

FREEDOM

anarchist fortnightly

Vol. 58 No. 24

13th December 1997

50p

In the current political climate, we ask ...

WHY ANARCHISM?

In *Freedom* ('The New Labour war-mongers', 4th October) we quoted from the Defence Minister's article on government policy in the journal *Tribune*. Now in a recent issue of the same journal obviously intended for the delegates to the recent Labour Party conference, three unions – the Steel and Metal, the Engineering and the MDF (the professionals union) – took a whole page advertisement (26th September) and described themselves as the "coalition to defend workers in defence".

The advertisement is headed "Ten points from workers in defence". Points one and two complain that under the Tories "400,000 highly skilled men and women, 50% of all workers in the defence industry, lost their jobs". The remaining 400,000 face loss of job security.

Point two maintains that expenditure on defence under the Tories came down from 5.3% of GDP and the Labour lot plan to bring it down to 2.6%. They accuse, in points three and four, that the Labour government is risking the lives of Our Boys by denying them, and we quote, "the up-to-date equipment", meaning that we must scrap the old stuff and have the latest.

Point five is really worth reproducing verbatim: "Too many of the arms sold around the world are made and exported by unstable authoritarian states with none of the checks and balances Westminster and the British press provide".

It is sometimes said that the bigger the lie the more chance there is of assuming it to be the truth. For goodness sake, the United States are number one and Great Britain number two in the armaments exporting industry. The rest are chicken-fed by comparison.

These trade unionists who signed their names to that manifesto – Keith Brookman, Ken Jackson, Roger Lyons – should be laughed out of court.

We repeat for the umpteenth time, *where is the enemy?* And if they say 'There could be' we will answer by saying. 'By the USA, this country and France exporting arms,

**The season's
greetings to all our
readers and best
wishes for a happy
new year**

you are trying to create the enemy just to justify an industry and a situation which provides *useless* jobs at the same time as all governments are saying that they can't afford to keep hospital beds open, they can't afford free further education, they can't afford to make the lives of single mothers and their kids less stressful, and for years their Tory predecessors couldn't afford to relate the old age pension to a percentage of average earnings' – and here are these miserable trade union bosses concerned with maintaining an industry, *the war industry*, which, yes, keeps 400,000 workers in useless and disgusting jobs in order to get a pay packet at the end of the week.

When will the workers rebel and demand that their skills and humanity can be released and used to produce the services, the goods, that we all need and which could be provided with full employment *and* with a working week of, say, twenty hours? Utopia? certainly, if one only thinks in capitalist terms – that is that a job is a job which produces a pay packet at the end of the week or month (after all, there are millions of City workers who think themselves superior because they work in offices, but most of them are producing *paper* which is dealing with the wealth and profits of a few at the expense of the rest of us).

The capitalist society will only disappear when enough people will want and demand and use their power to oppose. Journals like *Freedom* are addressing themselves to people who realise that the political parties have nothing to offer as an alternative to the capitalist system. And it is quite clear that *global capitalism* is with us with a vengeance and if we relied on the trade unions to liberate the working class from its shackles we could go on hoping forever.

What, in this writer's opinion, the value and the importance of anarchist propaganda such as *Freedom* has been doing *consistently* for more than a century is to convince its readers that because we only have one life to live we should seek to make it as exciting and as rewarding as the human mind and all the intellectual and scientific contributions make possible without depending on government, local authority and all the other bureaucrats *who ignore one if one is not asking favours from them*. In other words, this writer, at the end of a long life, remains an anarchist because anarchism has given a *meaning* to life for him over the years. Anarchism starts with you and me, and those of us who are propagandists are not seeking to convert governments or capitalists to anarchism, we seek to communicate with the *victims* of government, capitalism and authoritarianism in all its shapes and forms. It's only when the victims of capitalism know what kind of life they want for themselves and refuse to do jobs that are of no social value, or even, as in the case of so-called 'defence' work which is completely anti-social, something may start happening. But don't expect the initiative to come from trade union bosses, who are hand-in-glove with the bosses. Their jobs depend on there being bosses to fight? No, to negotiate with them, because trade unions would not exist in a non-capitalist society.

anarchist fortnightly Freedom

Vol. 58 No. 24

13th December 1997

50p

WILL SINGLE MOTHERS BE SHORT-CHANGED?

What is ethnic cleansing in a community? It is a totalitarian tendency. It is an attempt by one socially dominant group to impose certain cultural values upon another. It leads to the annihilation culturally or physically of the victimised culture if it is left unchallenged.

Last week we were treated to the unacceptable face of feminism when the 'female supremacist', the term Melanie Phillips used in her book *The Sex Change State*, Harriet Harman Secretary of State for Social Security proclaimed her strategy on national childcare. Protesting single mothers were ejected from the House of Commons, as they had been from the Standing Committee on 12th November. The soaring cost of single parent benefits has led to a government crackdown.

Ms Phillips accuses Harriet Harman of promoting 'the sex change state' by pushing Welfare to Work for single parents and setting up childcare for them. This 'New Feminism', as she calls it, amounts to women "marrying the state".

She claims that New Labour has become wedded to female supremacism and that Ms Harman is busy setting up committees of middle class women MPs to advance the doctrine. This orthodoxy, Melanie Phillips writes, "has flowed into Britain from America (that's the USA)" and has become popular "among social science researchers, public sector professionals and much of the chattering classes".

Understandably the more street-smart single mothers of the working classes don't want to be bullied into packing their kids off to some state childcare agency and clocking-in at some local sweatshop. They don't accept Ms Harman's version of the new feminist utopia. And why should they take their cues from this podgy-faced woman with her "middle class metropolitan manner of a St Paul's ex-head girl".

After all, this is the woman who in opposition, as Shadow Minister, a year ago said: "The way to get lone mothers out of poverty ... is not by cutting the amount on which they have to live year after year and plunging them further into poverty". Now she seems to believe that only poverty will get the poor to work, while only riches and less tax will get the rich to perform.

PERVERSE POLITICS OF CONTROL

The idea is being put about that all that is stopping more women entering the labour market is the absence of affordable childcare. Ms Phillips insists "the figures do not support the idea that thousands of mothers are desperate to get a job". Two Cambridge economists, Shirley Dex and Robert Rowthorn, reckon that no more than between 3% and 5% of all mothers with a child under ten are prevented from working through lack of childcare.

One can't help but feel that jobless women are going to be forced into the labour market

by the state, which will take over the role of 'mother'. The consequence will be more cheap labour.

But Ms Harman is not just planning to cut the single parent benefit. She has her eye on disability and sickness benefits as well. The benefits of Britain's six million disabled could be taxed, means-tested or time-limited.

The £100 billion social security budget has led to some perverse political ideas in the past.

John Redwood once suggested that teenage lone mothers should hand over their babies for adoption. Harriet Harman's attempt to march them off to work like the Seven Dwarfs is no less sinister.

What's more, it is all part of Gordon Brown's New Deal flagship fiscal strategy. The same spirit infests the plan to impose instant penalties on so-called 'fraudulent claimants' and the switching of the burden of

proof of identity to the claimant from 1st December. Because of the difficulty in winning cases claiming fraud by claimants in court, Tony Blair plans to enforce full repayment plus 30%. And, if the claimant 'proof of identity' project goes through, it looks like the jobless will be on identity cards before long.

MIDDLE CLASS MISSIONARIES AGAINST ETHNIC CULTURE

This is happening in the UK against a background in which large numbers of Americans may soon be in peril of destitution, when the law insisting that people on welfare take jobs comes fully into force in eighteen months. According to Ed Rendell, the mayor of Philadelphia and chairman of the mayors' welfare-to-work taskforce, there is "a serious mis-match" between welfare recipients and jobs available. The snag is most of the jobless are in the inner cities when most of the low-skilled jobs are out in the suburbs - most of the unemployed don't have cars and public transport is not adequate.

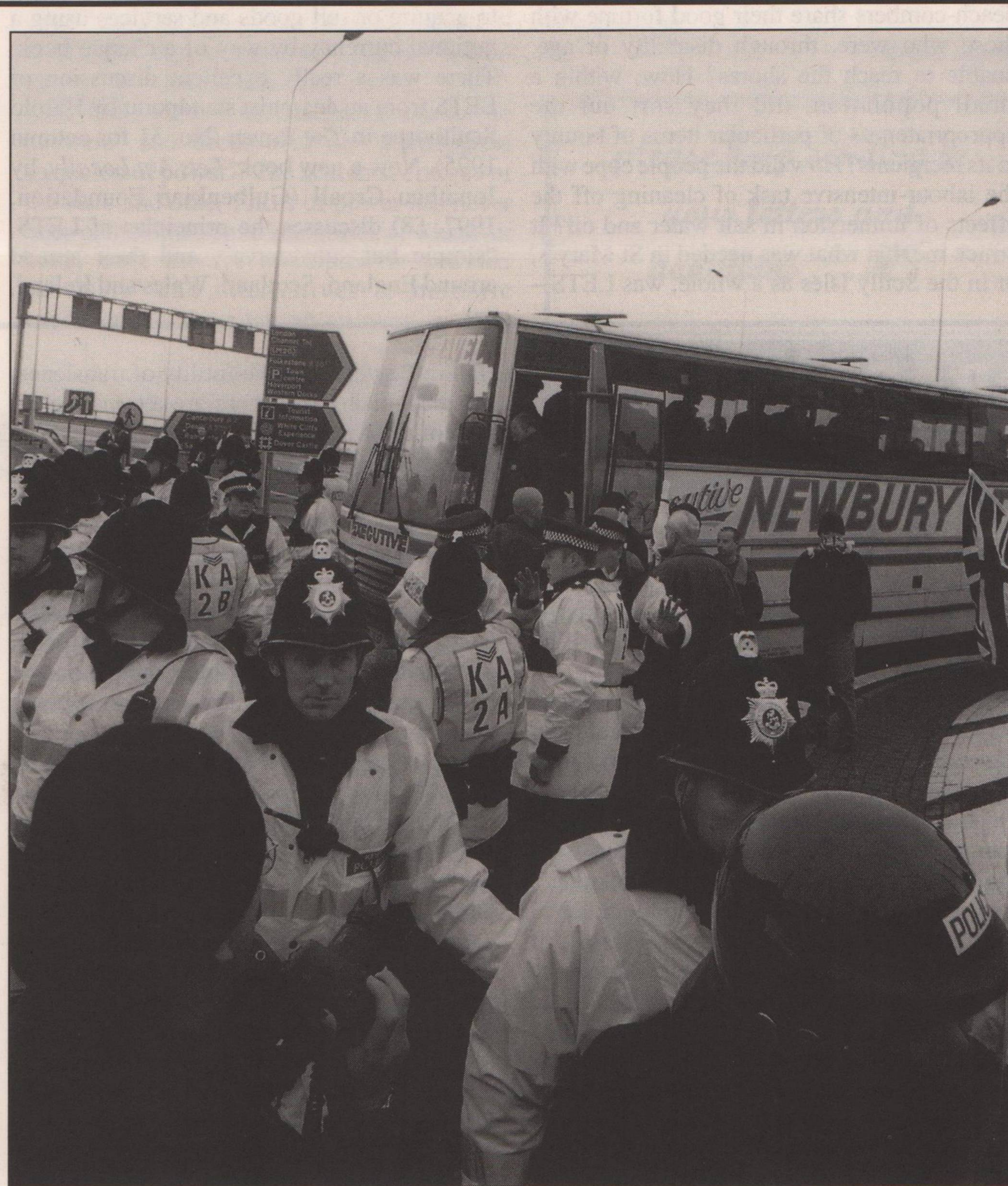
Many of New Labour's policies, like the New Deal and Welfare to Work, are US imports. The implied drugs war also has an American ring to it. Melanie Phillips's idea of a kind of ideological feminism, which she calls 'female supremacism', may be another aspect of the purveyance of US cultural trash.

Ms Phillips refers to the North American orthodoxy which "sees women as victims of male domination". She adds: "This female supremacism, rather than feminism, fundamentally despises, distrusts and dislikes men".

My concern here is the attack on working class culture and the ethnic cleansing it perpetuates and entails. Even a popular and semi-pornographic publication like *Murder Most Foul* will today try to portray female murderers as victims of men. For example: "[Ulrike] Meinhoff had been a successful middle class television personality, until she met petty thief Andreas Baader" - the implication being that Ms Meinhoff was respectable until she fell in love with the low-life Baader, who led her into a life of crime and revolution.

The attack on the language of working people by these missionaries of the prevailing middle class orthodoxy is no less pernicious. Working class people are being told how to use language properly to fit in with various US politically correct thought-police pronouncements. Earlier this year an office manager in Bolton, Ms Thomas, claimed she had been driven to quit her job by the strong language of her fellow workers. Anyone who has worked on the shopfloor knows there are strong cultural traditions and language. To attack this class culture and to attack this use of language by legislation is an attack on ethnic groups - the English working classes, their language, their dialect and their values.

Albert Shore



HERE IS THE PROOF

Our report in *Freedom* (29th November) of the NF 'march' in Dover when the Anti-Nazi League forced them to abandon their march and where we asserted that the NF contingent seemed like an outing from an old people's home is hereby corroborated by photographer Mike Cohen who sent us this photograph. The coach came all the way from Newbury (just over a hundred miles) and carried 32 people. The Kent police gave them

their usual protection reserved for right-wing groups and they managed to traverse 75 yards of the historic seafront before they got back into their coaches and returned to wherever they came from.

The people of Dover could do without such provocation and the thousands of pounds spent on police protection that Blair & Co. should have spent on the welfare of Romany families.

— ANARCHIST NOTEBOOK —

Wrecks and LETS

One of our children was a collector of matchbox labels and we used to be sure to collect, on our annual summer visit to Cornwall, whatever additions there were to the series of labels commemorating Cornish Wrecks, which commemorated ancient and modern shipwrecks around the Cornish coast. This was before every shipwreck was a tanker disaster spilling out crude oil around the coast. Naturally there was a folklore about luring vessels to disaster on the rocks for the sake of the loot to be gathered or the liquor to be smuggled ashore.

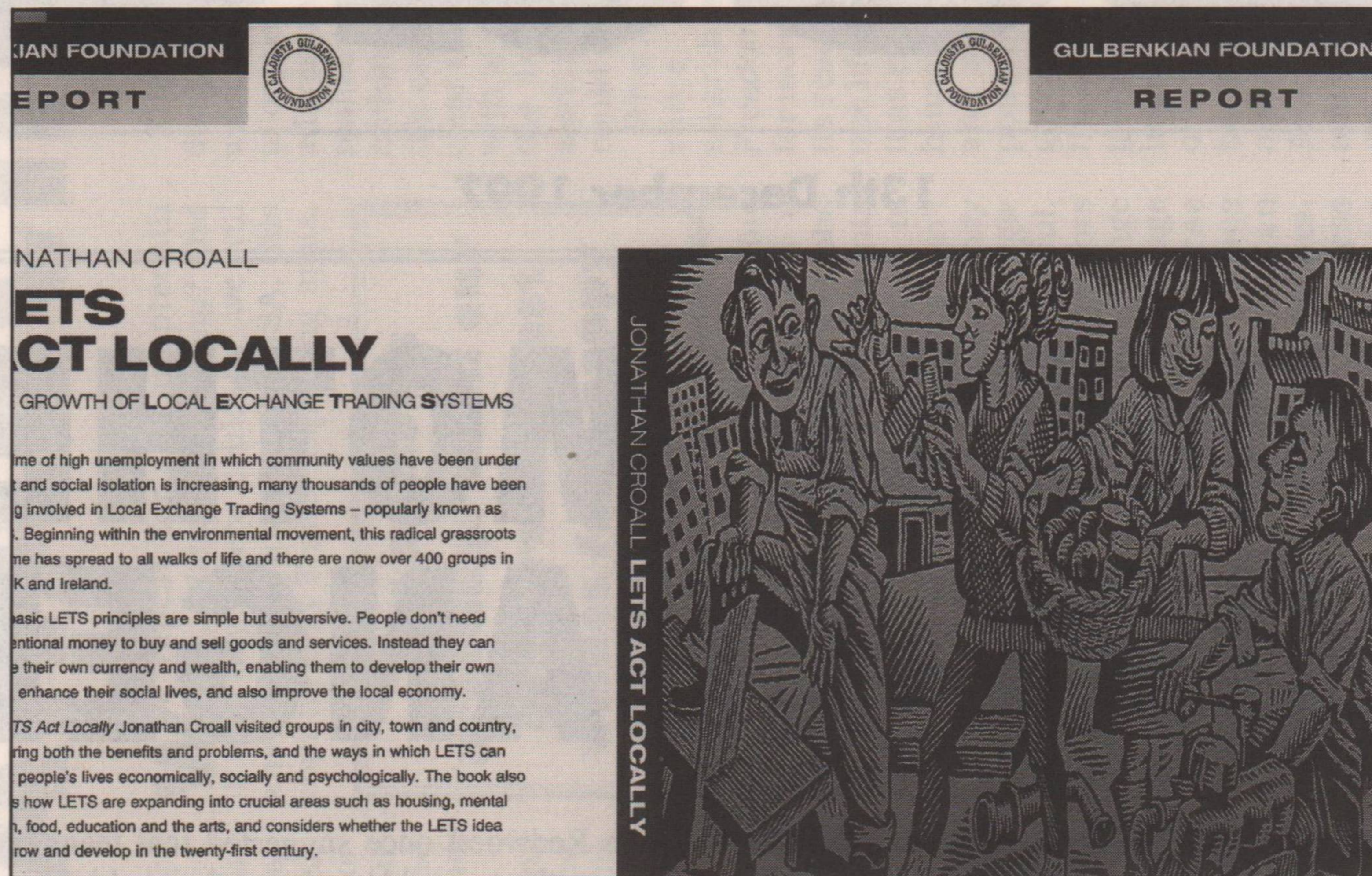
There was another side to this local folklore, which was that of the voluntary and paid coastguards and of course the lifeboat service, saving lives around that endless rugged and rocky coastline. In a different context, hundreds of miles up the coast, the story of Compton MacKenzie's, filmed as *Whisky Galore*, celebrated the contraband cargo that might be washed ashore for the gathering.

All this was brought back to me by a greeting card from Cornwall this month. The coloured picture on the front comes from the artist André Ellis and shows a variety of sea creatures exploring a mountain of consumer desirables spread on the seabed and around the rocks and seaweed. The caption was "The container ship 'Cita' sinks off St Mary's". The card, I learned, is published by Gullibles Greetings Cards of Cadgwith, Cornwall.

And the text on the back of the card explains the full history of the circumstances:

"A midwinter storm of unusual gusto swept over sixty loaded containers from the decks of the *Tokio Express* just off the Isles of Scilly in February 1997. The containers broke up on the sea-bed, mingling their bounty with that of previous wrecks and setting the scene for the arrival of the *Cita*.

In the early hours of Wednesday 26th March 1997, the 3,038-ton ship *Cita* ran aground in Port Hellick Bay, St Mary's, on the Isles of Scilly. The Antiguan-registered Polish-crewed container ship was on her way from Southampton to Belfast when she bumped into the Scillies and re-awakened the dormant spirits of long ago 'wreckers'. She became a total loss, breaking up and sinking, while her containers washed ashore with the sort of cargo that



the islanders usually only dream of. From tobacco to trainers, clothes to coat-hangers, shorts to shirts, mahogany doors to mice for computers - plus an incongruous mix of Action Men, bathroom scales and spare tyres!"

I, of course, fell to pondering on the sociology of this sudden cargo cult on the island of St Mary's. How did the young and active beach-combers share their good fortune with those who were, through disability or age, unable to reach the shores? How, within a small population, did they sort out the appropriateness of particular items of bounty to its recipients? How did the people cope with the labour-intensive task of cleaning off the effects of immersion in salt water and oil? It struck me that what was needed in St Mary's, or in the Scilly Isles as a whole, was LETS -

a Local Exchange Trading System. Maybe they actually have one but, as everyone must have learned by now, LETS is a way of overcoming our lack of actual money without the inevitable incompatibilities of barter which, as the list of odd commodities salvaged from the sea at St Mary's shows, are considerable.

A LETS system is a group of people agreeing to acquire or sell goods and services using a notional currency by way of a cheque book. There was a really excellent discussion of LETS from an anarchist standpoint by Harold Sculthorpe in *The Raven* (No. 31 for autumn 1995). Now a new book, *LETS Act Locally*, by Jonathan Croall (Gulbenkian Foundation, 1997, £8) discusses the principles of LETS, "simple but subversive", and their spread around England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland,

considering the ways in which the LETS idea can grow and develop in the 21st century.

Unlike some LETS propagandists, Croall is carefully realistic about the prospects for local groups, when the initial enthusiasm cools, and when members find that the services they offer might not be so well rewarded in a currency of limited application. The fact that Croall can report that there are nearly 450 groups established in the UK and Northern Ireland indicates that many of them have surmounted these various growing pains.

But he concludes that the most critical issue is that of the relations of LETS activities with the tax and benefits system. "If LETS are to have any real and lasting impact on the poorest and most disadvantaged sections of our society, then people who are unemployed or on low incomes will need to be totally confident that they can join and trade in a system without any danger of their benefits being lost. At present they cannot do so, because judgement on these matters is left in the hands of officials in local Department of Social Security offices, and is therefore arbitrary, inconsistent and confusing."

There are other issues where different LETS groups have a different experience. Some believe that it is precisely a very local matter. Others crave for wider links. In the county where I live, Suffolk, there are now twelve groups trading, and a group called Suffolk InterLETS was established in 1996. Other groups "think that the whole joy of LETS is that it's local, and that you shouldn't go outside to trade". Others think that joint action makes sense in relation to the country-wide anti-poverty campaign. There are similar disagreements over the involvement of local authorities. Some councils have actually appointed full-time LETS development officers. Some groups resist council involvement. Jonathan Croall has provided an enormously informative account of this movement so far.

Colin Ward

LETS Act Locally is available for £8 plus £2 p&p from Turnaround, Unit 3, Olympia Trading Estate, Coburg Road, Wood Green, London N22 6TZ.

— ABOVE THE PARAPETS —

IN THE STREET

As I write, a disused petrol station in north London is being occupied and used for protest/performance/play by 'Reclaim the Streets' (RTS), the anti-car culture direct action organisation, to coincide with the Kyoto conference on climate change. Simultaneously, RTS has published a sort of 'manifesto'. Like many popular organisations, RTS is an amalgam of different and rather formless tendencies and ideologies. Its primary purpose has been to hold 'street parties' to occupy land devoted to cars and use it for people - while causing major obstructions to city traffic and headaches for the authorities. The undoubted success of RTS has been in large part because of its ability to tap into powerful currents in youth culture, including the autonomous rave scene. However, there are limits to the project

as currently constituted, and some of the reasons for this are apparent in the RTS 'manifesto' (my name for it, not theirs).

On the one hand, one reads that "the struggle for car-free space must not be separated from the struggle against global capitalism for in truth the former is encapsulated in the latter". On the other, the street party is a 'carnival' which "celebrates temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and the established order", marked by the "suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms and prohibitions". It appears to me (and, as an outsider, I may be entirely wrong about this) that much of the 'idea' of RTS, as opposed to its practice, is linked to the idea of the Temporary Autonomous Zone (about which Colin Ward wrote in these pages a few months ago). The TAZ (a concept devised by 'Hakim Bey' in a book of that title) is precisely a moment of celebration, a 'carnival' in which one explores revolutionary experiences - temporarily. Which is fine by itself. However, to make the creation of TAZ experiences an end in itself - the only end of activity - is profoundly defeatist and ignores our responsibilities to those millions of people who continue to suffer and die as a result of the current social order.

As a strategy, limiting one's aims to merely creating fleeting experiences is "a counsel of despair" as Hakim Bey himself acknowledges. He replies that he: a) distrusts the word 'revolution' (not an adequate response); and b) believes that "nothing but a futile martyrdom could possibly result now from a head-on collision with the terminal state". Instead of the futility of martyrdom,

Hakim Bey chooses the futility of transience, not recognising that there are alternatives to both of these dead-ends.

The need to search for and construct such alternatives is indicated by a passage which ends the RTS 'manifesto':

"If you go to one demonstration and then go home, that's something, but people in power can live with that. What they can't live with is sustained pressure that keeps building, organisations that keep doing things, people that learn from the last time and do it better next time."

This passage (which I suspect is a quotation from Chomsky) enjoins us not only to keep on struggling, but to create social organisations and forces that can change dominant institutions. What happens in the street is undoubtedly part of that, but so is what happens in the neighbourhood and what happens in the workplace. What is needed is not only celebration and protest, but also organisation and the creation of programmes for action which can plausibly promise an end to social and environmental evils. The 'carnival', for all its heady delights, is a whirl of social atoms, closer to a mob than an organic community.

On the way back into Nepal from India, we ran into a RTS-type protest. A local communist leader had been assassinated and the community reacted by occupying and blocking the major highway into Nepal (along which a great deal of traffic passed). The highway was reclaimed for the people (roadside communities have deep grievances against the vehicles that roar along the highway, killing and injuring people and animals), and there was an unstoppable expression of resistance. There was also a fair amount of violence, with windows broken as lorries tried to drive through the crowd. Like the problem of 'car culture', the problem of political oppression and violence was much too wide to be solved by the occupation, but

as in the case of RTS, the occupation succeeded in certain limited aims and gave people both a vent for their feelings and a sense of their own power. However, in India, the occupation of the road was part of a larger process involving many more forms of protest and resistance, within a wider network of organisations - organisations which bound together hundreds if not thousands of people. When we go back to the petrol station in North London, it's pretty clear that RTS is in no sense equivalent in its reach or relevance or power to the communist party that rules West Bengal.

RTS is a valuable part of the current political scene. I hope that it goes on from strength to strength, and in particular that it finds its links to labour struggles such as the Liverpool dockers enriching and unifying rather than confusing and divisive. The sense I have, though, is that 'TAZ-type' thinking has a worrying degree of influence.

Milan Rai

— COPY DEADLINE —

The next issue of Freedom will be dated 10th January, and the last day for copy intended for this issue will be first post on Friday 2nd January

out now from Freedom Press

The Raven

No 36

on

'Class Struggle and Social Protest'

108 pages for only £3.00 (post free worldwide)

FREEDOM PRESS
84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX

SAFETY VERSUS CUT-THROAT COMPETITION IN TRAVEL

More than a year ago in the feature 'Anarchist Comments in Brief' (5th October 1996) I was suggesting that the TWA aeroplane that crashed off the USA coast shortly after take-off on its flight to Paris was not the result of a terrorist bomb, the immediate official reaction, but of cutting corners where maintenance was concerned. My hunch was based on the fact that "the plane (an old machine) had just come from Paris to Miami and within the space of three hours was to take off from Paris. No wonder the officialdom wanted it to be a bomb" (*Freedom*, 5th October 1996).

And the media played up to the official version, including *The Guardian* (24th August 1996) with a double-line headline: "Strongest evidence yet of bomb on TWA flight".

Well, after more than a year and a few million dollars in fees for the experts, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has at last stopped looking for the terrorist's bomb and admits that "our investigation has found absolutely no evidence to cause us to believe

that the tragedy was the result of a criminal act" (*The Independent*, 14th November 1997).

Apparently though the FBI are no longer involved the NTSB (National Transportation Safety Board) are continuing with their 'investigations'. Perhaps in a few years time they will come to the conclusion that a lack of proper maintenance, and the fact that it was an old machine, were the reasons why 230 people lost their lives.

Why I bring up the TWA crash is not to say '*Freedom* told them so'. It is to emphasise that cutting corners where safety is concerned has been a noticeable feature of privatisation of public transport. Last month, for instance, there was a report of a rail crash in Cumbria where a conductor was killed and both drivers and 25 passengers injured. The crash was in January 1995 - nearly two years ago - and the report by the Health and Safety executive only now concludes that "it could have been avoided if staff had put warnings on

the line after their train had been derailed" (*Guardian*, 21st November 1997).

And my question to these experts is: *which staff?* For as any rail traveller will have observed, there are now virtually no staff as everything connected with the railways is being operated by computers miles away from the centre of operations, *that is the tracks over which the trains operate*. Just recently it was reported that the remaining signal boxes - a few thousand still - are to be scrapped and transferred to the 'magic' computers. Not only accidents, what about the delays? Every morning on the radio we not only learn of three-mile hold-ups on the roads because lorries have turned over and blocked the highway, but also train delays because of either *signal or points* failures. When there were signal boxes there were no such problems and when the country was smothered in a yellow fog trains were not delayed because there were staff along the lines giving the go-ahead to the trains with fog-bangers which were actually put on the

rails to warn drivers of the red signals ahead. Today they have telephones in the drivers cab, all operated by the 'magic' computers.

But the computers are much less reliable or conscientious than those chaps who were perched up alongside the track in their signal boxes or along the track in fog, and were there when there was a crisis, such as a derailment.

Obviously I am old and old fashioned when it comes to safety on public transport. Computers may be cheaper (even if you have to pay compensation when you have an accident, or for delays) but in the long run *humans* are really more reliable - and especially if they are treated as human beings - than computers, which are just machines.

OCCUPATION ONE

Brownswood Road Library, N4, was today (3rd December 1997) taken to court by Hackney Council. A possession order was granted, but with a stay of execution until 31st March next year. The library, squatted over a year ago, has run a squat cafe (£1 meals on Sunday nights), meeting place (for RTS, Class War, etc.) and a community centre with the participation of local groups (Finsbury Park Action Group, Greens, etc.) and residents' associations (two ceilidhs), benefit concerts, a kids group and yoga classes. This was once a very popular library, the loss of which has angered residents who are fully supporting the squatters. The main focus, the Hackney Squat collective cafe, will of course continue elsewhere if eventually evicted. Various bods will negotiate meanwhile with the council for legal title. **Rik**

OCCUPATION TWO

Reclaim the Streets activists have taken over a disused petrol station in City Road, Angel. The occupation has been visited by over three thousand well-wishers over the weekend. The protest was meant to coincide with the Tokyo summit on pollution. The garage was wittily re-named 'TOXICO'.

The local right-wing rag the *Kamden Kronicle* ran a vicious story about the risk of the disused station going up in flames. What the *Kronicle's* lawyers have not appreciated was that they are liable to prosecution, as per the editors of *Green Anarchist*, for even reporting, however contentiously, on direct action. **Joe**

ANARCHIST COMMENTS IN BRIEF

A NATION OF GAMBLERS AND LOSERS It would appear that the bookmakers will offer a 'book' on anything, not just greyhound or horse races as one assumed years ago. Now you can lay your money on any event from when will the Queen die to when will we join the EMU. One quotes the extremes but in between pretty well all so-called 'sport' attracts gamblers on an enormous scale, and the rackets at the same time. Football is one of the main targets. A recent *Mail on Sunday* (9th November) had a whole feature on "The fix revealed: how much British sport is cheating the public by rigging results". What is involved is that the competitors are prepared for a consideration (more than a consideration) to lose a match or a race. Presumably for the bookmakers to go on taking bets they must also be in the racket to know who is going to win. In a sense the whole business is rather pathetic for the innocent punters who put on a quid or two just hoping that they have chosen the winner(s). Recently it has also been revealed that the players themselves are betting on their own games. Which way, one may well ask - especially if you happen to be the goalkeeper.

all papers, reports a "Crackdown on fishing quota fraudsters" - and it's not referring to 'foreigners' but our own native fishermen. A report by Hull University, a copy of which was apparently passed on to *The Sunday Telegraph*, "shows that six new Scottish super-trawlers have declared engine power at little more than half that listed by the manufacturers. By claiming to have less power, the vessels appear smaller than they are and the owners are able to save hundreds of thousands of pounds on their licence fees. There is growing evidence that the extra capacity of the new trawlers is enabling them to land huge quantities of 'black fish' for which they have no quota. Chris Tucker, a chartered engineer based in Hull, said: 'Anyone can de-rate an engine so that it is less powerful. It is a simple matter of adjusting a throttle stop. It would only be cheating if you then remove the stop after registering an engine power. I wouldn't dream of saying whether it happens in fishing or not - draw your own conclusions'."

Surely we have. What's the point of such a powerful engine and not using it?

The latest news on this little fraud job is that the government is thinking about it "including putting seals or even microchips to trawler engines to prevent any tampering". Can you imagine that the super-trawler owners haven't thought about that possibility?

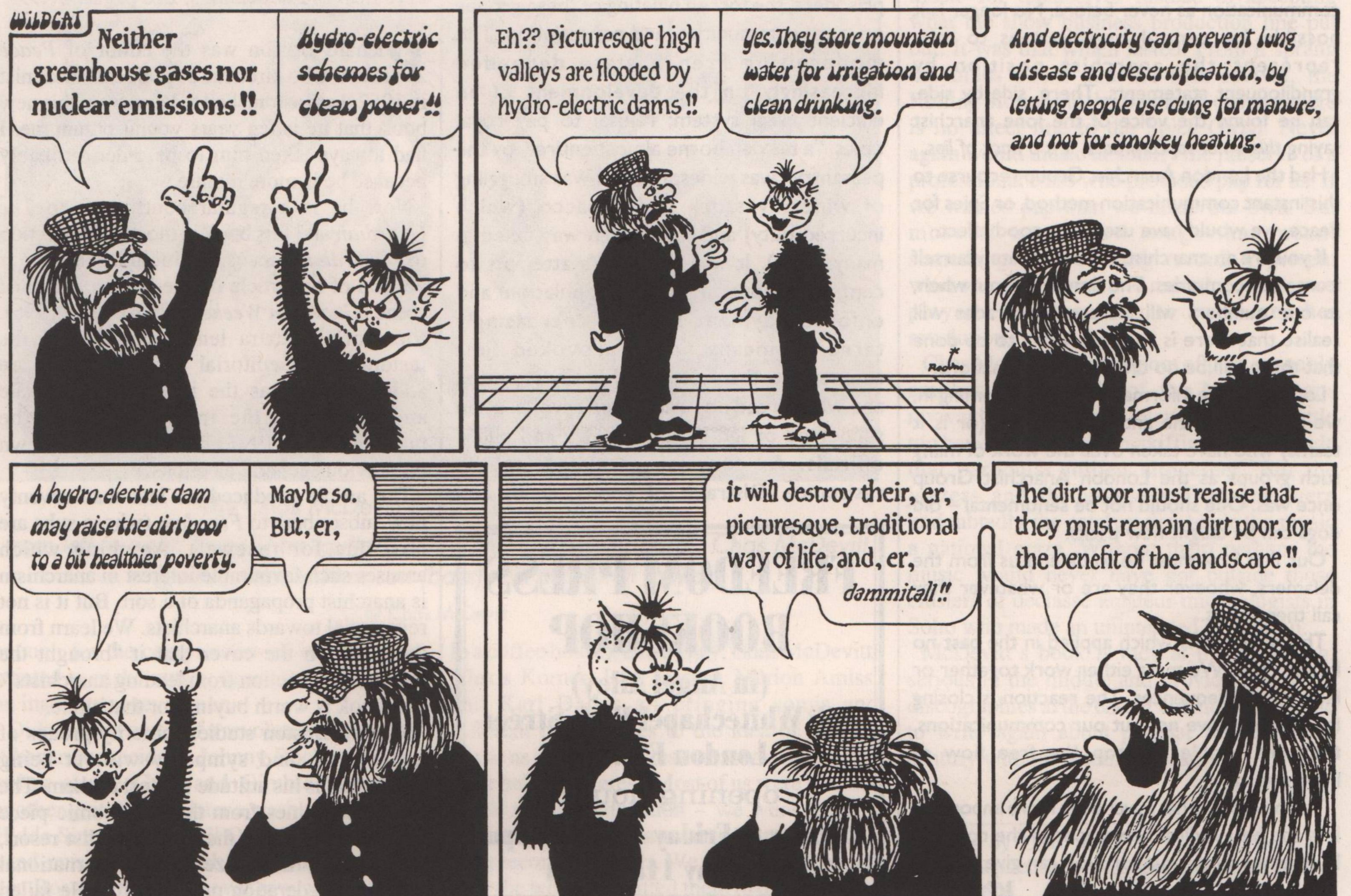
Grimsby MP Austin Mitchell refers to the whole racket as a vicious circle. "We get more vessels which under-report their capacity, so we end up with catching even more fish and decrease the level of our stocks still further" (23rd November).

Who dares to say that the anarchists who go on attacking the capitalist system are not practical? What fish stocks will there be if the present free-for-all assault on our oceans, on our fish stocks, goes on, as it undoubtedly will so long as the capitalist concern for profit is at the expense of the environment and, in this case, mankind's fantastic source of food - which goes on replacing itself without any effort on our part - *so long as we can control the greed of the exploiters who are only concerned with money profit?*

Libertarian

SUMMERHILL'S MOTHER DIES One of the most moving obituaries I have ever read appeared in *The Guardian* about Eva Neill, A.S. Neill's second wife, who had just died at the age of 88 and who had been there from the early 1940s (at the time she was actually working in America but had her son from her first marriage at Summerhill) and when she wrote to Neill saying that she was going to take him away Neill offered her a job as the cook. She accepted and in 1944 married him in spite of the fact that he was 27 years her senior. When Neill died in 1973 she took over the running of Summerhill, about which she was as expert as Neill himself, and it was only in 1985 that she retired as headmistress, handing over to their daughter Zoe Readhead, with whom I had the pleasure of a conversation over the telephone recently and she convinced me that she was *her mother's daughter* in that she would not compromise with the inspectors about the issue of freedom that has all along been the *raison d'être* of Summerhill.

WHO'S CHEATING IN THE FISH WAR? This is a topic often dealt with in *Freedom* with the 'British' always accusing the 'foreigners' of cheating in spite of the fact that the Brits have openly been selling their quotas to the Dutch and Spaniards. But the latest bit of scandal defies any attempt to present the British fishing industry as other than another capitalist racket. *The Sunday Telegraph* (23rd November), of



Rich and Poor



These words are written on 3rd December 1997. In order for you to read them they will be set, corrected and proofed, then laid out for printing. Then the printer will make plates and print the next issue fastly and efficiently. Then, of course, the paper has to be folded and put into envelopes individually, stamped, carted off to the Post Office and it will be in your hands to read by about Saturday week – 13th December. Your life being as busy as usual, you may not have the chance to read a word of this for some time to come. So all the urgency with which the contributors to this journal give to their material may not be read at all until it is too late. The demonstration, the occupation, the get-together to create an anarchist society gets delayed interminably.

Whereas the new technology is fast and efficient. Had this been written for electronic transmission then, at the press of the right control words, it would be in your home in less than a second. So paradoxically if you would subscribe to a-infos on FPI (address on the back page of *Freedom*) the chances are that you would have that feeling of instantaneousness or spontaneity which anarchists have always praised and believed to be essential.

I am a complete newcomer to electronic communication methods, but it gives me a feeling which I lacked since the demise of the London Anarchist Group. The debating society anarchism had never any attraction for me. It is the working together with comrades on far-reaching issues that this electronic method has opened up. Without the London Anarchist Group there has been scarcely any anarchist activity. I still have, from the secretary, some of Arthur Moyses's postcards calling us to the barricades where Patch was already there sniffing out the situation.

Don't run away with the idea that all is perfect on the Internet. There have been the usual groans, but until the loophole is there, there is a chance for local and international communication as never before. No longer is it possible for central organisations to misrepresent the anarchist position by grandiloquent statements. There, side by side, can be found the voice of the lone anarchist saying *this is not so, comrades, it is a pack of lies*.

Had the London Anarchist Group recourse to this instant communication method, or Spies for Peace, we would have used it to good effect.

If you are an anarchist, do not isolate yourself from your comrades. The time will come when, as our numbers will increase, comrades will realise that there is so much work to be done that there will be no time for recriminations.

Looking at the information which is coming in, we must thank the anonymous team (or is it teams) who have taken over the work of many such groups as the London Anarchist Group once was. One should not be sentimental – old dogs can be taught new tricks.

Our first task must be to defend us from the defamers, whoever they are or whatever they call themselves.

The restrictions which applied in the past no longer exist. We must either work together or face the consequences. The reaction is closing in. But they have not cut our communications, they are unable to stop the free flow of information.

This newspaper has never been more important. It is the best radical newspaper in the country. It deserves all the support you can give it.

John Rety

FOOD FOR THOUGHT ... AND ACTION!

LITERATURE WORTH SMASHING OPEN YOUR FRIEND'S PIGGY BANK FOR

Bumper Stickers,* eight assorted, See Sharp Press. You don't need a bumper to stick these on, of course; anywhere will do providing it's eight inches by two inches or three and a half inches. They're ideal for brightening up the side of a cupboard or filing cabinet, and in our experience they provide hours of endless amusement when stuck up outside political party offices or on politicians' cars, but use your own imagination. They're all self-adhesive and sport the following slogans in either black or black and red on a white background: *Justice: a term of vicious mockery, as in 'equal justice under the law'; Don't Vote: it only encourages them!; Be Realistic: demand the impossible; Ambition: the desire to tread on others; Help the Police – beat yourself up!; If you think that nobody should run your life VOTE FOR NOBODY; Work is the curse of the drinking class; If voting could change anything, it would be illegal.* They are available for 75p each for quantities from one to seven, and at the reduced price of £5.20 for a set of eight. Happy peeling.

History of Peasant Revolts: the social origins of rebellion in early modern France* by Yves-Marie Bercé, Cornell University Press. Anarchists would agree wholeheartedly with Bercé's basic premise: "The history of the growth of the modern state ... has often concealed the strength and durability of local communities", including the feeling of belonging to village or town; the spontaneous solidarity shown by the neighbourhood and the mutual support offered by relatively isolated communities, which he says "have all been conspicuous features of daily life since time out of mind". This brilliant book brings to life the reality of the daily grind in seventeenth century France and the people's courage in resisting oppression, in the same way as – or perhaps better than – Christopher Hill did with the lives of the common people in the English revolution. France at the time was afflicted with not just the European problems of poverty, high prices, plagues and unusually harsh weather, but with the massive costs of various wars, including war taxes, the seizure of food and supplies for both the army and its prisoners, the forced billeting of these groups on rural communities, and conscription. The modernising French state depended increasingly on the development of an efficient fiscal system; refusal to pay royal taxes, "a burden borne almost entirely by the peasantry" was widespread, as was smuggling of wine, livestock and tobacco (which incurred duty) and salt (which was taxed in many areas). It was the state's attempts to centralise control of the population and enforce payment through increasingly terrorist means which provoked first resentment, then riots, and finally repeated and widespread popular armed revolts, often supported or led by local gentry and public officials. As coercion escalated, so did resistance. Distrain of goods, crops and

livestock moved on to imprisonment and even summary execution of entire villages. In response taxmen, bailiffs and their henchmen were ridiculed, insulted, beaten up and thrown in the river, usually by the women while the men worked in the fields. Magistrates would sometimes jail or hang state officials for threatening local freedoms and privileges, always jealously guarded. Troops sent to suppress resistance met increasingly fierce opposition: barricades, snipers, uncontrollable armed peasants who would free their arrested leaders, pursue the troops across the countryside and even launch assaults on their barracks. Captured soldiers could be held to ransom or lynched – entire brigades were slaughtered. If there was one thing the peasants hated more than the tax collectors it was the enforcers, and since resisting even a bailiff was a capital offence, well, 'in for a sous, in for a livre' as they probably used to say. The crucial role of the commune is explained and emphasised throughout, whether as town, urban neighbourhood, rural parish or single village population. Mutual aid was taken for granted: neighbour would help neighbour, village would help village, whole communes would contribute thousands of armed angry rebels who would maraud across the countryside liberating the surrounding settlements. Unusually for a piece of scholarly research, this is an exciting book written in an easy narrative style. Even more unusually the author is plainly sympathetic to his subject and the translation is excellent. We do not know whether the original thousand-page French edition is still available, but this 360-page revised edition will do very nicely thank you as an inspiration. Includes a preface, introduction, postscript and index. Published at £15.95, yours for a mere £5.75, but stocks are limited.

The Revolutionary Pleasure of Thinking for Yourself* See Sharp Press. This is one of several editions of a pamphlet issued at various times and places in various forms. The editor of this one has cut most of the Marxist/Situationist jargon in which it was originally written, and "translated it into plain English". He has also added new material, including an introduction. The aim of the revisions is to make it accessible to the ordinary reader in which – comparing it to another edition we have, *Revolutionary Self-Theory* (Spectacular Times, 90p) – he succeeds, er, spectacularly. 16 pages, A5-ish, £1.20.

Do or Die: voices from Earth First!, No. 6, South Downs EF!. 152 pages of valuable, well written articles about direct action by various radical environmental groups, including a long section on international actions. One piece looks at the alleged domination of the UK movement by "white middle class males"; the history of Reclaim the Streets is examined, and there is some serious and pertinent scrutinising of the whole movement's strengths and weaknesses. There are reams of great cartoons, photos and illustrations, plus, discover the meaning of VIDA: Violent Indirect Direct Action. £1.80.

Direct Action No. 4, Solidarity Federation. Health hazards at work, basic facts for temporary and casual workers; Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin's reception in Australia and the background to this black American anarchist; global capitalism; IWA news; plus letters, reviews and more. 36 pages, £1.50.

Titles distributed by Freedom Press Distributors (marked*) are post-free inland (please add 15% postage and packing to overseas orders). For other titles add 10% towards p&p inland, 20% overseas. Cheques in sterling to 'FREEDOM PRESS' please.

WITTY ECCENTRICITY

Starkness at Noon

by Richard Boston

Five Leaves Publications, 218 pages, £7.99

Richard Boston was the editor of *Peace News* who hired me as political cartoonist in 1962. I am astonished to learn from this new book that he is ten years younger than me. I had always taken him to be older, probably because he is more mature.

Now he is a regular contributor to *The Guardian* and this book is mostly a collection of *Guardian* pieces. It includes a longer version of his article on the British anarchist scene (*Guardian Weekend*, November 1996). Most of the extra length consists of the restoration of editorial cuts, but there are additions such as the inclusion of female anarchists and the information that the turn-out for the 1997 election was well down on previous general elections.

The article produced no less than seventy new subscribers to *Freedom* (whose subs are now due for renewal). Anything which arouses such favourable interest in anarchism is anarchist propaganda of a sort. But it is not reverential towards anarchists. We learn from the blurb on the cover that it "brought the threat of libel action from leading anarchists". The book is worth buying for that alone.

Richard Boston studies minority groups of many sorts, and sympathy without being reverential is his attitude to most of them. The book title comes from that of a comic piece about Cap d'Agde, the French nudist resort, which won first prize in the International Naturism Federation press awards. He failed

to locate the Flat Earth Society, but manages to concoct a seven hundred word article out of the attempt.

In 1994 he stood as a candidate for the European Parliament and wrote a series of articles about it. Under 'description' on the candidature form he wrote "Tall and tanned and young and lovely". This was rejected on the ground that it had more than the permitted six words, so he changed it to "Boston Tea Party". His manifesto consisted of a list of emoluments paid to MEPs (the general expenditure allowance of £2,131 a month was halved for MEPs who failed to attend "for no valid reason", so the Italian MEP who never attended was having to rub along with only £12,000 a year, plus salary, secretarial allowance, etc., etc.). The Tory was elected. Boston came last of seven candidates, with nine votes less than the Natural Law Party.

The diary of his candidature finds fun in all sorts of unexpected places, for instance in the index to Roy Jenkins's boring *European Diary 1977-81*, which reads in part "Committee of Permanent Representatives, dinners for 122; lunches 141, 187, 212, 219, 264, 272, 321, 354, 486, 519-20, 523, 533, 563, 583, 617, 653".

Other essays are rambling literary criticism. The review of Richmal Crompton's *William* books includes a lot of P.G. Wodehouse and H.G. Wells, and that of Schulz's *Peanuts* strip cartoons is largely about Herriman's *Krazy Kat*. The rambling style, the off-beat erudition and the witty eccentricity make this a very enjoyable book.

Donald Room

FREEDOM PRESS

BOOKSHOP

(in Angel Alley)

84b Whitechapel High Street
London E1 7QX

— opening hours —

Monday to Friday 10.30am-6pm
Saturday 11am-5pm

GET ME MY BUTTERFLY NET

From the meat-rack within Piccadilly Circus up-market to Fortnum & Mason gourmet to the gentry, grocer to the Queens in royal or exile, can be heard the fluttering of fairy wings emanating medicalwise from the anti-climatic Royal Academy Winter Exhibition 'Sensation'. It is a gentle sound and the Town and his red-nosed Frau have a right (a right?) to try and recapture those old discarded childhood dreams, fantasies and, if you should be that lucky, childhood memories. It is falsity in all its Victorian splendour as, meticulously painted, the tiny fairy folk in frame after frame freeze-hold among the flowers, butterflies in gossamer small as a child's hand and, beneath the mask of childish innocence, the hint and the suggestion of the adult female body. It is Victoriana writ large for, bless their cast iron hearts, the Victorians loved their pornography and in the God-dominated age they wanted it with a clear conscience. It was a rising middle class who degraded the labouring class six days a week in their smoke-belching factories and on the seventh praised Christ for their profits and tip their top hats to God, for this the best of all possible worlds cough a lung or two. New to the arts, they paid for the second-rate academic mainly medieval pastiches with nude maidens tied to trees and lots of pink-arse small boys filling in as angels, but it was a free market so put the money down and get the daub that one can openly hang on the walls within the fake baronial hall. Paedophilia for a price prettily rose-tinted arse to cheek that will never offend the servants.

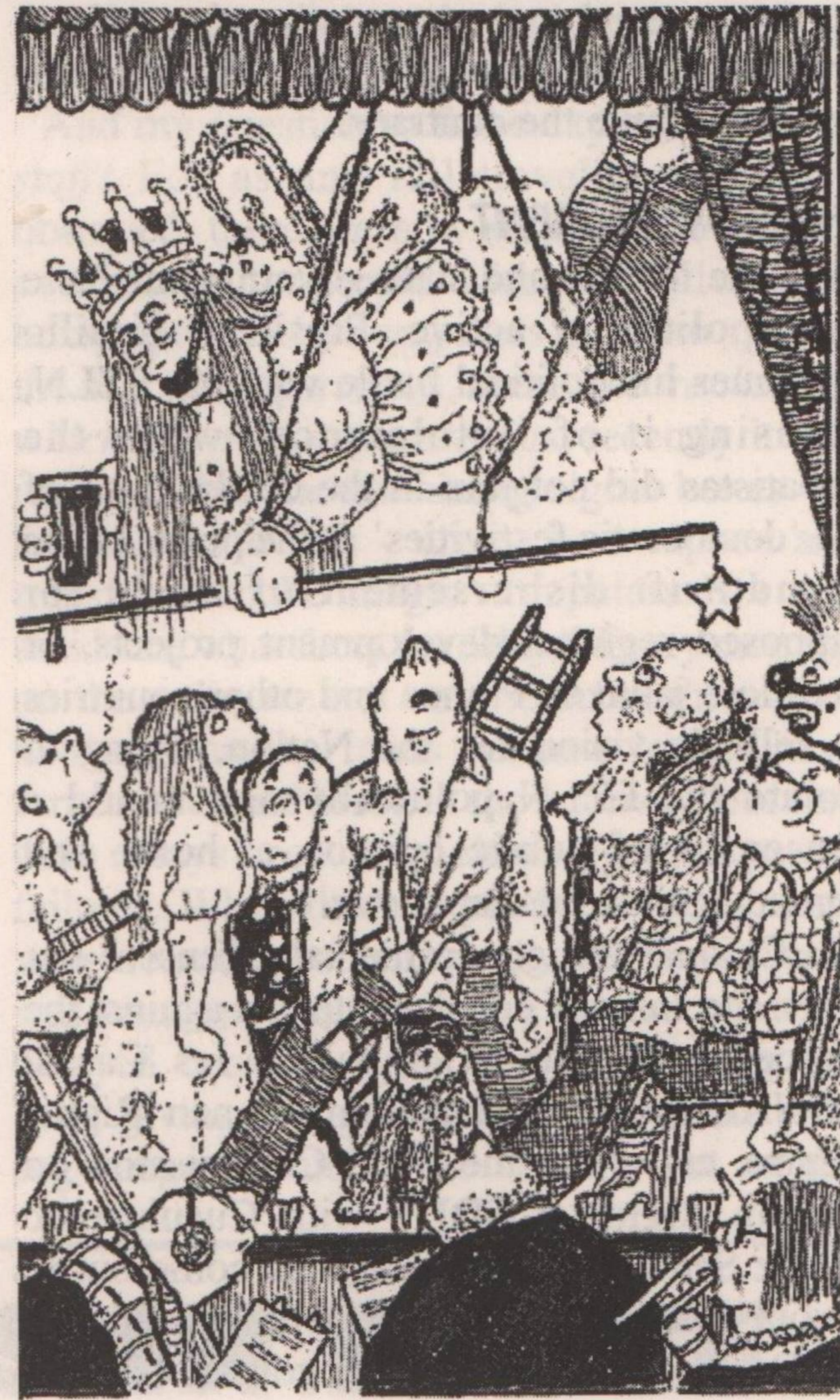
Rackham hangs on the walls of the Royal Academy exhibition for each in his fashion is a master of that craft, and the price flutters from \$100,000 for a Rackham to the £1,000,000 that Andrew Lloyd Webber paid in 1992 for Richard Dadd's *Contradiction: Oberon and Titania* but, as poor Dicky spend most of his painting time in Broadmoor insane asylum, he found a certain unbuyable peace.

The middle ages was a mean and brutal time and it seems that this was when witchcraft and faerie as the visual and active voice and action of the Old Religion came into open conflict with the New Religion as the new state religion of Christianity followed behind each invading army. That the Old Religion with its

acceptance of ancient gods finally became Christianised in obedience to the authoritarian new elitist ruling class comes under the heading of simple politics but, as Margaret Murray in her various books on witchcraft and the Old Religion demonstrates time and volume again, the Old Religion survived among the agriculture labouring class. Pray to Christ during the day and knees-up with the drum and fife behind the dancing priest among the gravestones and still pray to the old gods. It is true that Margaret tends to bend a rule or two as, when in the matter of the trial of Gilles de Rais, companion to Joan of Arc and Marshal of France, when they both stood individual trials for witchcraft, in that she ignores de Rais' huge number of sexual murders but writes it off as poetic licence.

In the great state trials engineered by the Christian establishment to destroy the star names still involved with the Old Religion one is time and time again forced to relate these trials with the state trials of the 'anti-communist un-American activities' and the Stalinist 'anti-trotskyist running dogs of fascism' divided (?) in their ideology but united in their purpose and aim. Over five hundred years one may divide judge, jury and victims but the dock still follows us all into the twentieth century.

In 1337 Lady Alice Kyteler stood trial for both operative and ritual witchcraft and she, as with Gilles de Rais Marshal of France, was found guilty for in the protection of the state no one is sacrosanct be they Royal purple or Ma Thatcher's life peer. In the matter of Lady Alice in 1324 it is recorded that when "in rifling the closet of the ladie, they found a pipe of ointment, wherewith she greased a staffe, upon the which she ambled and galloped through thick and thin, when and in what manner she listed". In the matter of Lady Alice's flying ointment on broomsticks as the usual frighteners of an ignorant populace and



ARTHUR MOYSES

'Maestro, don't you think she's a bit butch to be flying the Faerie Queene?'

myth-making state and remember that in a sparse agrarian society herbal remedies was the moonlighting perk of wise men and women. Though the church in the matter of the trials of the practitioners of the Old Religion accused them of everything from cannibalism to rave-up Bacchanalian sexual orgies in those ol' graveyards, but it was no more than the early Christians, as a minority cult, had been 'accused' of.

The belief that witches and fellow travellers could fly was accepted by those who used various ointment drugs such as baby's fat,

juice of water parsnip, aconite, cinquefoil, deadly nightshade and soot. Aconite is a dangerous poison, as with cowbane and hemlock, and these things date back to early Roman times and, rubbed into the skin, it slows down the heart and in the end death, as with belladonna that can cause "wild excitement and delirium" and once under the influence of those drugs it's 'look ma I'm flying'.

All drugs are fool's gold and avoid them, avoid them. There are no modern drugs, politics or persecution, just over the long years variations on a theme. There are those who yearn for the return of the Old Religion, or Clause Four on the back of the Labour Party membership card, but they are no more than dreams. And there are those who practice the Satanic Mass, yea even to the sacrifice of an unfortunate moggy if it means making one with the Prince of Darkness, but again dreams, dreams, dreams. For Anton LaVey is kaput and no more, dead, dead, dead, and the high priest of the Church of Satan should now be playing touch-toe with Old Nick himself. On Walpurgisnacht in 1966, in a quiet and respectable suburb of San Francisco, Anton established his first Satanick church in a brothel there to practice the Black Mass and various other party games when there was nothing on television. One feels that it was the use of naked females acting as servers that drew in the true believers, but Anton built up his churches to Satan with devotees that included the late Sammy Davis Jr, Jayne Mansfield and, some say, Marilyn Monroe. I myself could not make it that night, but take the pee as you wish as law-abiding fellow travelling Christians, 'we only go for the food and wine'. The fact is that Anton made it into the Yellow Pages with his Satanic Church and, after acting as a chaplain at a military funeral, Anton's Satanic Church became officially recognised by the US Armed Forces. The devil film *Rosemary's Baby* boosted the Satanic cult, but when Charles Manson's ghastly 'family' went on their night of dreary slaughter, giving credit to Anton as their PR, the weak sisters, as always, took to the safety of mum's cuddly arms. Comrades, it was ever so Old Nick or nay. God: One. Old Nick: Nil.

Arthur Moyses

An Anarchist Music-Making Movement

It has taken forty years for the first full scale study of the whole skiffle phenomenon to appear. Here was an anarchist style music movement that swept the country and changed the course of popular music in Britain and ultimately wherever Western popular music had an audience. With the exception of pre-fabricated groups like the Spice Girls the popular music scene even today is still dominated by those who started in skiffle groups and bought McDevitt, Vipers and Donegan records. Yet a few grudging lines in the rock histories, some credits from the folk magazines, and the odd clip of Nancy Whiskey singing *Freight Train* in the television rock histories is all we've had.

So Chas McDevitt's book* is a welcome event and makes a major start on putting history right. It sets the scene, explores the roots of the music (exceptionally well done this bit) discusses both recording groups and those that never made it to the studios, and provides a wealth of unpublished photographs, cartoons, and line drawings.

Probably the most interesting period for skiffle was the 1954-56 era before we all made records. Soho and its immediate environs was a community then, or perhaps it would be more accurate to say it was a cluster of communities. Britain's first underground newspaper - John Rety's *Intimate Review* - was our parish magazine. In the new-fangled coffee houses, Northumberland Avenue's The Coffee House, in The Nucleus and Bunjies (the latter is still going), in the Cottage Club, and in the Blue Posts behind the 100 Club, a few people, most of whom weren't good



The Chas McDevitt Skiffle Group, July 1957

from left to right: Tony Kohn (guitar), Marc Sharratt (washboard), Chas McDevitt (guitar), Lennie Harrison (bass), Bill Bramwell (guitar)

© Chas McDevitt

enough for the complexities of jazz but who wanted to make music, began to put together an inadvertent revolution.

Didn't seem much of a revolution at first and it began by accident. Johnny Booker playing guitar at the Gyre and Gimble joined by another guitarist and later a washboard player. Hylda Sims and Russell Quay combining jug band music and English folk song. Jean Van den Bosche (the first I ever saw with a guitar

in a coffee house), Diz Disley, Chas McDevitt, Alexis Korner, John Hasted, Marion Amis, and Karl Dallas all bringing songs and different perspectives to the idea of making music as a group, because what was on general offer held no interest. Most of us were without much musical education - we were eclectic because we didn't know any better. And we were record collectors. We took songs from all over the world and fitted them to our technical

limitations and our instrumentation.

Astonishingly an audience grew, we made records, went national, and in the end were defeated by the show business establishment. But for the first time in years a large number of young people all over Britain were making music for themselves instead of accepting what the show business production line put out. It was that which lasted. From it sprang the blues boom and the folk revival, the Rolling Stones and the Beatles (I do hope there is no direct line to the Spice Girls). Never again would music be totally the preserve of a professional class who provided pap for us. If we wanted pap then we made our own. But most of us wanted songs that meant something. The existing records represent what we were allowed to record, not what we played. And that was to cause another revolution.

Chas McDevitt, coming out of jazz, arguably emphasises the role of the New Orleans revival bands and their interval groups a little too heavily. Many proto-skiffles were outside that particular milieu altogether. But the jazzers and the unlovely Donegan were undoubtedly the catalyst that made the music a national craze. Without them perhaps the music would never have got outside those clusters of declassé amateur musicologists in Soho who made an unintended revolution.

McDevitt's book is racy at the beginning, serious in the middle and provides excellent discographies at the end. It will not be possible to write again about popular music in this century without reading it first.

John Pilgrim

* *Skiffle* by Chas McDevitt, with forewords by Mark Knopfler and George Harrison, published by Robson, £20

The Mexican Government, EZLN and organisations in Chiapas

Political life within the country is thriving. At the national level, intense activity before the 6th July elections took place as the country voted to renew the Congress, elect the mayor of Mexico City, and hold elections for diverse posts in several Mexican states. The loss of the PRI's control (and President Zedillo's) of the Congress, Mexico City and other states threw the official party and our presidentialist system into crisis.

The defections of PRI politicians and members of the military, to join opposition parties, have created an unfavourable climate with the Party. Both the private business sector and Church officials have had harsh criticism recently for government policies, and have put salt in certain wounds by bringing up matters such as the militarisation of the country, human rights, the (non) implementation of the San Andres Accords, etc.

As diverse sectors continue to lose confidence and credibility in President Zedillo's long-term plans for the country, the President turns to the use of force and coercion, given his lack of consensus and hegemony. President Zedillo even has strong opposition within the PRI, as the rank-and-file increasingly question his decisions. Business leaders have echoed criticism, as they face companies closing in droves and layoffs of workers who join the millions of unemployed, whose ranks have swelled in the past three years.

Military officials now step into the fray. Within the Mexico City police department, several government agencies and even in the national Congress, military officials are become active in order to exercise political control and demand their share of power.

The question now in the air is: who is controlling the country? Who is guiding the country and is capable of leading the vision for the future of the country? President Zedillo? The military? The PRI? Business leaders? The opposition? The Congress? The San Andres dialogue? The EZLN? Civil society and its organisations?

The San Andres dialogue between the EZLN and the federal government has been suspended since September 1996 and is at an impasse. Nonetheless neither the federal government, nor the EZLN, nor the

organisations of civil society have been dormant. Quite the contrary.

THE GOVERNMENT

Both the federal and state governments have been politically active. President Zedillo continues his political battle with the EZLN, accusing it of 'intolerance' when the Zapatistas did not join in the celebrations of the 'democratic festivities' at the polls, of the spendthrift disbursement of funds for supposed regional development projects, of Zedillo's jaunt to France and other countries to sell his vision for the Nation, trying to isolate the EZLN politically and mould a consensus of public opinion at home and abroad against the Zapatistas.

In Chiapas the governmental offensive has taken the form of constant attacks against the Dioceses of San Cristobal de las Casas, CONAI, the Fray Bartolome Human Rights Centre, etc. Now the State Commission on Human Rights (CEDH), with Cuauhtemoc Lopez Sanchez at the helm, has come out in favour of legislation to control the activities of NGOs. Years ago, during the governorship of Patricinio Gonzalez Garrido, Mr Lopez was severely criticised for having drafted some of the most repressive laws in the state, and has been accused of jailing indigenous people on trumped up charges. Not surprisingly, the interests of the state are deposited in a Commission (CEDH) which it controls. But the governmental offensive doesn't stop there: the state government, together with the PRI members in the state Congress, refuse to modify biased laws that will control the 1998 elections in which 111 municipal (county) presidents are to be elected.

In addition, the state government is carrying out one aspect of the San Andres accords, i.e., consultations for the redistricting of the state, but they are doing so unilaterally, with no opposition forces present. Meanwhile, President Zedillo visits Chiapas and hands out generous funding within conflictive areas, and inaugurates the Welfare and Development Program (paraphrasing the title and content of Table 3 at San Andres, which is still awaiting agreement), in an effort to eviscerate the Zapatista demands.

Both the federal and state governments have been militarily active as well. The increase in military personnel throughout the state and in new municipalities, the presence of more personnel from the Public Security Police in communities, and the increase in activity among the paramilitary groups make the Chiapas panorama a mosaic of almost daily violence, especially against rural communities.

The government's refusal to implement the Table 1 accords (Indigenous Rights and Culture), and its cornering the EZLN into a military logic through the presence of more security forces leads us to suppose that, notwithstanding the EZLN's inability to compete militarily with the Mexican army, the army could be preparing for a possible offensive, awaiting word from the government, which itself is seeking favourable conditions at a political and social level, including a shift in its favour of national and international public opinion.

The federal government's implicit position is clear:

- 1) no to any legislative bill regarding the agreements signed at Table 1;
- 2) the EZLN must join the electoral process;
- 3) recourse to arms is obsolete;
- 4) the causes that originated the conflict have been solved.

THE EZLN

The EZLN has been politically active on a number of fronts: it sent representatives to Spain for the II Intercontinental Encounter for Humanity and against Neo-liberalism; another delegation travelled through Italy; 1,111 Zapatistas marched on Mexico City; while there, they inaugurated the National Indigenous Congress and the Zapatista Front for National Liberation (FZLN); the EZLN has encouraged and strengthened the regional autonomous movement and the 'rebellious' municipalities, quite independently from the government's inaction on implementing the San Andres accords.

The EZLN has made its position clear: there will be no dialogue as long as the accords agreed to at Table 1 are not implemented and the indigenous regions are not demilitarised.

Given the government's and the EZLN's positions we conclude:

1. Both are active politically and militarily.
2. Both are carrying out aspects of the San Andres accords unilaterally and in a de facto manner.
3. Both have placed irreconcilable conditions for the resumption of talks.
4. Both are hoping that the other side will be worn down; the government hopes that the EZLN will implode; the EZLN hopes that a weakened presidentialist system and PRI, together with a strengthened civil society will help pave the way for a transition to democracy, liberty and justice.

THE SOCIAL ORGANISATIONS

During the past year we have seen many social, campesino and indigenous groups whither away, which previously had been a social and political counterweight to the ruling groups within the state of Chiapas. Coalitions of organisations that channelled discontent and were interlocutors for social, campesino and indigenous demands were a political, civil, legal and peaceful alternative to military solutions.

Also during the past year we have seen how the paramilitary groups have grown in strength, such as Paz y Justicia in the north of Chiapas; how the Chinchulines have been resurrected, how Alianza San Bartolome de los Llanos and Mascara Roja have been supported by official funds; and how the new MIRA (Indigenous, Revolutionary, Anti-Zapatista Movement) has come into existence. We have also seen how violence in the Northern, Altos, Central Valley and Border Zones has grown. The obvious question:

Where are the civil, social and peaceful initiatives? Why do armed groups multiply but not social forces?

Two events occurred on 12th October that give us some hope: in Mexico City the National Indigenous Congress came to a close with new life. An important agreement was reached among delegates from throughout the country to send a letter to President Zedillo demanding the implementation of the San Andres accords, a move that brought support from many sectors.

In Ocosingo, Chiapas, six coalitions of campesino and urban organisations formed a new social and political front: the Coordinator of Autonomous Organisations of the State of Chiapas (COAECH). It is made up by:

- 1) CIOAC (Independent Central of Agricultural Workers and Campesinos);
- 2) COAO (Coalition of Autonomous Organisations of Ocosingo), made up in turn by the ARIC-Independent, ARIC-Union of Unions, CNPI (National Coordinator of Indian Peoples), and the Francisco Villa Organisation;
- 3) CNPA (Plan de Ayala National Coordinator);
- 4) UMOI (Unity of the Movement of Independent Organisations), which brings together several other organisations;
- 5) RAP (Pluriethnic Autonomous Regions), also made up of various organisations with a presence in several municipalities in the state;
- 6) the FAC-MLN (Broad Front for the Construction of a National Liberation Movement).

All these coalitions have a sizeable presence throughout the state. And the CIOAC, CNPA and FAC-MLN are also linked into national movements.

The COAECH, as a new social and political actor in Chiapas, defined its internal rules and plan of action, emphasising mobilisation as one of the strategies for struggle, within a single political program with four main activities: 1) Implementation of the San Andres accords, 2) Demilitarisation, 3) Against paramilitarisation, 4) Land reform.

Interestingly, no explicit mention was made of the electoral struggle or of a political coalition in light of the upcoming 1998 municipal elections. Also of note is the fact that, whereas in years past the campesino, indigenous and urban forces tended to coalesce around economic demands, leading to seemingly inevitable division, co-optation on the part of the government and disagreements, now the sole uniting factor is political.

The birth of a new social force within Chiapas is a hopeful sign that common strategies of the social organisations may be able to bring about change in the state.

Centro de Informacion y Analisis de Chiapas (CIACH)

ANARCHIST POSTAGE STAMPS

postage stamps for after the revolution

with sixteen portraits by Clifford Harper and foreword by Colin Ward



What can anarchism possibly have in common with postal services? Francis Sedlak was a pioneer of the Tolstoyan anarchist community at Whiteway in Gloucestershire in 1899. After working his passage from Bohemia via the French Foreign Legion in Algeria, he escaped from prison into the Sahara desert, only to be jailed in Spain. At Whiteway he built his house where he lived with Nellie Shaw. Wanting to post an article he'd written, 'My Military Experience', he realised that he could not bring himself to lick the back of a stamp bearing a portrait of Queen Victoria and support the government-run postal service, so he set out to walk to London and deliver his article by hand, but "the weather was very cold with heavy snow and he was clad only in thin clothes with no shoes. Not surprisingly he was forced to turn

back." If only poor Francis Sedlak had a copy of Clifford Harper's *Anarchist Postage Stamps*, his letter may have got there sooner. We're sure there are enough anarchists working in the Post Office today to ensure its safe delivery ... if not on time.

Rebel Press ISBN 0 946061 14 9 £4.50
(please add 10% inland or 20% overseas for postage and packing)

NATO expansion to Hungary

After an expensive state media campaign, the referendum in Hungary for joining NATO, the government only managed to get 42% of the total vote supporting accession to the western security alliance. There were a majority of abstentions (51%) and 7% voted 'No'. The result is, however, presented at home and abroad as an overwhelming victory for the Hungarian government, having secured 85% of the vote (the minority vote that is).

That there have been great irregularities in the presentation is alleged by the Alba circle (the Hungarian movement for peace without coercion). They have taken the Hungarian government to court, accusing it of breaking the law on funding of television for political ends. They are also accusing the Roman Catholic church (which has traditionally been very right-wing in Hungary) of allowing its bishops to become involved in pro-NATO propaganda.

There is already a large American presence in southern Hungary as a back-up force for the 'international peace-keepers' in Bosnia. Alba is opposing the establishment of western troops in Hungary. For more information their e-mail address is alba@alba.zpk.hu. JR

Post-Modernism: the celebration of impotence

Dear Friends,
Paul Tremlett's advocacy of 'post modernity' (*Freedom*, 29th November 1997) and his uncritical acceptance of the theoretical musings of the disillusioned Marxist Jean-Francois Lyotard, is hardly illuminating. It has long been recognised, long, long before post-modernist intellectuals arrived on the academic scene, that we do not see the world in 'pristine' fashion, but that it is always mediated through language, culture and social praxis. As Lewis Mumford wrote nearly half a century ago (and he was merely re-affirming what anthropologists and sociologists had recognised long before): "Each one of us sees the world through a screen: the screen of his physical constitution and his temperament, his vocation and his varied social roles, his family and his other group affiliations, his personal philosophy and the total body of his culture" (in *The Conduct of Life*, page 23).

As for Paul's insistence that the world is 'real', nobody apart from religious mystics, idealist philosophers and the post-modernists has ever suggested otherwise. Only post-modernist intellectuals divorced from the real world have suggested that there is nothing beyond the text, or that there is nothing 'pre-conceptual'. Paul must think that the readers of *Freedom* are completely devoid of common sense. Paul should recognise: 1. a distinction needs to be made between post-modernity (i.e. late capitalism) and post-modernism (its cultural ethos); 2. that a rejection of the so-called 'grand narratives' of fascism, Stalinism or liberalism does not necessarily imply the repudiation of the ideals of the Enlightenment (freedom, fraternity, equality, reason, cosmopolitanism) or the principle of humanity (all of course misleadingly derided by Lyotard); and 3. that to recognise the diversity of human cultures does not entail the rejection of truth as representation – without truth is considered to

be culturally relative (in which case fascism is true), or held to be non-existent (which is contrary to common sense), or is thought to be something that will be revealed to ordinary mortals through poetic evocation or the oracular pronouncements of the likes of Heidegger and Lyotard (which is obscurantist and elitist). Post-modernism, as a yuppie philosophy which reflects and applauds the post-modern condition, is, of course, the 'grandest' of all 'grand narratives', and its cultural relativism is intellectually incoherent and politically vacuous, as the critiques of both John Zerzan (in *Future Primitive and other essays*) and Murray Bookchin (in *Re-enchanting Humanity*) both cogently and stridently affirm.

The so-called 'post-modern' condition – with its alienation, fragmentation, consumerism, cult of the ephemeral, cultural pastiche, relativistic theory and de-centred subjectivity – does not describe a new epoch but is rather a cultural effect of capitalism. While in the past socialists and philosophers bewailed and critiqued this condition and, as Paul writes, anarchists too tried to "restore meaning to the world", lo and behold the post-modernist intellectuals, mostly ensconced in some elite university and earning fat salaries, seem to applaud and wallow in this detached and disoriented condition. But do anarchists have to follow in sheep-like fashion these disillusioned Marxist intellectuals in their "celebration of impotence", which is how John Zerzan describes post-modernist theory. We should embrace post-modernist theory, Paul Tremlett tells us, because it offers "no answers" and because of its "pathological suspicion of power". The anarchist critique of the state and other forms of power has never been pathological, and anarchists, of whatever kind, have always attempted to provide 'answers' and alternatives to barbaric capitalism. If there are no answers, as Paul

contends, there is no point in asking questions and we can all go around as 'cheerful robots' either functioning within the capitalist 'mega-machine' or becoming a nomad in some 'temporary autonomous zone' that does not critique let alone challenge the status quo. Embrace post-modernity! If by this is meant contemporary capitalism and its cultural ethos, nothing could be more reactionary. If by this term Paul simply means that we should recognise cultural differences, well, who is there to disagree? Fascists, who always repudiated the 'grand narrative' of the Enlightenment, put a great emphasis on 'difference'. But anarchists, especially those much maligned classical anarchists, put an emphasis not only on cultural diversity, but also on individual autonomy and on our common humanity. They thus affirmed the ideals of the Enlightenment, especially as embodied in the slogans of the French revolution, and they thus came to oppose all forms of 'power' – political domination – the state (freedom), economic exploitation, capitalism (equality) and all forms of cultural oppression (fraternity). For all their limitations – and they are many and various, and we now live in a very different era of capitalism – the struggles and ideas of the classical anarchists have much more to teach us than the philosophical musings of the likes of Lyotard and Derrida, who are by no stretch of the imagination anarchists either in thought or aspiration.

Brian Morris

*please keep sending in
your letters and
donations ...*

Anti-State Activism

Dear *Freedom*,

As an anarchist I find it difficult to understand the recent small pocket of criticism directed at *Freedom* over a perceived bias towards North/North West based reporting. Your contributors from the region are doing a splendid job confronting and highlighting issues which are totally ignored everywhere else. Reports of the anti-JSA and Welfare to Work campaign taking place around the Lancashire area are a positive inspiration. Where else do we have the opportunity to keep right up to date with the steely, determined, though not without humour, opposition to the state's insidious attempts to introduce compulsion into our lives via the dole queue? Signing-on these days is a nasty, degrading ritual to which one must submit in order to gain a pittance that one might remain alive. The comrades in Lancashire (not forgetting Edinburgh or Nottingham), witnessed in action through *Freedom*'s columns, are providing the only ray of hope many are able to see at present.

At an individual level, your (north west) correspondent this year has risked life and limb bringing us detailed, factual insight from the grassroots deep inside Albania, which was little other than heroic – the writer concerned, and *Freedom*, are deserving of nothing less than the highest praise for what must have been a very dangerous venture where no other journalistic source, so far as I am aware at any rate, has penetrated.

And then of course there are the frequent gathering at the Northern Anarchist Network (NAN) conferences that have become such a vibrant springboard for anarchist activity all across the area. Anarchist politics are, in my view, very much the richer and more appealing for the input from the north.

Personally I care not a toss from where anti-state activism arises, so long as it's effective – the more widespread, not just London-centric, the better, I should have thought. A little less knocking and a bit more credit where it's due.

Frank (Merseyside)

Defending Summerhill

Dear *Freedom*,

I was interested to read your 'Defend Summerhill' piece in the 15th December issue, having spent all my school years at Summerhill, bar a very brief period at an infant school off the Grays Inn Road. There have been threats of closure over the years, and they seem to come round twice in every decade. Let us hope the present one will be lifted, as were the others, though I have an awful feeling that the Department of Education and Employment under the New Labour government will be even more intolerant than under the Tories. And it is interesting that both Education and Employment are under the same roof. It has become increasingly apparent that the Labour government sees education solely as a means of getting employment and not, as Neill would have suggested, opening doors to encourage children to achieve their potentiality in whatever field they chose.

A biographical note may be of interest. My route to Summerhill came about through two linked causes.

The first was the slump of the 1930s which meant that classical musicians such as my father found it difficult to find employment. This made him politically active and he joined the Communist Party along with my mother, and it was his involvement in the Musicians' Union that finally got Messers Lyons to recognise the Union, for the members who performed at their tea-houses.

The other was the outbreak of the Spanish civil war. My father, with my mother's blessing, decided to drive an ambulance to Spain to help the Republic in its fight against the fascist invasion of General Franco. While there he met another ambulance driver,

Wogan Philipps, who was wounded and who had to return to England, and who had joined the Communist Party with my father's encouragement.

He approached my mother to ask her whether she could go out to Spain to help in the medical services. She pointed out that she had two small children, myself and my elder sister, to look after. Wogan said he'd be willing to pay our fees to go to boarding school, and my mother, who had read Neill's books, agreed and we were sent to Summerhill.

My father was killed on the last day that the International Brigades were in action, before their withdrawal, and it was only months later that my mother heard the news. Wogan Philipps, who had been married to the novelist Rosamund Lehmann, later inherited a peerage and became the first Communist to take his seat in the House of Lords.

My time at Summerhill was mostly spent in the art-room, though I didn't go to art school on leaving but into publishing as my leanings were more towards the written word than the easel. Considering the background at that time, the War, when the school was evacuated to North Wales, I had an extremely happy childhood.

I went to see Neill in hospital shortly before he died. He was amused, he said, partly because I was the only child of Communist Party parents (there were a good number) who had never joined the Party. He also said that if he had to live his life over again, he'd do exactly what he had done in the past. He didn't have answers, only questions, and his profound challenge to the educational establishment will never be forgotten.

Martin Green

Welcome to all

Dear *Freedom*,

Welcome to the anarcho-syndicalists who will hold a founding conference in Bradford next March, to the new anarchist alignment who held their inaugural meeting in London this September, to the existing anarcho-syndicalist grouping the Solidarity Federation, to the Anarchist Communist Federation, to the three offshoots of Class War, and to all the other groupings of comrades who share particular notions. Such groupings energise the anarchist movement by encouraging those who join them.

However, as D. Pattison points out (letters, 15th November), the British 'left' is notable for its sectarianism and fractiousness. It is important that the new anarchist/syndicalist grouping should not perceive itself as the 'national organisation to co-ordinate anarchist activity'. Otherwise it might be like some earlier 'national organisations', a hindrance to the anarchist movement and a waste of energy denouncing those anarchist activists who would rather not be 'co-ordinated'.

Donald Room

Bouquet

Dear Comrades,

I enclose a cheque to cover the renewal of my *Freedom* subscription, with anything left over to be used for the Fighting Fund. I think *Freedom* is the best it's been in a long time. There is a good balance between news of current campaigns and issues, and more theoretical pieces. I particularly enjoy the contributions of Colin Ward and Milan Rai. The regular international page is another highlight.

Adrian Janes

News from Angel Alley

Many subscriptions to *Freedom* fall due this issue. There would have been more, but a goodly number delighted our subscriptions department by paying early. We are grateful to all subscribers, but a special thank you to that goodly number.

Subscription rates have been constant for some time, as we were able to absorb a small increase in postal costs. The Post Office has advised, however, that there will be a further increase in postal charges during 1999 and it seems very likely that we will have to put up subscription rates next year. Of course, this will not apply to subs which have been paid in advance, so there's an opportunity to save a little.

We hope to continue subsidising 'claimants' subs in the UK. Claimants are pensioners, the unemployed, students and others on small incomes, whether they are claiming from the state or not. Many 'regular' subscribers, and some 'claimant' subscribers, enclose donations to the Freedom Fortnightly Fighting Fund, which enables us to continue this practice.

Donations to the Freedom Press Overheads Fund are currently going towards urgent roof repairs. We also need to get new typesetting equipment, as hold-ups have been caused recently by Aldgate Press's equipment failing to read some of our disks. We rely on donations as well to provide working capital for the production of books and *The Raven*. Seasonal greetings to all our supporters and readers.

This year's
**BOOKSHOP
CHRISTMAS
PARTY**

will be on
Saturday 20th December
12 noon to 5pm
old and new friends welcome

**Freedom on the
World Wide Web**

<http://www.tao.ca/~freedom>

e-mail Freedom Press at
freedom@tao.ca

a-infos

daily multi-lingual, international anarchist
news service

To: majordomo@tao.ca

Subject:

.....
subscribe a-infos

**FREEDOM
fortnightly**

ISSN 0016 0504

Published by Freedom Press
84b Whitechapel High Street
London E1 7QX

Printed in Great Britain by Aldgate
Press, London E1 7RQ

OLDHAM ANTI-JSA

Tel: 0161-628 6182 for details

**MANCHESTER
ANTI-JSA GROUP**

meet every Wednesday fortnight at
The Vine, Kennedy Street, Manchester
contact: Dept 99, 1 Newton Street,
Manchester M1 1HW

North West Anti-JSA

Dole Bully Hotline:
0161-338 8465

**Grants for
Radical Writers**

*The Institute for Anarchist Studies
annually awards \$6,000 to writers
internationally whose work is pertinent
to the anarchist critique of domination
and vision of a free society.*

For more information send \$1.80 in
international postal coupons to:
PO Box 7050, Albany, NY 12225, USA
or browse our website:
<http://members.aol.com/iastudy/Default.htm>

*Upcoming deadline for applications is
15th December 1997*

**Manchester Solidarity
Federation**

**Public meetings are held on the
first Tuesday of the month at 8pm**

**The Brow House,
1 Mabfield Road, Manchester M14**

For further details contact:
PO Box 29 SWPDO, Manchester M15 5HW

**London
Anarchist Forum**

Meets Fridays at about 8pm at Conway Hall, 25
Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL.
Admission is free but a collection is made to
cover the cost of the room.

- PROGRAMME -

12th December Symposium on Technology
19th December Christmas Party and General
discussion

26th December NO MEETING

2nd January General discussion

9th January Class Struggle (speaker Peter
Wilkinson)

Anyone interested in giving a talk or leading a
discussion please contact Carol Saunders or
Peter Neville at the meetings giving subject and
prospective dates and we will do our best to
accommodate. Donations are accepted from
those who cannot attend regularly but wish to
see the continuation of these meetings.

Carol Saunders / Peter Neville

**OLDHAM ANARCHIST
DISCUSSION GROUP**

Wanted: anarchists, anarchist
communists, libertarian communists to
set up a discussion group in Oldham.
First meeting will be in January.

Write to:

PO Box 127, Oldham OL4 3FE

Red Rambles

A programme of free guided walks in the Yorkshire Dales
and surrounding area for Socialists, Libertarians, Greens
and Anarchists. All walks are on a Sunday unless otherwise
stated. All walkers are reminded to wear boots and
suitable clothing and to bring food and drink. Walks are
5 to 8 miles in length.

December 21st: Lower Airedale. Carleton to
Gargrave. Meet outside the Swan Inn, Carleton, at
10.45am.

**Telephone for further details
01756-799002**

**PLEASE RENEW
YOUR SUB EARLY**

Our one-person subscriptions
department reminds us that most
subscriptions to Freedom will expire
at the end of the year. If the number
5824 appears above your address on
the address label, you are one of those
subscribers.

It will be a great help to our
hard-worked volunteer if you renew
your sub before the due date. Thank
you.

FREE THE GANDALF THREE

A meeting will be held at
**Conway Hall, Red Lion Square,
London WC1**

on

Wednesday 17th December at 7pm

Further information from:

**London Greenpeace, 5 Caledonian Road,
London N1**

**FREEDOM AND THE RAVEN
SUBSCRIPTION
RATES 1997-8**

	inland	outside Europe surface	outside Europe airmail	Europe (airmail only)
Freedom (24 issues) half price for 12 issues				
Claimants	10.00	-	-	-
Regular	14.00	22.00	34.00	24.00
Institutions	22.00	30.00	40.00	40.00

The Raven (4 issues)

Claimants	10.00	-	-	-
Regular	12.00	14.00	18.00	16.00
Institutions	18.00	22.00	27.00	27.00

Joint sub (24 x Freedom & 4 x The Raven)

Claimants	18.00	-	-	-
Regular	24.00	34.00	50.00	36.00

Bundle subs for Freedom (12 issues)

	inland	abroad surface	abroad airmail
2 copies x 12	12.00	13.00	22.00
5 copies x 12	26.00	32.00	44.00
10 copies x 12	50.00	60.00	84.00

Other bundle sizes on application

Giro account number 58 294 6905

All prices in £ sterling

SUBSCRIPTION FORM

To Freedom Press in Angel Alley, 84b Whitechapel High Street,
London E1 7QX

- I am a subscriber, please renew my sub to *Freedom* for issues
- Please renew my joint subscription to *Freedom* and *The Raven*
- Make my sub to *Freedom* into a joint sub starting with number 36 of *The Raven*
- I am not yet a subscriber, please enter my sub to *Freedom* for issues
and *The Raven* for issues starting with number 36
- I would like the following back numbers of *The Raven* at £3 per copy post free
..... (numbers 1 to 35 are available)
- I enclose a donation to Freedom Fortnightly Fighting / Freedom Press Overheads /
Raven Deficit Fund (delete as applicable)

I enclose £..... payment

Name.....

Address

..... Postcode