

The Prince and the terminator genes

The Prince of Wales is very rich, and various of his ancestors were Christian saints, reputed descendants of Wotan, and organisers of massacres. Therefore his public pronouncements tend to get reported as if they were worth taking seriously. A few years ago, he advised gardeners to talk to their plants, as a method of enhancing growth and increasing yields.

On 8th June this year, when Tony Blair was threatening to send troops to halt the genocide in Kosovo, the lead story in the *Daily Telegraph* was that HRH the Prince of Wales had written an article entitled 'Seeds of Disaster', opposing the genetic modification of plants.

"I happen to believe that this kind of genetic modification takes mankind into realms that belong to God ... We live in an age of rights – it seems to me that it is time our Creator had some rights too".

And further on, "Once genetic material has been released into the environment it cannot be recalled ... If something does go badly wrong we will be faced with the problem of clearing up a kind of pollution which is self-perpetuating."

We do not presume to speak of God's rights, but there is good news for those who share the Prince's other concern, about genetically modified plants escaping into the environment. An American laboratory, the Delta and Pineland Company, has patented a gene which causes plant seeds to die as they ripen. The international giant Monsanto seed corporation is already selling cotton seeds carrying such 'terminator genes'. Next year, or the year after, we expect them to be inserted into food crops, peas, beans, maize, and wheat.

For breeding purposes, the terminator

gene is ingeniously combined with a 'terminator repressor system' which prevents the terminator enzymes from working. The repressor system is chemically removed from the seeds offered for sale, so the seed merchant still has the breeding stock, but the purchasers have to buy new seeds every year.

That is to say, they have to buy new seeds *if they want to grow the genetically engineered strain*. Otherwise, they can breed their own seeds or obtain seeds elsewhere. Commercial farmers will make a commercial decision, whether the cost of new seeds every year is offset by the benefit of increased yields or whatever. Organic farmers like Prince

Charles will make a commercial decision, whether a lower yield is off-set by the readiness of customers to pay extra. Non-commercial farmers and gardeners will make non-commercial decisions.

For the seed merchants, of course, the point of the terminator gene is to maintain profits, by preventing farmers from stealing their patents. The environmental benefit is an incidental contingency. Nevertheless, it is a real benefit. Prince Charles can instruct his minions to plant organic seeds right next to seeds carrying the terminator gene, without fear of contamination. For any seeds which escape into his field from the adjacent field will be dead.

If the Prince of Wales's only worry was to protect the environment from the spread of genetically modified plants, he would be pleased about the terminator gene. But his main worry seems to be preserving monopolies for the Creator of the Universe, so he will probably not be pleased.

Let it be clear that, although we recognise the purpose of patent rights in a commercial society, we are not in favour of them. We want a non-commercial society where beneficial inventions, whether in agriculture or in any other field, are immediately available to all; where inventors are celebrated as benefactors of humanity, not employed to make profits for their employers.

And when we eat, we would rather not eat anything which the Prince of Wales has talked at.



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The implications of cut price care ...

The old cop it among council con-men

If Roy Oldham, Labour leader of Tameside Council, and the bosses and trustees of Tameside Care Group have their way, a bleak future awaits most of us in an old peoples' home. These are the sad signs which are at the heart of the sacking of the 240 care workers at Tameside in Greater Manchester this month. Care of the old on the cheap in Tameside means sugar in the tea of senile diabetics. Shortage of staff means that mealtimes are rushed so that old people with strokes can't swallow the food fast enough and risk starvation and loss of weight. The agency workers crossing picket lines can't cope.

The story of the care of the elderly on Tameside these last ten years has been a shabby little shocker. It has been a story of mismanagement, gross cronyism and very possibly corruption starting with TEL (Tameside Enterprises Ltd.), the predecessor of Tameside Care group which *Freedom* covered in the early 1990s. Large sums of

money went missing, but no one was ever prosecuted. One reporter called it "a story of high office and low politics".

From sweat-shops to work-houses

This tale is all too typical! Tony Blair has said: "We must end the shame of older people living out their last years neglected and alone." The Prime Minister is a charming sounding man, but out in the sticks in Tameside and beyond the likes of Roy Oldham come over as rough arses in their policies to old people, as well as their own council workers.

So while Mr Oldham runs his regime on Tameside like a Godfather runs the Mafia, denying Council responsibility for the current chaos in his town's Old Folk's Homes, Mr Blair has set up a team of fifteen ministers to review an urgent strategy for the 'ageing population problem'. This month, in the *Sunday Mirror*, John Denham, Junior Social Security Minister, who is chairing the

'review team' declared: "We are tackling what to do about pensions and long-term care".

Soft talking politicians like Blair and Denham, with their 'word-bites' and 'spin-doctors', will review the problems of long-term care of the elderly; but callous, thick-skinned men like Roy Oldham will still be tackling the enforcement of policies in localities like Tameside. How can the old survive in the modern world when, as John Lloyd writes: "Neither society nor family can flourish unaided, in a world in which market logic pitilessly chooses the fittest to serve it and rejects the rest."

People today don't have time to look after their older relatives, because they are so busy tied to hitting impossible targets at work or trapped in shift-systems or commuting here, there and everywhere to get work. The way things are going it is going to be straight from the 'sweat-shop' to the 'work-houses' of the elderly for a lot of people.

Recently in his paper *Social Policy: an anarchist response*, Colin Ward wrote: "The deprived (the old folk in the hands of Tameside Care Group) and the people charged with serving their needs (the sacked care workers), find themselves increasingly in the same boat." The idea of doing away with the labour force is what management is all about today. Hence, Mr Ward adds, "the ideology of dispensing with the labour force spread to the distributive and service industries, to government and local government, and even to those branches of public employment concerned with servicing the needs of impoverished communities."

More misery is on the menu, but Colin Ward expects this "absurd and explosive situation" to blow up sooner or later. The Tameside issue could be a powder keg.

The nightmare to come!

Of course, there have been Labour Councillors who turned out on picket duty at the Old Folk's Homes just before the local elections. But these Councillors are known con-men in the pockets of Roy Oldham. They have not been seen since the election. Because it is known that neither the sacked care workers or the old people in the Homes can expect much help from the established institutions in the town, last week a Support Group was set-up to back the Tameside Care Workers. That same day there was an invasion of 'Scab Agency' by care workers, anarchists and members of Workers' Power. That Agency - Taylor Brook Associates - later disassociated with the body Tameside Care Group (see elsewhere in this issue).

This Support Group of the sacked care workers is going to tackle the problem of the other scab agencies, to help in the fight for wages and conditions for care workers, but also to bring out the callous persecution of old people in the Homes for the Elderly. A public meeting is planned, and publicity is going to be aimed at local people to get them more aware of the issues.

The grim reality of modern life in England today is brought out in a talk delivered by Will Hutton, editor of the *Observer*, called the '30/30/40 society':

"There is a bottom 30% of unemployed and economically inactive who are marginalised, another 30% who, while in work, are in forms of employment that are structurally insecure, and there are only 40% who can count themselves as holding tenured jobs which allow them to regard their income prospects with any certainty. But even the secure top 40% know they are at risk; their numbers have been shrinking steadily for twenty years."

The social and job insecurity of people's everyday lives today means there is no time for parenting or looking after older relatives in most families now. The result is vandalism, misery and loneliness in old age. A social nightmare in the making.

Albert Shore

Care workers sacked

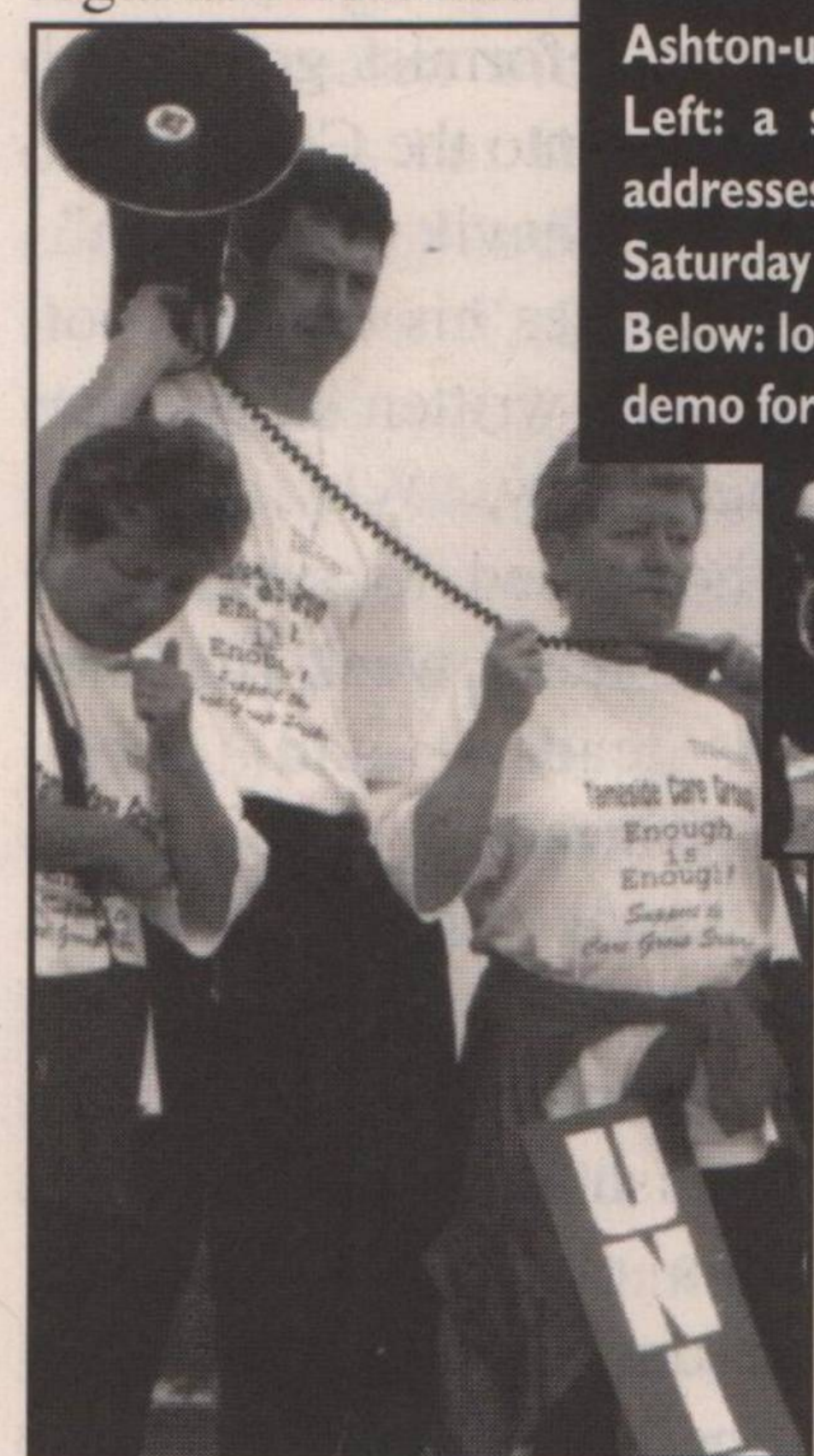
The 240 care workers who are currently on strike in Tameside, Greater Manchester, have vowed to continue with their industrial action after receiving dismissal notices on Wednesday 3rd June from Tameside Care group (TCG). This company, which was formerly known as Tameside Enterprises Limited (TEL), was set up by the Labour-controlled Tameside Council in 1990 to run its elderly persons homes.

The strike, which concerns a dispute over cuts in pay and conditions, is now entering its tenth week. On New Year's Eve the managing director of TCG, Alan Firth, informed care workers that due to cuts in funding by Tameside Council and the West Pennine Health Authority, the company would be imposing cuts in pay and conditions. Although TCG (a not-for-profit company) made a profit last year of £750,000, Mr Firth claims that the pay cuts are necessary "to ensure the continued financial viability of the business". For care workers employed by the company - who have not had a pay rise in five years - this was the second pay cut since 1993.

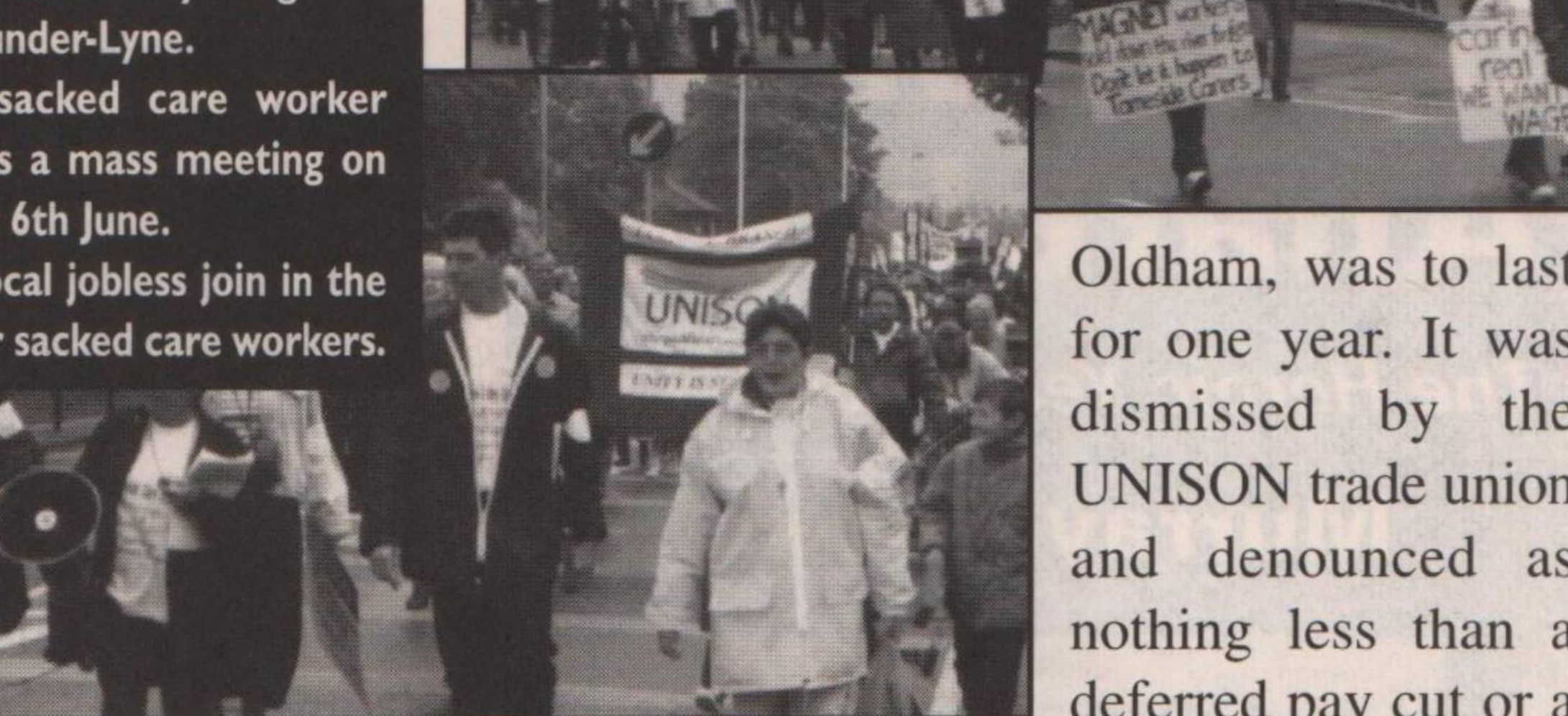
Since the beginning of the strike the company has been relying on scab agency workers. Curiously, whilst Mr Firth claims that he has been forced to cut the care workers' wages because of cuts in funding, the company has been content during this dispute to pay far higher wages to scab agency workers as well as taxi hire charges to take them to work. Not surprisingly, the striking care workers do not accept Mr Firth's claims that he has been forced to cut wages.

Whilst most striking care workers are members of UNISON, the GMB trade union also represents around forty of the carers. The GMB have been anxious to get their

members back to work since early on in the dispute. At one mass meeting GMB members were told by Dave Boyle, a GMB official, that the union's legal advisers had



Right: care workers lead the march from Stalybridge to Ashton-under-Lyne. Left: a sacked care worker addresses a mass meeting on Saturday 6th June. Below: local jobless join in the demo for sacked care workers.



recommended a return to work so that carers could pursue either unfair dismissal claims or civil action for breach of contract. Mr Boyle is a prominent Labour Party member in Tameside and in the past he has held political ambitions to become the MP for Ashton-under-Lyne, following the retirement of the present incumbent Robert Sheldon. It is also known that the GMB have been unhappy about the level of strike pay being paid by UNISON to striking care workers, which they have had to match in order to retain their members.

More recently GMB members have been balloted on an offer which involved a return to work on terms that existed prior to the strike, after Tameside Council and the West Pennine Health Authority injected extra cash into Tameside Care Group.

The deal (or some might say sting) which was thrashed out between the GMB union and the leader of Tameside Council, Roy

Oldham, was to last for one year. It was dismissed by the UNISON trade union and denounced as nothing less than a deferred pay cut or a stay of execution. It is understood that following the GMB ballot, some 29 GMB members have joined UNISON and eleven GMB members have agreed to stay at home. Only five GMB members have returned to work.

Although a major shareholder in Tameside Care Group, the Labour-controlled council in Tameside has been heavily criticised for its failure to support the striking care workers who have now been sacked. To my knowledge, no Labour councillor in Tameside or local Labour MP has spoken out publicly in support of the striking care workers. Indeed, I have been on two marches to support the care workers and have yet to see either a Labour councillor or a Labour MP present. It was rumoured on the last march, which took place on 6th June, that a prize of £10 was being offered to any marcher who could spot a Labour councillor on the demo and an even better prize of £15 was being offered to any marcher who could spot a Labour Party banner.

Morale is very high amongst the striking care workers. Mass pickets are taking place

(continued on page 3)

The Wall

Nine years after the wall was torn down in Berlin a new one is to be built. Not in Berlin, but in the Czech Republic. In fact two cities in Bohemia have just announced plans to build walls to separate their Czech and Romany (Gypsy) communities. Many Czech officials see this as the only solution to the problem of race and poverty in their country where Havel is still president and is still making speeches about how Western countries have lost their spiritual way.

In North Bohemia, Usti nad Labem city council was the first to announce their plan last week to build a four meter-high wall to cut off the view of a neighbourhood where the inhabitants are always late paying their rents to the council and whose lifestyle upsets their neighbours. "These people don't belong to a normal society," city council member Jan Kocourek said. He acknowledged that the people he was talking about were Gypsies.

Milan Knotek, another city council member, was more diplomatic. "We know the wall won't solve the problem, but the mayor has received two petitions complaining about noise from this neighbourhood and this is where the wall can help. It will divide the well-behaved from those who don't behave so well."

Other council members complained about rubbish lying around the dirty Gypsy neighbourhood, but foreign journalists who visited Usti after the announcement could find no garbage in the streets. When they replied that Usti city council was infringing upon the human rights of their poorer inhabitants, a city council spokesman said: "What law of

human rights are you taking about? They have the right to work and they don't. They have the right to vote and they don't vote. They have the right to pay rent and they don't. The only aim of this project is to protect normal people."

Several inhabitants of the affected protested personally to the mayor waving their rent books shouting they had paid. The mayor said a few innocent people will have to suffer but that the great majority either are late in paying their rent or don't pay at all. He is sure the wall will also keep out the noise.

Vaclav Klaus, the ex-prime minister who is running for re-election this month, visited Usti two days ago to personally talk with the mayor. Klaus later told waiting journalists that he believes the national government in Prague should not get involved, that local officials should sort out these kind of racial problems.

In Plzen, one of the country's largest cities, plans to segregate the Romany are even more drastic. The city council is studying a plan to build a new ghetto with portable wooden living units for out-of-work families, i.e. Gypsies. The new ghetto will be completely surrounded by a barbed-wire fence. A curfew will be imposed on the citizens living there. A police station will also be established inside the ghetto with the police having the right to enter any home at any time without warning.

Throughout the Czech Republic violence against dark-skinned people seems to be epidemic. Last year a black African student

was stabbed to death by skinheads in Prague. Italian tourists have been beaten up on several occasions by skinheads who thought they were Romany. According to several human rights organisations in Prague more than thirty Romanies have been killed by skinheads since the Velvet Revolution, while hundreds more have been beaten up. Many Romany political activists say the actual number murdered is more than sixty, while thousands have been beaten.

One inhabitant of the Romany neighbourhood in Usti told the press last week that the city council could save a lot of money by just moving the Romany to Terezin. "It's still standing. Why don't they just send us there? Then they wouldn't have to build the walls." Terezin was a World War Two Nazi concentration camp in North Bohemia, not far from Usti.

"I don't know why the international press should be so surprised by these new events in the Czech Republic," Lubomir Zubak, a Romany leader said. "Havel meets with Chinese dissidents but I have never been able to see him to tell him how the police are taking the skinheads in their cars to make these attacks. I even wrote a letter to his wife asking her to be a spokesperson for the Romany survivors of the Holocaust at Lety who are supposed to be compensated by the Czech government but haven't. She refused."

Last week President Havel used his powers to free two Romany brothers who attacked Miroslav Sladek, leader of the neo-fascist Republican party whose campaign literature

calls for a 'final solution' to the Gypsy problem in the Czech Republic. Havel's wife thanked the two Gypsies for defending her honour after Sladek slandered her and her husband.

"Havel would have pardoned skinheads if they had attacked Sladek" Zubak said. "If Sladek had not been incarcerated during the last presidential election, Havel wouldn't be president today. He won by only one vote. Sladek's vote could have changed everything. If Havel was really interested in helping the Romany why did he sign into power a new citizenship law which prevents most Romany from obtaining citizenship? Havel's nothing but a hypocrite, a professional humanist."

Barbara Plichtova, a former Czech actress who emigrated to Canada in 1988 and is now back working as a Romany human rights activist, feels the problem is deeply ingrained into Czech society. "The great majority of the Czech people are sick, spiritually and mentally", she said, "because they have lost their sensitivity to other people - not just Romany but everyone they consider a foreigner."

Paul Polansky

Paul Polansky is an American poet and writer who has spent the past five years living with Romany families in Slovakia and the Czech Republic. In 1994 he drew international attention with his revelations about Lety, a World War Two Romany (Gypsy) death camp. His book *Living Through it Twice: Poems of the Romany Holocaust (1940-1997)* was published this spring. Due out in September is Polansky's book *Black Silence*, the oral histories of the Lety survivors, shortly to be followed by *The Storm*, a novel about Jews and Romanies used as slave labour on a nobleman's estate in southern Bohemia during World War Two.

Murray Bookchin's position on anarcho-syndicalism is summarised in his 'The Ghost of Anarcho-syndicalism' in *Anarchist Studies* volume 1, number 1, Spring 1993. Both historically and analytically his criticism is important.

Bookchin writes that anarcho-syndicalism came to an end as a historical force in the Spanish Civil War of 1936-39 and calls it "one of the most cloistered of libertarian tendencies today" (page 3). He rejects the idea that "anarcho-syndicalism is the alpha and omega of 'true' anarchism in contrast to other libertarian tendencies that involve a broader view of social struggle than one that is largely focused on traditional conflicts between wage labour and capital", finding in "worker-oriented anarchists" a degree of "dogmatism and stodgy fixity" that he believes "should hardly be characteristic of left Libertarians generally" (page 4).

Bookchin is not suggesting that anarchists should ignore economic problems and class conflicts, but he does say that "anarcho-syndicalists increasingly supplanted the communal, ethical, universalistic, and anti-dominating character of anarchism as a broad vision of freedom in all spheres of life with their own narrower one" so that eventually, the "tendency to parochialise anarchism along economic and class lines grossly constricted its scope to a trade-unionist mentality".

Bookchin sees Malatesta's position at the Amsterdam Congress of 1907 as crucial and central rather than the exception which Nicolas Walter makes it in *Freedom*, 29th January 1998. "As Malatesta ... warned, 'Trade Unions are by their very nature reformist and never revolutionary.'" Bookchin believes "it is fair to say that the performance of the anarcho-syndicalist movement has been one of the most dismal in the two-century history of modern anarchism".

For the history of anarcho-syndicalism,

Bookchin on the anarcho-syndicalists

The Spanish Anarchists

The Heroic Years 1868-1936

Murray Bookchin



Murray Bookchin's long-awaited new edition of this seminal history of Spanish anarchism is now available. Hailed as a masterpiece, it includes a new preface by the author. *The Spanish Anarchists: the Heroic Years 1868-1936* has just been re-printed by AK Press and is available from Freedom Press Distributors at £13.95 (post free inland, please add 15% towards postage and packing overseas).

Bookchin points out that the anarcho-syndicalist leaders of the *Casa del Obrero Mundial* put their 'Red Battalions' in the service of those fighting against Zapata. Many of the leading figures in the IWW - Bill Haywood, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, William Z. Foster, Bob Minor, Earl Browder

- "found a comfortable home in the American Communist Party". And in France, members of the General Confederation of Labour (CGT), "no less than many of its leaders, tended toward reformist goals and eventually were absorbed into the Communist movement after the Bolshevik revolution". Then Bookchin summarises his criticism of CNT/FAI which he had written at greater length earlier, asking finally, "Why, in fact, did the workers who raised barricades in Barcelona during that fateful week [in May 1937] obey their leaders and allow themselves to be disarmed?" Top down structures never work as anarchism. However, Bookchin writes of the larger anarchist movement in Spain:

"To its credit, Spanish anarchism - like anarchist movements elsewhere - never completely focused on the factory as the *locus classicus* of libertarian practice. Quite often throughout the last century and well into the civil war period, villages, towns, and the neighbourhoods of large cities, as well as popular cultural centres, were major loci of anarchist activities. In these essentially civic arenas, women no less than men, peasants no less than workers, the elderly no less than the young, intellectuals no less than workers, déclassé elements no less than definable members of oppressed classes - in short, a wide range of people concerned not only with their own oppressions but with various ideals of social justice and communal freedom - attracted anarchist propagandists and proved to be highly receptive to libertarian ideas. The social concerns of these people often transcended strictly proletarian ones and were not necessarily focused on syndicalist forms of organisation.

Their organisations, in fact, were rooted in the very communities in which they lived" (page 19).

Bookchin writes of 'human liberation', of an ethical anarchism broader than class and concerned with ending the domination of human by human, of people as citizens of a small community "occupied with resolving not separate particularistic conflicting interests but a shared general human body of concerns ... a truly ethical society in which the harmonisation of human with human leads also to the harmonisation of humanity with the natural world". Finally:

"To perpetuate the historical shift of anarchism from a largely ethical form of socialism (in the most generic sense) to anarcho-syndicalism - a largely economic form of socialism most often premised on the factory structure - would be ... highly regressive ... The economic mentality of the so-called 'practicals' and 'realists' who presumably knew how to manipulate workers and express their pragmatic interests brought an increasingly amoral, even immoral, tone into CNT's leadership. This tone still seems to linger on in the dwindling anarcho-syndicalism of the 1990s" (page 21).

I have chosen here only a few points from Bookchin's extended argument for a broader anarchism than those syndicalists (anarcho or not) writing in Freedom Press publications express. Though I haven't done justice to the fullness of Bookchin's essay, I think I have indicated his argument. The whole essay, written long before those in *The Raven* number 36, is an important antidote to the narrow and simplistic views expressed in some of those essays.

John R. Doheny

Northern News

Polygram profits from poverty pay

The re-instate Nigel Cook campaign held a demonstration against the multinational CD producer Polygram on 23rd May in Blackburn, Lancashire. The demonstration was called to mark the twelve months since Nigel had been sacked for trying to organise a trade union in his place of work, so was also highlighting the increasing problem of poverty-pay linked to casualisation. Polygram outsources the packaging of its CDs to the sweatshop agency M&S packaging, where workers are paid as low as £3 an hour with no contracts, no holidays and no sick pay.

The event was well attended and a coach full of Nigel's supporters even came from London. Channel 4 sent along a television crew to interview people, particularly the sort that get involved in direct action. It had been noticed that because of the television presence the huge Polygram sign across the works entrance had been removed. However, all was not lost as a supporter had brought a replacement Polygram advertisement logo for television purposes only!

When Nigel slipped under the half-barrier (which was manned by police) to deliver his letter of protest to the office, a line of mounted police suddenly appeared from the rear of the compound. Talk about the charge of the Light Brigade. Nigel was arrested and taken to the local police station. This action seemed to be the cue for some supporters to clamber on the low-rise buildings and unfurl their banners.

After the demonstration Nigel's supporters, minus the man himself, met at a nearby working men's club for beer, food and live music. Half an hour later Nigel was released without charge to join his jubilant supporters.

Make the scab agencies pay

On 21st May there was a demonstration and occupation of Apex Nursing and Care Services Ltd. in Burnage, Manchester. This recruitment agency is involved in supplying scab workers to replace the 250 recently sacked staff of Tameside Care group. The staff had been sacked after walking out in a dispute over severe cuts in wages and conditions of employment.

This action was called in support of the sacked care group workers and was organised by Workers Power and other left socialists, and supported by anarchists. It had been hoped to obtain support for this action from the sacked care workers and a mini-bus had been provided to ferry the workers to the demonstration. However the branch secretary of UNISON in Tameside, Mr Noel Pine, whose union represents the sacked workers, disowned the action and unfortunately no care workers attended. Even so, the occupation of Apex went ahead.

Mr Boylan, the company manager, was immediately distressed by such activity and telephoned the police. On being questioned by the demonstrators about the supply of scab labour, Mr Boylan would not deny these allegations but kept repeating that any questions must be put in writing.

When the police arrived the demonstrators left, but it was made clear to Apex that if they continue to supply scab labour they will be visited again and again until they realise that the adverse publicity generated by their actions will hit them in the only place they know - their pockets.

Jim Evans

Is the Syndicalist Alliance viable?

From Spain and North America there have been several requests for information regarding the proposed formation of a new anarcho-syndicalist federation which had the provisional title of the 'Syndicalist Alliance'.

A meeting considering the formation was held at Bradford in West Yorkshire in March, and *Freedom* published interviews in April with two foreign observers to the meeting from the CGT in Spain and the Swedish SAC federation.

Further clarification ought to come from Guy Cheverton, who is the secretary of the 'Syndicalist Alliance'. However, our understanding is that only a fragment of the original organising committee of twelve joined the Alliance after the Bradford meeting. The North West participants did not join because they felt that their the body as it stood was not viable. Guy Cheverton, Hull Syndicalists and some other individuals from across the country, took a different view and with great tenacity are continuing with their experimental project.

Last week in a telephone conversation, Guy Cheverton accepted that *Freedom*, given that it gave wide publicity earlier in the year to the project for a new anarcho-syndicalist federation proposed by Hull Syndicalists, should now issue this clarification of the current situation. The North West non-affiliates will be meeting shortly to define their own position, and no doubt a statement will follow from that quarter.

— COPY DEADLINE —
The next issue of
Freedom will be dated
4th July, and the last
day for copy intended
for this issue
will be first post on
Thursday 25th June.

Care workers sacked (continued from page 1)

outside the care homes on a regular basis, and strikers have now started to occupy scab agencies.

On Tuesday 9th June around forty care workers occupied the offices of Taylor Brooks Associated, a care agency in Ashton-under-Lyne. Despite threatening to send for the police, the care workers refused to leave

the premises and only agreed to do so when the managing director, Paul Taylor, offered to negotiate with two care workers. Both care workers emerged from the offices shortly after the protesters had left, with a letter which stated that whilst the company had two agency staff working nights with Tameside Care Group, this contract was to end on 15th June. The letter, signed by Paul Taylor, also stated that after this date all business dealings with TCG would cease. Other occupations are being planned and a support group is to be set up.

Further information about the strike can be obtained from Tameside UNISON, 29 Booth Street, Ashton-under-Lyne, Lancashire OL6 7LB. Tel: 0161-308 2452.

Letters of complaint can be sent to: Alan Firth, Managing Director, Tameside Care group, Enterprise House, Grange Road South, Hyde, SK14 5NY, and also to Councillor R. Oldham, Leader of Tameside MB Council, Council Offices, Wellington Road, Ashton-under-Lyne, Lancashire.

Derek Pattison

NET WATCH

Copex 98

The 'Tesco's for Torturers Fair' is back at Wembley on 24th September. For further information you can contact the Campaign against the Arms Trade, 11 Goodwin Street, London, N4 3HQ. The population of Wembley will not like it a bit. In Farnborough the noise from 'Stealth' and other low flying aircraft was wicked.



NET WATCH

Summer Solstice Celebrations

The 1998 festivities are going ahead in the Stonehenge area 19th to 22nd June. Stonehenge walkers have left from Brighton on 1st June and there was a get together in Battersea Park for walkers on the same day. The first night was spent at the Crystal Palace protest camp (see *Freedom*, 23rd May), who incidentally are increasing both in numbers and public support. They are setting up a library and would appreciate loan of anarchist books and magazines.

The Reclaim the Streets movement have announced a street gathering in Salisbury itself at midday by the train station. "You never know your luck". More information on 07970 378572.

For those who want to be there but distance prevents their presence, the Stonehenge Campaign's web site is a real gem, devotedly put together by George Dice on antedeluvian equipment from his famous bus Karelia.

Frankenstein Fields Forever Action

Information received from the Genetic Engineering Network states that seven fields have been cut down in one night's operation in localities as far apart as Derbyshire, Gloucestershire, Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire and Worcestershire in a popular action against the growing of genetically modified crops. The number of decontaminated fields stood at nineteen on 7th June. This is a significant blow to the companies who are already feeling the effects of public distrust, says the communique. The companies hit include the big four, Monsanto, Agrevo, Pioneer Genetique and Plant Genetic Systems. Seven fields decontaminated in one night, seven fields closer to a safe world.

Although four government agencies have called for a halt, Jeff Rooker (UK food minister) said he can do nothing - "he is not in the driving seat". Collects his salary, though.

The Rape of Socialism

The Rape of Socialism: how Labour lost the millennium

by Donovan Pedelty

published by Prometheus Press, 506 pages, £13.50 (special price to *Freedom* readers, £10 plus postage 10% inland, 20% overseas, while stocks last)

This book is not, the author tells me, aimed merely at anarchists and the left-wing libertarian movement, but also at those socialists who feel cheated by the advent of New Labour to devote itself to "ushering in an age of kinder capitalism supervised by 'democratically-elected' paternalists". A smiling whore toasted by Rupert Murdoch and his influential friends, and praised by Lady Thatcher, ultimately yielding to the cause of global capitalism with more or less full abandon.

State socialism in its latest New Labour form cultivated the the motto 'Yield, yield, yield and yield again'. Programmed in the 'There is no alternative' (TINA) mentality, Mr Pedelty draws attention to New Labour's 'malign' nature; as he says "it developed from Malthuses and Social Darwinists of yesteryear, to its Thatcherites, emasculated Socialists and obscurantist 'Social Marketeers' of our times."

Of course I am being a bit free and easy in calling the endless machinations of the Labour Party, even more so New Labour, 'socialism'. It is and always has been one of those curious English compromises – neither one thing nor t'other. Gregory Elliott in his *Labourism and the English Genius* (1993) writes: "Labour is not now – and never has been – a socialist party. Throughout its history it has comprised a coalition of social reformers and reformist socialists, the latter in a permanent minority, whether among parliamentarians, trade unionists or individual members. As its very name suggests, Labour was founded to advance the interests of the labouring class within capitalism via reforms, not to create a qualitatively different form of society; to ameliorate, not abolish, capitalism."

Mr Pedelty quotes the above analysis by Elliott approvingly, yet feels uneasy about it. Despite the fact that Don Pedelty was associated with anarchism, and a member of the Syndicalist Workers' Federation in the 1950s and '60s, he has had an uneasy relationship with the Labour Party. Mr Elliott, whose book has the subtitle *The Strange Death of Labour England*, writes: "As recent events have demonstrated, the leadership/ordinary members dichotomy is a myth, though a beguiling one, inspiring the everlasting project of restoring the Labour Party to a socialist vocation it has never possessed".

Labour and socialism: history's casualties?

A critic said last month that Communism and Fascism are history's victims and cannot return. Likewise writing in 1935, George Dangerfield in his Foreword to *The Strange Death of Liberal England* declared: "the true pre-war Liberal – supported, as it still was in 1910 by Free Trade, a majority in Parliament, the ten commandments and the illusion of progress – can never return. It was killed, or killed itself, in 1913. And a good thing too."

Mr Dangerfield, an historian, claims that 1910 was the start of something, a 'landmark' year. He writes: "For it was in 1910 that fires long smouldering in the English spirit suddenly flared up, so that by the end of 1913 Liberal England was reduced to ashes." From these ashes a "new England seems to have emerged" he observed.



What is this 'new England'? Really it amounted to the replacing of what Paul Johnson called the veneer of "civilised Asquithian serenity" with the fat lady of labour. Don Pedelty in his *Rape of Socialism* is referring to the degeneration of an idea, but the wooing and manhandling of the body of the labour force in this country became open season. Fascists, communists, Marxists, Trots, Christian socialists, co-operative movements; all were to service and ravish the Labour Movement at a price.

George Dangerfield claims Liberal England killed itself, Don Pedelty is really writing about the slow death of Labour England, and he quotes from the writer Dennis Kavanagh who observed: "Mrs Thatcher said that she wanted to kill off socialism in Britain, and it is often said that she did so. This is wrong, it died long ago. Under Wilson and Callaghan Labour was concerned above all with gaining and retaining office. Party politics was a battle between the ins and outs."

Mr Pedelty further shows that Labour adopted monetarism and "Labour's leaders turned on their own followers, substituting control of the masses for their emancipation" in 1976 before the advent of Thatcherism and New Toryism. He says it "the embracing of the monetarist doctrines ... by Healey and Callaghan in 1975-76 ... should have made it clear to all but the incurably myopic ... that a choice had been made, and that it was a choice in favour of the interests of capital, not of labour – not of working people, and still less of the poor."

Typical of the attitude of the Labour leaders was Callaghan's reply in 1978 to Kenneth Harris in *The Observer* when Harris asked "You don't think ... that some people have lost faith in the Labour Party because prominent supporters of the Labour Party, not just politicians, seem to have done very well for themselves and have 'crossed over to capitalism'?" Callaghan retorted: "Everyone's standards have gone up!" Adding that pensioners in his constituency now take their holidays in Spain.

So that was what socialist utopia was all about – Benidorm instead of Blackpool? Sweating on a beach on the Costa Blanca. Is it progress when a women's rebellion which started with Mrs Pankhurst delivers us Mrs Thatcher and Blair's Babes? Or Tom Mann's trade union efforts hands us down Ray Monk? It is Al Jolson instead of Caruso, or the Spice Girls instead of Nellie Melba.

State socialism's superficialities

Mr Pedelty reminds us that Oscar Wilde said "a map of the world that does not include Utopia is not a map that I want to look at". But if the rejoinder of Labour leaders like Neil Kinnock is that miners now have houses in Marbella, and that is the utopian answer of state socialism today – well, it is enough to make me turn to religion.

Marbella and holidays in Spain for the masses, that is the kind of vision the modernist poet T.S. Eliot must have had in mind when

he wrote mockingly: "Much is your reading but not the Word of God, / Much is your building, but not the House of God. / Will you build me a house of plaster, with corrugated roofing ... (T.S. Eliot, choruses from *The Rock*, page 168).

Such is the contempt that Labour leaders have for the masses and the workers whose support they once sought. New Labour leaders now have the view of the working man that Ortega y Gasset expressed in *The Revolt of the Masses*: "Once and for all, he accepts the stock of commonplaces, prejudices, fag-ends of ideas or simply empty words which chance has piled-up within his mind".

Enter Peter Mandelson and the spin-doctors – as Mr Pedelty says "Vagueness is the politician's friend". 'Social Justice' instead of 'the full fruits of their labour'. Contempt and callousness for the poor from the middle classes; as Arnold Toynbee once apologised: "Instead of justice we have given you charity."

Who'd have thought now that Clem Attlee once said, before he was to become Labour's first Prime Minister after the Second World War, that: "Socialism is about equality or it is about nothing". The modern politician is probably hard put to understand or know of John Rawl's *Theory of Justice* with its proposal that "all inequality must be justified", so busy are they dancing to the tune of their whips. Mr Pedelty rightly suggests the level of the Labour Party's radicalism should not have been measured by its public ownership pretensions, but rather as John Cole, the journalist, argues, by the "depth of commitment to redistribution of wealth and income."

Agreeing a form of life

In the end Don Pedelty feels he is writing up a post-mortem on the Labour Party, not to mention socialism. In the body of the text he has discussed the 'hijacking of the Tory Party' by the Thatcherites from the kind of 'consensus conservatives'. Thence to what he calls 'The waning of the Labour Move-

ment', 330-odd pages of moral and spiritual decline of a political whore.

Was this inevitable? In places Mr Pedelty seems to suggest that higher standards could have been upheld by the Labour Party. But in the end he is reduced to quoting Michael Young's 1958 satire *The Rise of the Meritocracy: 1870-2033*: "The Labour Party made the inevitable compromise with the new society it had done so much to create: it ceased to exist ... 'Labour' was a millstone; 'worker' was taboo; but 'technician', what magic was there! And so the modern Technicians' Party was born, catering in the broadest possible manner for technicians by hand and by brain". The fat lady of labour is vanishing before our eyes.

At the end of 'The Century of the Common Man' Pedelty reckons the European Union has twenty million jobless. Politicians can ignore this lower depth to woo the middle class, except for purposes of zoo-keeping control. As Kropotkin declared: "parliamentary rule is pre-eminently a middle-class rule."

Genuine working-class rule which stirred Orwell in Barcelona in 1936, has always seemed culturally deficient and lacking in confidence on these shores. Anti-parliamentary syndicalism threatened in 1914 and George Dangerfield wrote: "The great General Strike of 1914, forestalled by some bullets at Sarajevo, has slipped away into the limbo of unfinished arguments." And in January 1979, Peter Jenkins wrote: "In the last few weeks we have seen the coming of age of syndicalism". That last was the 'Winter of Discontent', which Pedelty deals with, but it now seems like it may have been the winter of British syndicalism and trade unionism.

Don Pedelty asks why did 'democratic socialism' fail? Why, after Attlee, did no Party leader do more than aim at 'managing capitalism'? To answer this Mr Pedelty is thrown back to the anarchist arguments of Peter Kropotkin in his Epilogue.

If state socialism is 'a goner' does that mean, as T.S. Eliot declared, we are to live 'dispersed on ribbon roads' in a world of individualism and moral subjectivism? What is to be our agreement on a form of life? There is an assumption, as Raymond Plant writes in *Modern Political Thought* (1991) "that a society needs some kind of moral foundation, a set of beliefs which either do or might hold it together ..." Mr Pedelty knows that an alternative set of libertarian values are available for use now authoritarian socialism is doomed.

This is a large workmanlike book that ought to be read alongside Silone's *School for Dictators* by anarchists and serious left libertarian students of contemporary politics.

Brian Bamford

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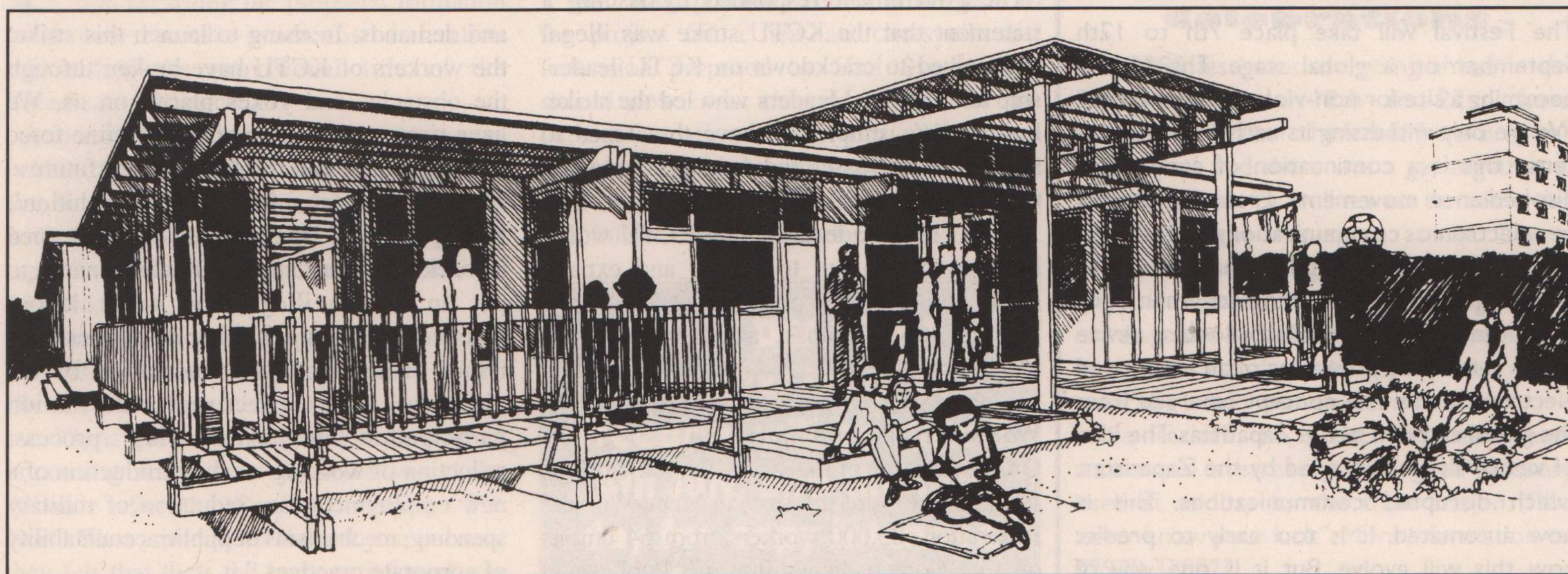
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— ANARCHIST NOTEBOOK —

Marble halls in the Grays Inn Road



*I wasn't born for an age like this,
Was Smith? Was Jones? Were you?"*

The feeling he was describing, and I am sure it is something that has been felt by each of us, is called alienation, and it is something we all feel in the kind of society that we inhabit. Bertolt Brecht wrote a poem that ran: "When I meet a man with an unfurrowed

brow I say to myself, Maybe he just hasn't heard the bad news."

I would say, as an anarchist, that alienation is a matter of the absence of personal autonomy: the ability to make one's own decisions. This is borne out by endless findings. The Consumers' Association found, for example, that the happiest and most satisfied of workers (in spite of their income insecurity) were the self-employed. And at the very time when Mrs Thatcher's government was extolling the conservative virtues, a pair of researchers, Richard Scase and Robert Goffee were exploring *The Real World of the Small Business Owner*. They found that the typical self-employed person was not in the least a big-time capitalist in embryo, but was, just like you and me, a kind of drop-out from the regular world of having a job, and a boss.

As the historian Paul Thompson explained: "They disliked the whole modern capitalist ethic, and especially being employed by others; instead they preferred to feel the satisfaction of providing a 'service' and doing a 'good job'. Quite often it was a mere chance which allowed them to find their present vocation. Moreover, they will not provide the basis for our next industrial revolution, because they don't want to expand: that would imply employing people and losing the personal relationships they like to have with a small number of fellow-workers ..."

This sounds like the way things have worked out for plenty of people here today just because they weren't born for an age like this. It sounds true of Walter Segal, who like the rest of us wasn't born for an age like this. People here will remember him saying how "I built thirty houses in London before 1962 but it was becoming so difficult that it was really warfare – and," he assured us, "I had become in consequence a much less amiable person than I am now. I was really quite an unpleasant person to meet professionally." Walter pared away at his working life giving a completely personal service to his clients, not employing assistants because he would have to work that much harder to pay their wages. And even though he wasn't born for an age like this, Walter's friends, perhaps especially those here tonight, rejoice that the last decade of his life was the happiest, and remember how he explained that when the first frame went up of the houses in Lewisham, he said that "it was an astonishing feeling. I was immensely happy, like a child almost."

Someone else who was happy that day, of course, was Ken Atkins. When he and his family were tenants and would rather be somewhere else, as he wasn't born for an age like this, the proposal to develop a self-build group among Lewisham tenants, was the

opportunity he, in retrospect, had been waiting for.

And he's one of those who stuck it, all through the heart-breaking and spirit-destroying months of bureaucratic delay because the system in Britain wasn't designed to accommodate anybody doing anything for themselves. He has often talked of the liberating effect the experience of building his family's house had on him, and he became a much-loved friend of Walter, Brian and Jón, and an endless advocate of everything that is important for the Walter Segal Self Build Trust. He dreamed he dwelt in marble halls, and woke to find it true. More or less.

Every conceivable obstacle stands in the way of people who want to build for themselves just as it did nearly thirty years ago when Walter said: "It sounds absurd that one should try to search for methods of building cheaply when we have the impossible problem of accelerating land cost and do nothing about it. My Buildings and methods will in the end be strangled by this problem unless something is done to overcome it."

I quoted that from John McKean's book *Learning from Segal*, and he notes how in 1945 Segal had argued that in 1945 land accounted for 5% of the cost of housing, but that by the early 1960s the cost of land was nearly 40% of the total. I myself learned from Radio 4 on 13th August 1997 that in the south-east of England land costs are 65% of the whole house cost. None of us, and none of the politicians of any party has been able to cope with this issue. It isn't even on their agenda.

But this key cost factor which nobody mentions any more, is only one of the problems faced by self-build housing groups. It is intimately linked with that of gaining favour with the Housing Corporation as a channel for government funding, where you actually have to become an interpreter of the nuances of departmental policy as modified by current Treasury policy just to find out whose boots to lick next. There are then the other hurdles of planning permission and the Building Regulations. As Ken always points out, people are not *allowed* to build at their own pace. They have to fit into a calendar laid down by the grant and loan machinery, and this has no place for the phenomenon witnessed all through history (and geography too) of the home that begins as substandard improvisation and improves over time as the occupants turn their labour into capital.

Few of us were born for an age like this, and not many of us dreamed about living in marble halls, but plenty yearned for decent housing and some managed to make it come true.

Colin Ward

— VISIBLE HANDS —

Weightless Power

Business columnist Diane Coyle wrote in the *Independent* recently on what some regard as the transformation of Western economies, which Coyle describes as the onset of the 'weightless economy'. This consists of activities, products and services "where what people are willing to pay for is intangible". A derivatives trade or an insurance policy, a piece of genetic code, a movie or recording, a brand image or attractive design, or a piece of software. "What it is not is material stuff". The most obvious example is the computer industry, but so is a pair of Gucci sandals "whose buyer is paying for what they do for her image and confidence rather than something to protect her feet".

Professor Danny Quah of the LSE has argued that these kinds of intangible products are 'inappropriate', they cannot be protected. See the pirate CD industry, the ubiquitous unauthorised copying of software, and so on. At the same time, paradoxically, it is these 'weightless' industries which have generated the most fabulous wealth. "Of the twenty wealthiest Americans in the latest US rich list, three had got there through computer software, another three were in other bits of the computer industry and two were media magnates" (Coyle).

This is because for many 'weightless' activities, from pop music to software, "the natural marketplace is global and the marginal cost of expanding is virtually zero". The potential sales volume is astronomical, and the cost of producing an extra CD or another set of floppy disks is nearly nil. If you can establish market dominance, usually through creating the most powerful brand early on, there are massive profits to be made.

In the set of 'weightless' activities, products, and services that Coyle lists, most things actually *are* activities, products, and services which are sold to the public, but one is not: 'a brand image'. A brand image is a intangible element of a product, and this makes all the difference in the world to Coyle's analysis. Because brand strength is nothing new, it is not a cutting edge innovation of the digital age, it is as old as

the hills (or Quaker oats).

Coyle notes that one implication of the underlying economics of weightlessness is that, "like it or not, marketing and advertising are absolutely crucial to economic growth". Passing over the question of whether she has really provided the basis for reaching this conclusion, is this really such a new observation? Two observers wrote as long ago as 1968: "In an economic system in which competition is fierce and relentless and in which the fewness of the rivals rules out price cutting, advertising becomes to an ever-increasing extent the principal weapon of the competitive struggle". Through the creation of an intangible aura around its product, the corporation 'differentiates' its product and can create 'brand loyalty' among consumers – a strong semi- or wholly irrational attachment to a product.

Paul Baran and Paul Sweezy noted that by 1962 expenditure on advertising in the US had grown to over \$12 billion. "Together with outlays on market research, public relations, commercial design, and similar services carried out by advertising agencies and other specialised firms, the amount now [1968] probably exceeds \$20 billion. And this does not include the costs of market research, advertising work, designing, etc., carried on within the producing corporations themselves".

So the weightless economy was pretty substantial even twenty years ago, before the onset of the digital age. Baran and Sweezy point out that manipulative advertising expenditures increase in proportion to the power of the great corporations, and are one of the primary means of securing their monopolistic power. In other words, consumers pay a premium to purchase the goods sold by the major corporations in part in order to fund massive cultural manipulation, helping to perpetuate the system of corporate dominance. Weightlessness is therefore an essential element of monopoly capitalism.

How heavy on society is the weightless power of the corporations.

Milan Rai

NET WATCH

Electronic Disturbance Theatre

The Festival will take place 7th to 12th September on a global stage. The Net is becoming a site for non-violent direct action. We are only witnessing its early forms. In this sense this is a continuation of earlier civil disobedience movements. From the streets to electronic communications, concerted action is being tried out. The analogy is given of a swarm of wasps acting together. They have developed what is called a flooding device which send out a little sting of an automated electronic pulse. The concept emerged from the global activism of the Zapatistas. The idea of virtual sit-ins was tried by the Zapatistas, which disrupted communications. This is now automated. It is too early to predict how this will evolve. But it is one way of applying pressure on the mighty and powerful to respect the human rights of, say, the Chiapas. More information: sjw210@is8.nyu.edu.

KAK is flying in Germany

The spokesperson and chair of the German police union, Hermann Lutz, calls Germany a dictatorship. This is because, as reported in *Freedom* (6th June), of the mis-information given out by the government over the safety of the transport of nuclear waste, which is now temporarily banned. The government maintained there was never any danger for police, railworkers or the public (in that order). This follows on from the news from Sellafield that the containers used to transport waste have a higher level of radiation around screwholes and dodgy fittings which fail even the nuclear industry's own crap safety guidelines. The German containers were tested and failed the so-called 'wipe test' not only on this occasion but, according to other reports which have been suppressed, for the past ten years. In the meantime a transport from the shut-down East German reactor would have been due in the next few weeks, but is stopped for the time being and this gives campaigners a breathing space to muster support. As to what the wipe test is, it is the ever so scientific method of rubbing down the containers with a rag, and measuring the radioactivity of the rag.

Kick it Over

The excellent Canadian magazine with the above title is going through a very difficult period. Basically, the two editors have been financing the magazine out of their own pocket and they have depleted their personal account to get the 35th number out. Not knowing the Canadian anarchist situation, all we can say is that it would be a great pity to lose an outstanding magazine. As usual they are owed money by distributors, not an unknown occurrence in this country. Their address is: PO Box 5811, STNA, Toronto Ontario, Canada, M5W 1P2.

Food not Bombs

The Food not Bombs movement is having its world conference in San Francisco from 10th to 12th July. They want to hear from groups and individuals from this country. One of their speakers talked to the London Anarchist Forum and food distribution was organised subsequently outside the Imperial War Museum. This year they are hoping that their conference will not be a target for the police. They will hold workshops on every aspect of food collection and distribution, and the address they give is San Francisco FNB, PO Box 40485, San Francisco, California, 94140, USA.

At 1pm on 27th May some 120,000 workers downed their tools and took to streets to protest the rampant mass dismissals and to demand a genuine reform.

The government responded by issuing a statement that the KCTU strike was illegal and vowed to crackdown on KCTU leadership and the local leaders who led the strike. Furthermore, employers have threatened to sue unions for losses and damages caused by the 'illegal strike'.

KCTU leaders declared that KCTU would have no option but to extend and expand strike action if the government used state instruments to harass, arrest, or penalise unionists.

Workers strike and march on

On the first day of the strike, 92,000 workers from 53 unions of the Korean Metal Workers Federation, 23,000 workers from 64 unions of the Korean Federation of Public and Social Service Workers Unions, 5,000 workers of the Regional Health Insurance Cooperatives Employees Union, 3,000 workers of the Korean Federation of Chemical Workers Unions took part in the first warning general strike organised by the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions.

Following strike meetings, the unionists converged in major urban industrial centres throughout the country to hold mass public meetings. Some 60,000 workers took part in mass rallies in fifteen cities, with the biggest turn-out in Ulsan where over 30,000 workers took part, including the members of the Hyundai Motors Workers Union.

In the common 'strike manifesto' read out in all the regional mass meetings, the KCTU declared, "workers have shaken off the fear and anxiety created by crisis. The government and big business – supported by media who have become the mouthpiece of the rich – have exploited the good will of workers and ordinary people by forcing them to shoulder the entire burden of the crisis and the cost of recovery. They have even used the crisis as a threat to gag the just grievances

General Strike in Korea: 28th May 1998

and demands. In rising to launch this strike, the workers of KCTU have broken through the obstacles and yokes placed on us. We have risen as a legitimate and genuine force to design and build the shape of our future.

In another statement, 'strike resolution', KCTU declared "the government has turned its back to our just and legitimate demands to put an end to illegal and unfair labour practices. It is not willing to address the issues of the ill-effects and abuse of the dismissal law, effective trade union participation in restructuring process, reduction of working week, introduction of a new employment tax, reduction of military spending, mechanisms of public accountability of corporate practices."

Government Not Yet Serious

The resolution went on to denounce the government attitude: "It says that the issues of illegal and unfair labour practices of specific employers which were originally raised prior to the first Tripartite Council can be dealt with the second Council when it gets going. It says it cannot commit itself to a specific amount for unemployment relief fund in response to the KCTU demands to create a 20 trillion fund. Instead it hopes to raise some funds for unemployment relief by laying off workers from public corporations. To cap it all, the government stated that it has no plans for the fundamental reform of the chaebol system."

Despite the build up towards the launching of the general strike, KCTU had engaged in negotiations with the government for nineteen hours from 4 pm on 26th May till just two hours prior to the beginning of the strike.

The government negotiation panel presented a nine point response to the KCTU's five demands. It agreed to address objections and proposal raised by the KCTU panel and seek

authority from superior officers. But the government panel spent more time consulting with higher authorities, and finally returned with an instruction from the Minister of Labour to call off the negotiation, without delivering any response to KCTU's counter proposals.

KCTU will leave open the channels of communication, dialogue, and negotiation with the government. At the same time it will build up pressure by hold mass meetings and rallies.

More Mass Action

KCTU will hold mass meetings in Seoul and other major cities throughout the country on 28th May. More mass action is scheduled for Saturday 30th May and 3rd June. KCTU will step up organising for the second round general strike on 10th June. It is expected to be larger than the first warning strike with additional participation of public sector workers.

The leadership of KCTU are camping out in the steps of the Myongdong Cathedral, the site of the historic general strike in 1996-1997, to provide a stable headquarters for regular strategy meetings and the convergence point of mass rallies in Seoul.

Prospects for Negotiations

The government is expected to resume negotiating despite its vehement rhetoric. It harbours a keen interest in achieving 'something' President Kim Dae Jung can take with him in his visit to the US. Furthermore, the breaking of the 'taboo' of critical action in times of crisis may lead to a more rational recognition of the need to negotiation with the trade union movement on the most important issues in the effort to overcome the crisis and the reform agenda.

Source: KCTU Action Alert
<http://kctu.org/news11.htm>

Burmese military sentences students to death ...

In early April this year the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) handed down death sentences to two student activists who were accused of subversive activities including an alleged plot to assassinate SPDC leaders.

The two student activists, Ko Thein (aka Thein Htun) and Khin Hlaing, were part of a group of about forty people arrested in connection with the alleged plot and other political offences in January 1998. None of the forty accused were allowed legal representation and the sentences were handed down by a judge at the Special Court located opposite Insein Prison in Rangoon.

Ko Thein was accused of being an ABSDF agent, and he and Khin Hlaing were both given the death penalty. People who are handed the death penalty in Burma are usually hanged. In the judgement the two were also each given a fourteen-year prison sentence.

The other 38 people arrested in January received from three to fourteen years imprisonment. Set Aung Naing, a leader of the All Burma Federation of Student Unions (ABFSU), was imprisoned for fourteen years for allegedly working for the Communist Party of Burma (CPB) and carrying out destructive actions against the state. A group of those arrested were sentenced from three to seven years for having contact with Set

Aung Naing. They are Aung Kyaw Hein, Thet Naing Oo, Nay Lin Soe, Htun Htun Win and Aung Latt.

Among those sentenced to fourteen years imprisonment are U Mya Han (aka U Myint Han), Naing Aung (aka Fighter Aung), Letya Htun, Aung Din, U Han Win, Daw Khin Myint and Naw Deisar.

According to former political prisoner Moe Aye, the forty activists were only engaged in political defiance activities. He says Set Aung Naing, Aung Kyaw Hein and Nay Lin Soe were arrested for attempting to contact UN Special Envoy De Soto during his visit to Burma. "So far as I can tell, these people were arrested not for subversive actions but for their attempt to hand over a letter to De Soto during his Burma visit," said Moe Aye. "The letter contained accounts and records detailing human rights abuses committed by the military."

According to sources, the SPDC detained more 100 politicians, students and political activists in January this year and accused them of involvement in various illegal activities at a press conference on 1st March 1998. An unknown number of those arrested remain in prison awaiting sentencing.

All Burma Students' Democratic Front
(for more information please call 01-654 4984, e-mail: lurie@mozart.inet.co.th or caroline@ksc15.th.com)

NET WATCH

Assassinations in Colombia

Recent murders of political activists in Bogota may be linked to a Colombian army unit 'the 20th Intelligence Brigade. In recent weeks a prominent lawyer, a human rights advocate and a leftist politician have been murdered, prompting many peace activists to go into hiding or flee the country.

Light relief

From Wayne Grytting allegedly: in 1997 six of the first eight finishers in the Colorado Bolder Boulder Marathon run were athletes from Kenya. But corporate sponsors disliked the result. The Kenyan runners were deemed "marketing liabilities". So as to ensure more Americans finished among the leaders, race officials reduced the number of runners from Kenya or any other foreign country to three, in the sponsors' words: "It is our country, our event, our money. American sponsors want American winners."

The Raven Number 37

Anarchism in the Americas and China

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Rich and Poor



A tocracy is one thing, we know how to deal with tyrannous regimes. It is when the system which controls the human population is practically undecipherable or noticeable that difficulties arise. In the '30s there were the long lines of the unemployed. Early morning in the bitter cold waiting for a job that could make a difference to pitiful existences. One of Tolstoy's most moving stories deals with workers carrying heavy loads for a pittance and without the chance of sleep. The Revolution had to happen. The mode of exploitation changed, the bad old days had to go.

Not everywhere for where the population has been kept down, starving, illiterate, controlled by superstition and distortion of tribal memories, the same type of destitution still exists. Children making carpets or footballs, children living in sewers and calling it a home. But only sixty years ago when preparations for the war began, it was the industrial nations who got destroyed, bombed and decimated; the poorest parts of the world lived in comparative peace.

All that is now a mere memory. The politics of today has changed as the technologies changed as the communication methods have changed. The Church is not as powerful, Government is not as powerful, the Rich are not as powerful as they used to be. For those in power can no longer walk the streets without bodyguards. No amount of power trip can possibly convince any of them that despite all their protestations they have become the Enemy of the People.

Royalty is of course a different kettle of fish. Especially in a country like this with a nominal parliamentary democracy. Nobody quite knows whether the monarchy is important or not. During the dreadful Thatcher years when that Madame wanted to sit on the throne she managed to defeat and destroy the working movement such as the miners, the railworkers, the dockers, the students, the teachers, the engineers and the rest. But she came a cropper with the Poll Tax and it was the tiny anarchist movement that stopped her triumphalist march in Trafalgar Square. And it was rumoured that the very Queen herself had to fight for her very life, or at least for her dairy herd at Windsor, which remains to this day unpasteurised. This has to be said, because our 'movement' is different in every respect from any other political movement. We are against the monarchy, but that does not make us republicans, presidential or dictatorial. When we shall have a free society nobody will have less or more rights than any other person. Neither are we going to say that only anarchists have a right to this, that or the other.

Characteristically this is what differentiates us from all the other political factions. Neither God nor Master. That does not mean that we are intolerant or unsympathetic. We do not believe in holding grudges. Once we have got the rulers off our backs, we will not worry about people's pasts, it is what they do today in the changed circumstances that matters. It is the natural thing to do. The one who ladles out the food to the starving will not want to see your party card first.

How this will come about is yet unforeseeable. But we must forego the revolutionary bloodbath so beloved by all our political opponents. We are not saints, violence comes to us like to everybody else. But there is no such thing as a blocked out memory. And remember this, the unprecedented rise of the anarchist movement all over the world is due to self and community education. Self defence is also the defence of the community. Self education is also the education of the community. After everybody else has been fed, I also will have my crust of bread. Women and Children first, but when men, women and children starve, whose fault is that? This is a mad world, my masters, but not for long.

Year One is soon to come. Nobody needs to fear that the bad old days will ever come back. We only have one life, comrades, and let the world of people understand that we have no political opponents. We shall withstand exploitation and will share as well as we can the produce of our labour. As to how we shall be able to clear up the mess and the minefields, the atomic waste and the genetic bungling is for the future to decide.

John Rety

India, Pakistan, the Bomb and you

Dear Freedom,

I was very surprised that your latest copy, (dated 6th June 1998) appears not to mention, except for Donald Rooum's cartoon, the new nuclear arms race started in Pakistan and India: I am not good at writing but for want of anyone else can I please say a few words on this subject, because I see it as the most immediate concern to the survival of this planet. You did report in the previous edition, the Indian Tests and complained that from National CND there was a "deafening silence": what about yourselves; and Geoffrey Wheatcroft in the Independent on Sunday asked where are all the nuclear disarmers. Well, I am still here (where have all you Mr Wheatcroft's been?) and I, and my still quite numerous fellow disarmers, have obviously failed to put over the case for nuclear disarmament and the falsity of the deterrence argument, such that the Indian and Pakistan Governments can trot out this ridiculous nonsense that I thought had been left in the 1950's, about national defence and security. I would think that it is obvious to most sensible observers that the situation in South Asia (and it obviously affects the rest of the world) is far less secure than before these tests. The following is mostly contained in a leaflet I have done and is obtainable from me for copy or plagiarism.

When India tested a nuclear bomb it seemed to me that the world had finally gone crazy! Just when we have seemingly convinced the Generals if not the politicians in the West, of the obvious uselessness of nuclear weapons, in any situation (I refer, among other things, to the statement of sixty ex-NATO generals, earlier this year, that nuclear weapons can have no military purpose), the land of Gandhi, that man who showed us all how to live, threatens Pakistan with nuclear annihilation. Now Pakistan have tested their BOMB. Can this be really possible?

In June 1996, the International Court of Justice at the Hague, The World Court, declared that all nuclear weapons were and always had been, in all conceivable circumstance, illegal under International Law. To use or threaten with nuclear weapons is not only useless but illegal. What possible use could it be for India or Pakistan to threaten each other or China or anyone else with nuclear weapons? Instead of being statesmanlike Pakistan has tested some six nuclear weapons and a new nuclear arms race has started. All other nuclear capable nations will justifiably say that they also need nuclear weapons if America, Russia, China, Britain, and France and now India and Pakistan, say they need them. Israel although undeclared also has them and this presents enormous dangers in the Middle East.

Nuclear Weapons cannot be used; a mere fire in a nuclear power station in the Ukraine, Chernobyl, has caused tens of thousands of casualties and made thousands of hectares of land unusable for tens of thousands of years, so how could the world deal with a modern nuclear weapon let alone several as is the only logical thing to do in a war situation, so as to 'knock out' your enemy and prevent them from making a nuclear reply? If they can't be used then how do you convince the enemy that you would use them, and if you do, then their threats have not deterred you? This argument can be used vice versa and therefore demonstrates that deterrence cannot actually work: more than that it actually encourages the other side to use them before you do! Or if the other side believes that they are too terrible for you to use then they can invade you with impunity. It is interesting to note that the only leading politician to realise this was Gorbachev who demonstrated that

unilateralism would, and did for a short time, before his downfall: work! Not that this means I have any faith in politicians but in this immediate game of politics endangering the very survival of the world we have to pressure them into again 'pulling back from this brink'.

The only reason, I can imagine, that these, India and Pakistan governments want these weapons, unless they are really crazy, which would present even more danger, is that they perceive a greater world status in possessing them; I think this is a form of political madness. Tariq Ali in an article in the *Guardian*, which if I had written it might well have been taken as 'racist', called them "debased political culture(s)" - "culture(s) devoid of everything except the narrowest self interest" and that the people "misinformed [my italics] and miserable, were celebrating". Having spent many months on the pavements of Calcutta I can assure you that the ordinary poor have no concept of the enormity of this weapon or the cold war style deterrence arguments: I would also like to say that I consider all 'political cultures' to be debased; but it may be some are more debased than others?

From all this it seems to me and I would hope even to the most unreasonably 'leftist' person that the most effective and sensible thing for Britain would be to declare unilateral nuclear disarmament. Surely there is no argument left to justify our holding them a moment longer; I hope you all will be supporting the Trident Ploughshares 2000 in attempting to dismantle our Trident Submarines.

Lastly I would remind everyone of the impossibility of these tests not releasing any radioactivity. Although it would be almost impossible to prove that any particular individual was killed by these tests there will be many deaths and other casualties caused by these tests (I understand that the Indian ones were carried out within five miles of an inhabited village!). It may be that their poor deaths are not in vain, and the nuclear powers will be forced into signing a nuclear disarmament treaty, and Pakistan and India might sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT). However cynical we may be about conventional politics it can't do any harm and may put pressure on these nuclear obsessed politicians, to boycott all Pakistani and Indian goods, to write to The Indian

Commissioner, to The High Commissioner of Pakistan, your own MP and MEP, and Robin Cook, Tony Blair, etc. Also write to the other nuclear states America, Russia, China, and France and maybe Eisenhower's 1959 prediction that "people want peace so much that one of these days governments had better get out of the way and let them have it" will come true.

Peter M. Le Mare

Editorial reply: Like our correspondent, we have opposed nuclear weapons as long as they have existed. What is most noticeable about these new nuclear powers is the hypocrisy of the old nuclear powers, pretending to be shocked and appalled by the Indian and Pakistani bombs, while regarding their own bombs as inoffensive.

The Indian and Pakistani governments claim to have exploded five experimental bombs each, though there are seismologists elsewhere who doubt these claims. They probably have enough between them to kill two or three million unsuspecting civilians. The United States has the stockpiled capacity to annihilate ten or twelve times the entire population of the world. What appalling cheek of President Clinton to talk as if Indian and Pakistani arsenals are more dangerous than American and British arsenals.

There may be something in the 'mutually assured destruction' (MAD) argument. A government which starts on a conventional war, 'continuing diplomacy by other means' must face the possibility of subjects getting killed, but faces it with fortitude. In a nuclear war there is a possibility that the government itself will get killed, so a nuclear war is less likely than a conventional war. The only time atom bombs were used in a war they were dropped on a country which could not retaliate in kind.

Be that as it may, while nuclear weapons exist there might be a nuclear war. Or they might explode by accident and, as Peter Le Mare points out, an accident even at a peacefully-intentioned nuclear power plant has devastated an area of a whole country. For the hope of humanity, nuclear weapons must be abolished. We suspect that this may require governments to be abolished as well, but if governments can be persuaded to give up their weapons we will welcome it.

By all means write to high commissions, MPs, MEPs, prime ministers, presidents and rulers telling them they must rid themselves of nuclear weapons. It will probably have no effect, but it won't do any harm.

Fermin Rocker

The East End Years
A Stepney Childhood
with drawings by the author

Fermin Rocker was born in the East End of London in 1907, the son of Rudolf Rocker the famous anarchist theorist, activist and disciple of Kropotkin.

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(nearest tube Holborn). Admission is free
but a collection is made to cover the cost of
the room.

— PROGRAMME 1998 —

19th June 'What I Want is Facts' (speaker
Nicolas Walter)

26th June General discussion

3rd July An in-depth discussion on
anarchism led by Matt Winfer

10th July General discussion

17th July Social Darwinism and Socio-
Biology (speaker Donald Room)

24th July General discussion

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.

**Carol Saunders / Peter Neville
for London Anarchist Forum**

PUBLICATION CELEBRATION
meet the author

of the new Freedom Press title

**The East End Years:
a Stepney Childhood
Fermin Rocker**

introduced by
Anthony Rudolf and John Rety
on

Tuesday 23rd June, 7pm

at
Owl Bookshop
211 Kentish Town Road,
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Red Rambles

A programme of monthly guided walks in
Derbyshire, Staffordshire and Leicestershire for
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others. All walkers are reminded to wear boots
and suitable clothing and to bring food and
drink. Walks are 5 to 8 miles in length.

Sunday 28th June

Wirksworth to Alport Height

Meet at 1pm outside The Black's Head public
house, Market Place, Wirksworth, Derbyshire,
for five-mile circular walk.

**Telephone for further details
01773 827513**

**Third Anarchist
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in Berlin**

**This year the Anarchist Summer Camp
will be held in Berlin from Friday 31st
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This is a self-organised camp where we do
the cooking and washing-up together as
well as the dancing, singing, discussion,
climbing, playing ... whatever you like.
In previous years (held in Hamburg)
various study groups and also film
sessions and presentations.

This year's camp site is situated in
woodland on the outskirts of Berlin
(a lake for bathing is not far away).
Your share of costs should be between
90DM and 140DM depending on personal
means and income (meals are included).

For details, suggestions, enrolment:
Postal address: Jugendumweltladen, c/o
Andreas, Jagowstraße 12, 10555 Berlin,
Germany

Tel: (Germany) + 0177 27 249 03
Fax: (Germany) +030 40 533 639
e-mail: acamp@jpberlin.de

For enrolment we require the following details:
your address (postal or fax), the number of persons
enrolling, details of any planned study groups,
projects, if you wish to play in a band, etc.

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