demands, criminal groupings formed who had nothing to do with the real causes of the uprising. The committees met the Prime Minister, Fino, to reaffirm their desire to see the immediate resignation of President Berisha.

Umanita Nova: What is the current situation in Albania and how do you see things evolving?

Mark Sotori: The situation seems calm. Foodstuffs are available but their prices have tripled. Salaries and pensions are no longer being paid. There are serious sanitary problems. There is also a fair amount of provocation. One of these is inflammatory talk and actions aimed at fomenting rivalry between the North and the South in order to start a civil war. We, at the committee, feel that such provocation has little in the way of a future because all of us living in Albania today are suffering famine and misery and are more united than ever in our struggle.

ALBANIA

INTERVIEW WITH MARK SOTORI OF THE SARANDA COMMITTEE



'Welcome to Saranda'

Umanita Nova: Do you have a political platform?

Mark Sotori: Our platform is to get rid of Berisha and overturn the election results of last June. Personally I believe that the crisis will not be resolved until there is real collaboration between all the political and social forces in the country.

Umanita Nova: In those towns where the committees are in control what form of organisation exists? Some speak to us of self-management and say that women are playing an important role.

Mark Sotori: The committees are self-managed and networked. All committee members have the same responsibilities. Nobody has a privileged position. We serve the social structure. We carry on with our own jobs. Women have a particularly onerous task because as well as participating in social activities they have to take care of the children. Those close to Berisha call us bandits and accuse us of, for example, holding some 120 hostages. Nothing could be further from the truth. We have invited Albanian television to come and verify the situation. In addition to this many of Berisha's democratic opponents are with us on the committee.

Umanita Nova: The papers, radios and television continue to claim that Albania today is still prey to chaos, criminal groupings, mafia and thieves.

Mark Sotori: Let me repeat, we have nothing to do with the banditry which, unfortunately, exists in Albania today. Our actions have nothing to do with the gratuitous activities of those criminals who we are fighting with vigour.

Umanita Nova: What do you think of migrations of Albanians to Italy?

Mark Sotori: What would you do if your kids wanted feeding and you couldn't deliver? This movement has economic causes. We are pleased to hear that many Albanians have been well received in Italy, are living with Italian families, and are being well treated.

Umanita Nova: What is your reaction to the tragedy at sea last Good Friday? Do you feel the Italian government carries responsibility for what happened?

Mark Sotori: This was a terrible tragedy which has left its mark on the Albanian people and the Italian people as well who we look on as our friends.

Umanita Nova: What do you think of the multi-national intervention?

Mark Sotori: If the soldiers are here for peaceful and humanitarian reasons we will welcome them. In the same way that some were well received in Italy in recent years.

Umanita Nova: Is there not a risk that Albania will become a colony of the Italian state as happened when the fascists were in control?

Mark Sotori: No. No chance. We don't feel that the international force has any such intentions. Anyway, Albanians wouldn't tolerate it. Let me repeat, we believe strongly in the friendship that exists between the Albanian and Italian peoples.

Umanita Nova: What are working conditions like for Albanians working in Italy? In your opinion are they well-treated or exploited, under-paid as some newspapers are claiming?

Mark Sotori: The economy in capitalist countries is, we know, based on wage differentials but may I remind you that a policeman, an employee receives half an Italian salary here.

Umanita Nova: What is your role in the committee?

Mark Sotori: Folk chose me because I'm well known. I'm an ordinary bloke. I'm 43, a mechanic but, I repeat, within the committee we are all equal and we feel that once the crisis has been resolved we should surrender our arms.

NYC INTIMIDATES WELFARE RECIPIENTS: ACTIVISTS FIGHT BACK

New York City has launched a grossly punitive programme aimed at removing 100,000 people from the city's welfare rolls. Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani has created a separate 'Eligibility Verification Review' (EVR) process to screen out "ineligible applicants for Home Relief (general assistance) and aid to families with dependent children". This despite evidence compiled by New York State's own welfare department that welfare abuse occurs in less than 3% of all cases.

What are the city's methods? Require all applicants to go to one EVR centre in Brooklyn where they must often wait for hours and then withstand lengthy interrogation. Many are misled into signing 'withdrawals' of their applications. Intimidating tactics also include surprise 'home visits'. If the applicant or recipient is not home for any reason, benefits may be denied or cut off.

But people are fighting back. Organiser Suzanne Osgood reports on several actions to halt EVR. Recipients and advocates are suing the mayor and his welfare commissioners in the federal court. Brooklyn and Bronx Legal Services, the Center on Social Welfare Policy and Law, the Legal Aid Society and the Urban Justice Center charge that the city has caused "life-threatening harm and irreparable injury to poor children and unemployed and disabled adults".

In October fifteen public assistance recipients from the Urban Justice Center turned the tables on the city and made an 8am surprise 'home visit' to Richard J. Schwartz, Mayor Giuliani's senior adviser on welfare reform. Mr Schwartz was questioned through the buzzer at his Upper West Side building and when he didn't answer the demonstrators followed procedures used by the city's welfare inspectors: they stopped neighbours on the street to ask what they knew about Mr Schwartz. After half an hour the police placed the

demonstrators behind barricades and escorted the welfare 'expert' to a car.

Other actions to block EVR include individual fair hearings, public hearings and a town meeting. For more information or to give your support contact the Urban Justice Center, 27 West 24th Street, #600, New York, NY 10010, USA.

US DOLE ROLLS DOWN, HOMELESSNESS UP

As the welfare roll numbers drop in Milwaukee, owing to the Workfare programme, the homeless shelters are full to overflowing. The system which hits at the poor is being successful in getting people off benefits, according to Jason DeParle of the *New York Times* Service.

State officials admit that foul-ups have forced families to lose benefits, often through no fault of their own.

But as yet there has been no big obvious calamity and this is seen as reason for optimism. The hope is that as welfare cuts sweep through the cities most poor families will find ways to adapt.

The Milwaukee experiment started in March 1996 when the state brought in three new schemes:

- To divert new applicants from the rolls.
- To require welfare claimants to work 35 hours a week for their benefits.
- To try to change the behaviour of bureaucrats by privatising many job placement services and rewarding the most successful agencies.

Will this be the Brave New World for Britain?
Unemployed Worker



On the promenade at Saranda

Does nature abhor anarchism?

Dear *Freedom*,

In reply to Ewtor (24th May): Ewtor has some serious misconceptions of anarchism, particularly the social problems he believes would be encountered in the building of a different society. The difficulties with power vacuums and the obvious inadequacies of humans has never been disputed by anarchists. Different laws and forces operate in social and organic evolution and if social evolution is viewed over a long period it can be seen that the different stages of economic development did not involve a change in the biological foundation of humans. The evolution of feudalism into capitalism confirms this, as also the previous stages of social development do. Unlike marxists, anarchists do not wish to make use of the state to develop a different economy. On the contrary, they wish to destroy it.

In the last century armed force was thought to be necessary for the destruction of the state, but this is now usually seen as an absurdity. Gustav Landauer (1870-1919) best described the problem of the state as follows: "The state is not something which can be destroyed by a revolution, but is a condition, a certain relationship, between human beings, a mode of behaviour. We destroy it by contracting other relationships, by behaving differently."

As a good example of anarchism in action, I suggest our friend reads a few books on the Spanish social revolution of 1936-39 where the anarchist collectives operated over much of Spain for a considerable period.

As for the future, anarchists don't make wild predictions but with growing disenchantment with politicians, anarchist ideas are attracting

the attention of increasing numbers of people, including the state. Non-violent direct action is the order of the day, which may in the end make politicians redundant. William Morris suggested we use Parliament as a dung store, and if this suggestion is eventually taken up we would enjoy the benefits of an organic revolution as well as a social revolution.

Neil Fisher

Dear *Freedom*,

Ewtor's letter (*Freedom*, 24th May) raises some good points about the viability of anarchism. They have been raised before, many times, but are well worth discussing again.

Ewtor has "received the impression that anarchism seeks to replace centralised hierarchies with disseminated local seats of responsibility". If this means something like parish councils or community meetings, the impression is mistaken. The "seats of power" which anarchists want are individual persons.

Anarchism is founded on the notion that the whole point of society is to increase the scope of individual choice. A society which restricts the choices of individuals by enslaving them, impoverishing them or coercing them in any way, is failing as a society. In a perfect anarchy each person would have absolute sovereignty over herself or himself. Social relations would be on the basis of voluntary co-operation, because the means of coercion would not exist.

In the real world, of course, nothing is perfect. But in bricklaying, brewing, social struggle or any other endeavour, aiming for perfection is the way to achieve the best we can manage.

All societies rely on voluntary co-operation

(see Colin Ward's *Anarchy in Action*) and all sorts of different social structures exist (see Harold Barclay's *Culture and Anarchism*). In some existing societies there is no connection between what a person does and what that person consumed. In some, bullying is considered abnormal and objectionable. In some, the way to gain kudos is to do unpleasant jobs which everybody wants done but nobody likes doing. A society which combined these features would not be perfect anarchy, but by comparison with our society it would be approximate anarchy, and the hope that it might exist is not unreasonable.

Social progress is slowed by the fact that people regard what they know as normal, even if they do not like it. If strong government is seen as normal and the government collapses, another strong government is likely to appear in its place. However, it is possible to change public perceptions of what is normal. Government can be weakened by subtle means, such as a decline in the habit of deference to authority. Weaker government then becomes the accepted norm, and the weakening of government (meaning bosses of all sorts, not just the legislature) is worthwhile in itself because it means an increase in choices for ordinary people.

No doubt if the human population were decimated without everything else being decimated, the survivors would be better off, but there is nothing we can do towards bring this about. As to the situation in Albania, I do not know much about it and would rather not erect a theory on not much data.

Anarchists strive for complete freedom from coercion, because that is what they want. If it is an impossible ideal it is still worth striving for, because by aiming for perfect freedom we may make society a bit freer than it would otherwise have been.

Donald Room

'Friendly Societies'

Dear Comrades,

New Labour's Social Security spokesman, Frank Field, speaks with misty-eyed nostalgia of the virtues of 'self-help' and 'self-reliance', personified by his latest brainchild, private health and unemployment insurance via Victorian-style Friendly Societies which will (he claims) promote 'self-reliance' without 'burdening' New Labour's high-earning supporters.

But if the original Victorian-era Friendly Societies really did provide the poor with a safety-net, why were the Workhouses - those urban concentration camps which for the poor were the only alternative to death in the gutter from starvation - nevertheless full to bursting? The truth is that Friendly Societies were nothing but a con. They provided the fat cats that ran them with a nice little earner, they fooled the people who paid subscriptions to them (that they could barely afford) that they would be taken care of, and they deafened those that still had jobs to the cries of the starving unemployed.

What Field really means by 'self-reliance' is 'the good sense to find a secluded corner to crawl into to die from starvation or cold so I don't have to step over you on my way home from the opera'.

It was only when the poor began to make it clear that they weren't going to show that kind of 'self-reliance' any more that Lloyd George desperately tried to buy them off with his state unemployment insurance plan (i.e. National Insurance) of 1912.

Keith Ackermann

The circus is over

Dear Editors,

As both a new (i.e. renewed) and (in both senses) darned old reader of *Freedom*, reading your anti-election pieces gave me a déjà vu experience with a vengeance. Same old arguments: showing one's not taken in by and damned well not going to endorse the fraudulence of 'democratic' politics, and so on. I realise we'll never agree about this, but maybe some of your more taciturnly astute readers will sympathise with my attitude.

Anyone who takes the trouble to read my 'house-brick' *The Rape of Socialism* will be left in no doubt about where I stand, so I won't make a meal of the ingredients (some of which, like the off-hand admission in your 10th May editorial that "governments obviously do have some power over our lives", are decidedly unpalatable to anarchists) of the case against counselling people not to vote. Now that "the circus" (and you're absolutely right to so describe it) is over for, most probably, the next five years, let it suffice to ask if it really makes sense to contend or imply that it makes so little difference who claims to "have a mandate from the people" (as the politicians like to put it) that it's not worth exercising one's quinquennial citizen's privilege of choosing

one's masters. Tell that to the extra 8.7 million poor you highlight in your 'Focus on ... the United Kingdom' (*Freedom*, 26th April), or to those human enough to give a damn about them, while rational enough to know better than to accept the premise that one lot's just as bad as the other.

Okay, so at best it's a choice between greater and lesser evils, and who the hell wants to choose evil at all? Well, as one who admits having spent a lifetime compromising my principles - paying taxes, being polite to the boss and giving rein to my mutual aid instincts largely through organisations conditioned by and reflecting the hegemony of capitalism and the state - I stand amazed that some anarchists still seem to kid themselves that they can get through life without compromise.

General elections are tailor-made for anarchist propaganda, and of course they should be fully exploited. But the truth - i.e. that the crony-hucksters of capitalism and representative democracy are peddling a fraudulent prospectus - is damning enough without taking a line which is disturbingly reminiscent of that which so-called communists used to take in labelling western democratic socialists 'social fascists'.

So my message to all libertarians who are looking forward to taking part in another rollicking 'anti-political' (?) campaign in 2002 is: exaggerating is another way of lying. Leave it to those follow-the-leader parliamentary democrats who don't give a fig for the truth as long as they gather in more recruits and more votes.

Don Pedely

Anarchism and the City Tradition

Dear *Freedom*,

I would like to reply to some of the points raised in Larry Gambone's recent letter (10th May 1997) regarding anti-civilisation anarchists.

Firstly, I find his assertion that anything which doesn't have the support of 99% of the population is elitist slightly bizarre, given that every progressive idea has found itself in that position at some time or other. Whether anarchism itself avoids the 'elitist' label is debatable.

However, my main point is to question the need to hang on the accumulated baggage of civilisation. Although dictionary definitions are often insufficient for political purposes, in this case I'll resort to my copy of the Concise Oxford and offer the following: "An advanced stage or system of social development; those peoples of the world regarded as having this." This definition highlights two points: the concept of one society's progress or advancement, and the idea that only some "peoples of the world" have attained this stage. Implicit in this are the principles of competition and exclusion. Civilisation is constructed in opposition to the non-civilised, usually termed barbaric, savage or primitive. This dichotomy is not accidental: it is how civilisations have

always defined themselves, in opposition to others who - through their perceived inferiority - are seen as legitimate targets for war, conquest and often genocide. The sphere of the non-civilised frequently also encompasses the natural world outside of the cities and the cultivated spaces of the urban agricultural environment, engendering a need for the control and domination of nature that often has disastrous ecological consequences.

The idea of civilisation has a history, and it cannot be dissociated from that history - trying to rehabilitate it, from an anarchist perspective, is as useful and valid as trying to rehabilitate the ideas of capitalism or patriarchy.

It may be, though, that this 'absolute' definition of civilisation is rejected in favour of a more relative one, allowing for European, Chinese, even Native American 'civilisations'. But in this case what is meant it better approximated to by *culture*, which is more specific and doesn't depend on an idea of superiority. Besides, Larry does not use the expression 'this civilisation' but simply the all-encompassing 'civilisation'. We may not want to throw out the baby with the bathwater - but whose baby and whose bathwater?

Adam Green

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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.

Peter Neville / Carol Saunders
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ACF

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Thursday 5th June at 8pm RACE AND THE ANARCHIST MOVEMENT

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