

## Bombs Galore

Two weeks ago the papers and news broadcasts were full of reports of bombs, in Omagh, Nairobi, Dar-es-Salaam, Sudan, Afghanistan, and Cape Town.

A car loaded with explosives blew up in Omagh, Northern Ireland, killing 28 and injuring hundreds – the bloodiest incident since the present ‘troubles’ started in the 1960s, just when it looked as if they might be over. Local police said there had been a warning, of a bomb near the court-house. They sealed off the court-house area, and ushered people from there into the already crowded market area, which is where the bomb went off.

An Irish Nationalist group called the Real IRA was suspected from the beginning, but made no statement for a couple of days, perhaps because they were embarrassed. Eventually they said their intended target was property, not people. Their warning had given the correct location of the bomb, and the deaths were the responsibility of Omagh police who had accidentally or cunningly misunderstood the warning.

Even as they were drafting the statement, they must have known it was feeble. Responsibility for the effects of a bomb lies with those who planted the bomb and directed its planting. They cannot blame anyone else.

One after-effect of the Omagh bomb was that the British and Irish governments recalled their Parliaments, in the middle of their summer holidays, to pass laws making it easier for suspects to be convicted. No doubt in time, this will lead to more innocent people going to swell the disgraceful prison population.

Meanwhile, huge bombs went off at the American embassies in Nairobi and Dar-es-Salaam. They had to be huge bombs, huge enough to blow holes in the embassy walls, because security is

too tight for bombs to be placed inside. One was in a vehicle parked in the street outside, the other in the office block next door. ‘Collateral damage’, as the military call it, included the death and injury of hundreds of Kenyan and Tanzanian civilians.

There were no warnings to the local police or anyone. The perpetrators – a Muslim group said to be led by Osama bin Laden, a Saudi millionaire resident in Afghanistan – accepted the collateral deaths as part of the plan. Some Muslim apologist even called it part of God’s plan, confirming the belief of unbelievers that God is not just fiction, but horrible fiction.

American government statements denounced the bombers as ‘cowardly’, on the grounds that they were well out of range when the bombs exploded. Then, in retaliation, American ships launched bombs from thousands of miles away, against the obvious target of bin Laden’s



‘The Procession of the Victims’ taken from *The March to Death*: drawings by John Olday (Freedom Press, £3)

place in Afghanistan, and the very un-obvious target of a chemical plant near Khartoum. Both resulted in considerable collateral deaths and injuries.

The chemical plant near Khartoum had no apparent connection with bin Laden, but it seems the US military were waiting for any excuse to drop a bomb on it. They had secret evidence that it was manufacturing chemical weapons under the direction of Iraq, and the USA wants chemical weapons to be its own monopoly. The Sudanese military government insists that it was only manufacturing medicines, but they would, wouldn’t they?

Tony Blair, like British Prime Ministers before him, hastened to gush his support for the American bombs. This was inevitable, because although Britain is politically independent of America, in military matters it is an American dependency. The Sudanese government Announced that it would expel the British ambassador and recall its own ambassador to Britain.

It might be argued by adherents of the Conspiracy Theory of History that the United States is deliberately trying to antagonise Islamicist fanatics and military dictatorships. While the Cold War against Communism was on the US supported such unlovable regimes, but now Communism has collapsed the US needs a new Cold War to keep its population and its allies loyal. They are trying to create a new enemy.

The bomb in Cape Town, planted by some tin-pot Islamicist in an American café, suggests that they are succeeding

It grieves us, and would amaze us if we were not so used to it, that so many ordinary people seem actually in favour of governments, would-be governments, religious believers and other mass murderers.

Donald Room



# anarchist fortnightly

# Freedom

Vol. 59 No. 17

5th September 1998

50p

## Labour's Three New Deals

Not much is new about Labour's New Deal except the massive ongoing media advertising campaign. There was one in the 1930s, another in the 1970s, and now a third for the late 1990s. All three had/have two simple aims: to provide cheap labour for employers and to reduce the published unemployment figures. Same aims as the Conservatives, just the methods are different.

### Labour's First New Deal

In the 1930's, over 200,000 young unemployed men mainly from areas of heavy industry in the north of England and South Wales volunteered (to avoid losing their benefits) to be sent to one of 27 labour camps (called slave camps by the *Sunday Times*) that were set up in remote areas of the country. Many were skilled workers, but the aim was to prepare them for low-paid unskilled work. It may be no surprise for readers of this paper to learn that this was the result of an idea that came out of the 1929 Labour Government of Ramsay MacDonald. It is only now, some sixty years later, that most of us are hearing about these camps and that is because a social historian and teacher and a researcher at the Writer's Republic, a social research group, decided to interview former members, and the media (*Sunday Times* 9th August 1998 and the *Guardian* 12th August 1998) decided it was newsworthy. And only just in time, for those still alive are now in their eighties. These camps, officially called Instructional Training Centres or Transfer Instructional Centres, were much better known as Labour Camps, and were designed to provide tough physical activity to "harden up the work shy" who were defined officially as anyone who had been out of work for twelve months or more. This at a time when unemployment figures were reaching three million. The work often involved digging holes and then filling them in, although it was not always mindless effort as we also learn that "trees were felled and roads and causeways built". But it was cheap labour for the large landowners who were no doubt important to the government of the time, and of course the unemployment figures came down a little. But there was also another agenda. We learn from subsequent correspondence in the *Sunday Times* (23rd August 1998) that the camps were run on military lines by mainly First World War army officers, with early morning parades in front of the Union Jack, drilling and a uniform of sorts. Perhaps these officers were also desperate for work in order to eat and did not appreciate the irony of First World War survivors preparing cannon fodder for the second. We are told by another correspondent that one of the Ministry of Labour inspectors of the camps was a Fabian and a life-long socialist, not a right wing bureaucrat. We must ask the question - What exactly was the difference?

Although the personal records of all the victims were destroyed in 1939 the camps were never secret and we are told that the

relevant papers are available in the Public Records Office. They were even written about in 1937 by the trade unionist Wal Hannington, but he was dismissed as just a communist agitator. Those sent to the camps mostly just didn't want to talk about it and those who did want to talk could find no one who would listen - or at least no one with the resources needed to give publicity to the information. Even one of the leading experts on unemployment policy during the inter-war years has now admitted that he knew little about the camps, so they are just missing from the history books. What government needs censorship when society censors itself?

### Labour's Second New Deal

Now we are in 1970s Britain and it is again a Labour government that is setting up camps to which mainly unmarried unemployed men were sent under the threat of losing their benefits if they refused to go. This time the camps were run by the DHSS, not a Ministry of Labour, and the numbers involved were

much smaller, with some suspicion that it was directed at political and union 'trouble-makers'. But little else was different. The camps were again run on military lines by ex-army staff. Three months of hard physical activity, an example of the short sharp shock treatment so popular with governments as a cure for perceived social problems.

### Labour's Third New Deal

No suggestion this time of labour camps, at least so far, because circumstances have changed and the landed gentry are less economically important and have less political clout. Now the government needs to appease a new aristocracy. So it is the multinationals and the Sainsbury's and the Tesco's who can use the cheap labour. Stacking shelves replaces digging holes. Television advertising attempts to persuade young people that this is their golden opportunity to acquire the skills needed for economic survival. But it is the employers that get the cash, up to £60 a week for each wage slave they accept, plus a Training Grant for joining the scheme. Even

schools are now invited to apply, and as a *Guardian* editorial suggests (24th August 1998) "the presence of the unemployed in the classroom might offer students a useful glimpse of their own future", for after three months most young people will be back at the Job Centre although of course the unemployment statistics will look a little better.

Unfortunately for Labour's third New Deal a new factor is threatening the government's desire to keep unemployment down. This is a gradual realisation by government, something the Conservatives knew instinctively, that there are certain essentials if the capitalist system is not to self destruct. Financial stability is important and this, as measured by inflation indices, requires a permanent pool of cheap labour which in turn depends on a pool of unemployed, which for Britain is calculated to be around two million. So we can expect a double act - one exhorting the unemployed to try harder to get a job, however low the pay, whilst the other tries to ensure that not too many of them succeed - Oh Happy Life.

HS

## The War of the Future (and of the Past)

The US missile attacks on Sudan and Afghanistan (and, accidentally, on Pakistan) have demonstrated yet again Washington's contempt for the law.

No doubt there are serious long-term issues raised by the missile attacks (which fit into a long-standing pattern of US state terrorism stretching back through the attacks on Iraq, the bombing of Libya, the invasions of Panama and Grenada, the terrorism against Nicaragua and Cuba, and so on and so forth). One issue of critical importance for US policymakers is the threat of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons proliferation - and the proliferation of ballistic missiles as possible delivery mechanisms.

If third world countries acquire such weapons of mass destruction, this could inhibit

US intervention in the rest of the world. The Pentagon's 1991 top-level *Strategic Deterrence Study* stated that a major target of "third world deterrence" is "us, the United States of America ... The major role of nuclear weapons in the hands of such third world nations may be to deter the US, not from direct attack (most unlikely), but from intervening in these nations' or groups' local affairs". Such affairs may not be 'local' in our eyes, of course ... In such groups' eyes a few nuclear weapons might be enough to keep the US at bay. *Without US precautions they are probably right.*

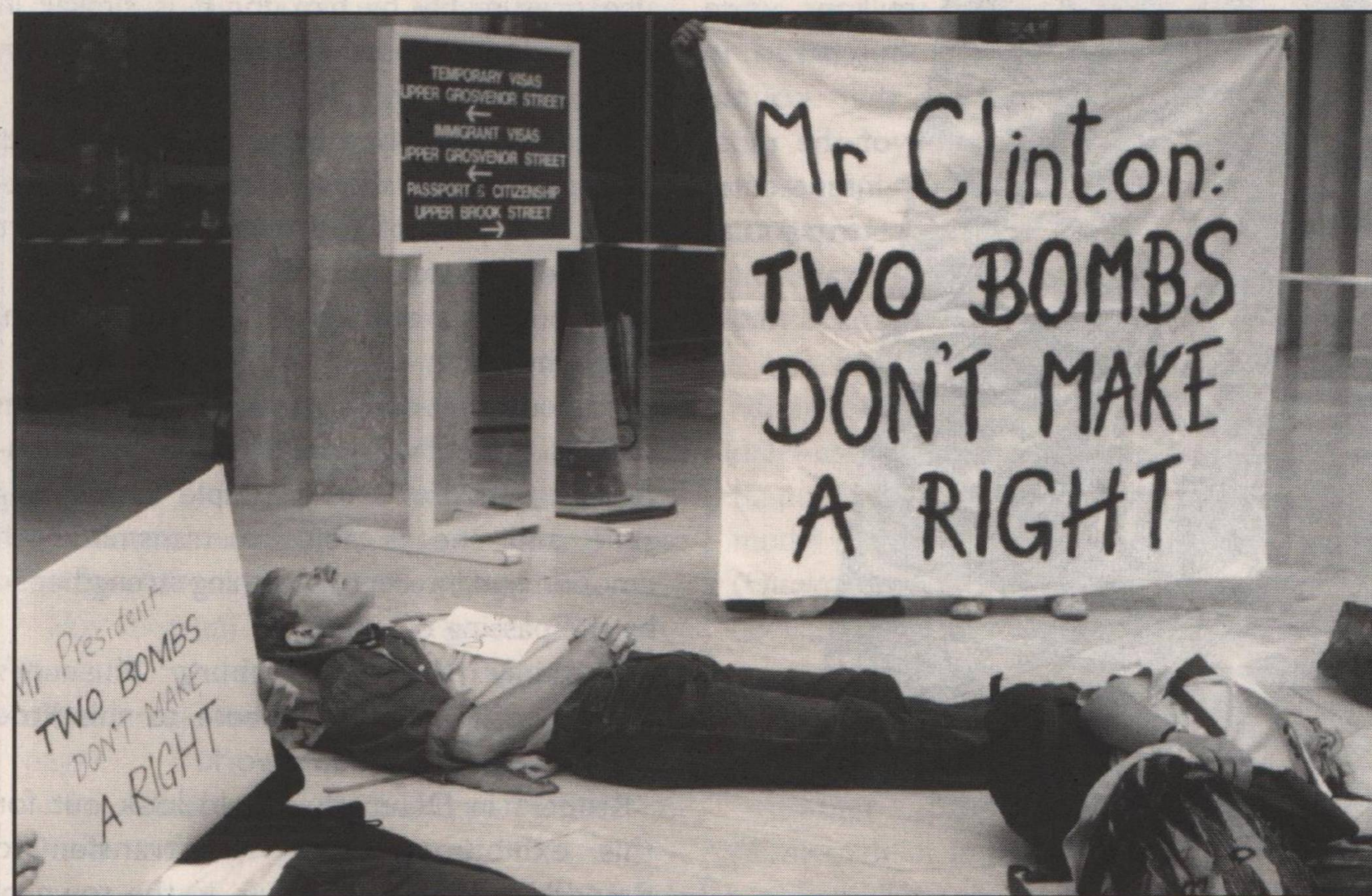
The same logic applies to third world chemical and biological weapons. The 'precautions' that the US can take include the pre-emptive unilateral destruction of chemical

and biological weapons facilities in enemy countries. Washington is anxious to establish its 'right' to take such action and to build up public support at home and abroad for such terrorist unilateralism. The embassy bombings in east Africa have given the Pentagon an opportunity to establish just such a precedent.

It is unlikely that the US really believed that the pharmaceutical factory was being used for the purpose alleged, but such considerations are irrelevant to the larger purpose of building political support for unilateral 'disarming' attacks on sites allegedly connected with the production of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Interestingly, the US condemned the Israeli bombing of Iraq's Osirak nuclear plant on 7th June 1981 as 'unprecedented'.

If this analysis is correct, the bombing of the Sudanese pharmaceutical factory was an important step towards securing for the United States the 'right' to unilaterally and illegally destroy by force suspected third world WMD and their production facilities. This 'right' is needed primarily to protect US intervention forces deployed in the third world, and to enable them to carry out their missions with impunity.

The mission of such interventions is, invariably, to buttress the present economic and political order, an order which has been consciously designed to benefit powerful Western transnational corporations. Anti-WMD terrorism is an important element of US security policy, and US 'security' is in elite circles identified with the interests of the private corporations which dominate social, cultural and political life. This 'war of the future' is merely a continuation of the European war of the past five hundred years, a war of conquest and enslavement.



Mikhail Bakunin and Andrea Needham on the steps of the US Embassy, 24th August 1998, shortly before their arrests for protesting at the US missile attacks on Sudan and Afghanistan.



— VISIBLE HANDS —

## The dirty water chain

In my last column I explored some of the basic needs of life, and how social solutions to these needs are rarely experienced immediately and directly in the West. Intermediaries and impersonal mechanisms stand between us and the growing and cooking of food, the delivery of clean drinking water, the gathering of fuel and the generation of power, the disposal of human waste, and so on. What is interesting, from an analytical point of view, is that malnutrition, or 'undernutrition', is often not due simply to inadequate food supply, but the product of a complex interaction between failures in some or all of the sectors of the economy just referred to. A classic example is the case of Iraq, which I have just returned from.

In Iraq, I, and my colleague Andrea Needham, were able to meet Denis Halliday, the outgoing UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq. Halliday has resigned at least in part out of frustration with the sanctions regime and the inadequacy of the UN-monitored 'oil-for-food' programme, which has been running since early 1996. He told us that one of the UN's primary concerns was child malnutrition — especially 'chronic malnutrition', meaning undernutrition leading to stunting, or low height-for-age. In his last report on Iraq, on 5th June this year, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan commented: "It is of serious concern to me that a survey carried out by the [Iraqi] Ministry of Health, UNICEF and WFP [UN World Food Programme] in March 1998 has detected no measurable difference in the nutritional status of infants under five since the survey they conducted in April 1997".

UNICEF, in reporting the April 1997 results, commented: "Chronic malnutrition has long term implications on a child's physical and mental development. After a child reaches two or three years of age, chronic malnutrition is difficult to reverse and damage on the child's development is likely to be permanent." The April 1997 UNICEF estimate was that around 750,000 children in south and central Iraq were chronically malnourished.

The June 1998 Secretary-General's report on Iraq commented: "The results of the most recent survey reinforce the importance of water and sanitation for the nutritional status of the population. Substantial improvements in nutritional status cannot be expected until there is a corresponding improvement in related areas that have an effect on nutrition. An area of concern remains the distribution of infant formula [part of the oil-for-food ration], which has replaced breastfeeding. Water supplies used to prepare the infant formula are often untreated, drawn from wells, streams and dams, and are found to contribute to diarrhoeal disease, one of the most important contributing factors to malnutrition in children. This was confirmed in the UNICEF Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey in August 1996, which indicated that fifty per cent of rural households draw water from untreated sources."

Kofi Annan concluded: "The results of these surveys demonstrate the need for a multi-sectoral approach to the problem of malnutrition and the need for the enhanced humanitarian programme to *reduce concentration on food intake*, and spread limited resources to other sectors requiring urgent attention if further deterioration in the nutritional status of the population is to be prevented" (emphasis added).

One of the chains of production is linked along these lines: diarrhoea causes malnutrition, and is a leading cause of child death. Unsanitary drinking water causes diarrhoeal diseases. According to the UN, contamination levels at the point of production are falling 'substantially' and in some areas 'dramatically', as a result of chlorine imports permitted under the oil-for-food deal. However, "[t]he very poor condition of the water network, which suffers from frequent breaks and leaks, especially in southern Iraq, can result in contamination after disinfection of the water, which reduces the efficiency of the service". The cracks in the pipes also increase the significance of power generation to the water. When the power is cut (six hours a day in Baghdad, twenty hours a day in the south), pressure in the water pipes falls, a vacuum is created, and any nearby sewage is sucked into the pipes, re-contaminating the water.

The dismal, though marginally improved, state of drinking water production and distribution interacts with the un-reconstructed sewage and sanitation sectors and the rapidly deteriorating power generation system. In other words, spare parts for the electricity sector are essential humanitarian supplies, critical to overcoming child malnutrition.

UNICEF has estimated that a minimum of \$500 million is needed to restore the existing water and sanitation sector to an acceptable operational level. The amounts allocated in the oil-for-food deal so far (phases I to III) will provide (when they are finally delivered to, and installed in, Iraqi facilities) only twelve per cent of the overall immediate requirements, according to Kofi Annan's June report. As for the electricity sector, the Secretary-General estimates that a total \$7 billion will be needed to address the electricity sector's operating problems, and \$870 million is needed for immediate rehabilitation. Up till June, \$176 million had been allocated for the sector, and commodities worth \$15.9 million had actually arrived in-country. Under the original projections for the new, enhanced, oil-for-food deal, \$137 million was allocated to electricity. Now that projected revenues have fallen sharply (in part because of the collapse of oil prices), even this figure will not be achieved, and it is possible that the actual allocation for power generation will be even less than in the previous phase of the programme. Given the rate of deterioration in the electricity sector, this will have serious consequences.

Denis Halliday told us that "nutrition is something, of course, that is not resolved easily. It's not even purely a food intake problem as you'll understand". The Secretary-General has called for a multi-sectoral approach. What has become clear is that the multi-sectoral strategy embodied in the oil-for-food deal has failed, and will continue to fail for the foreseeable future, to meet the needs of Iraq's children. Philippe Heffinck, UNICEF representative in Iraq, said in November 1997: "What we are seeing is a dramatic deterioration in the nutritional well-being of Iraqi children since 1991. And what concerns us now is that there is no sign of any improvement since Security Council Resolution 986/1111 [the oil-for-food deal] came into force". He added: "It is clear that children are bearing the brunt of the economic hardship". The British government, of course, assures us that sanctions are aimed at the Iraqi regime, and not the Iraqi people.

I asked Halliday whether it was true he was resigning in part because of the sanctions. He said, "Yes, I believe that sanctions are a very blunt instrument ... it discriminates in a sense against the weak and the poor and the lower echelons of the economic scale in a way that I find unacceptable, contrary to the basic human rights of individuals throughout the world which we in the United Nations are so wedded to". Halliday deserves credit for not washing his hands of the crisis, and for the efforts he has made on behalf of ordinary people in Iraq. Meanwhile, the dirty water chain stretches back from polluted wells and cracked pipes, back to London and Washington, and to all of us in the West who have watched this crime unfolding over all these years. Dirty water, dirty hands.

## Rich and Poor

I have written about this elsewhere and it remains a puzzle for me as to why anarchism has so many adherents and passionate advocates among the ranks of artists (poets, painters, musicians, philosophers and such like) whereas political anarchism musters less than lip service to artistic considerations. That anarchist thinking has inspired many great artists goes without saying.

An exhibition currently on show at the splendid art museum in Gothenburg in Sweden illustrates precisely what I have in mind. The exhibition shows examples of the work of German anarchist painters and artisans who lived and worked

together in a commune in the small village of Worpsswede, from which the exhibition takes its title.

The modest drawings by members of the group which line the walls show eloquently their determination to conduct their lives in an artistic manner assisted and imbued by tenets of anarchist philosophy.

This philosophical outlook shows many threads. After all, the founding of the colony was in the year of 1919, subsequent to the Great War of devastation when untold millions were butchered in the course of the most insane of all imperial wars.

As such the colony provided both an escape from communal madness and an opportunity for the affirmation of artistic principles.

There were many influences which fuelled their enthusiasm. They range from the poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke, whose poetic description of Worpsswede states the case in his usual manner: "The smallest flower has its place in the order of things to take root and to sway in the wind, here in Worpsswede they appear to live and laugh just as they wish".

Other influences on the group ranged from Oscar Wilde to Gerhard Hauptman, and the anarchist philosopher (founder of *Freedom* in 1886) and author Peter Kropotkin. In a glass case is a rare copy of Kropotkin's book *The Conquest of Bread* in its 1919 German edition, *Eroberung des Brotes*, printed and illustrated by the artist Heinrich Vogeler, a member of the Worpsswede group. The drawing of Kropotkin on the frontispiece is also presumably by him, for it is similar in style to Vogeler's other drawings shown in the exhibition.

The handsomely bound book with its futuristic design shows that anarchist artwork was part of the revolutionary effort that then spread across Europe.

The book is a centrepiece of the exhibition, and rightly so.

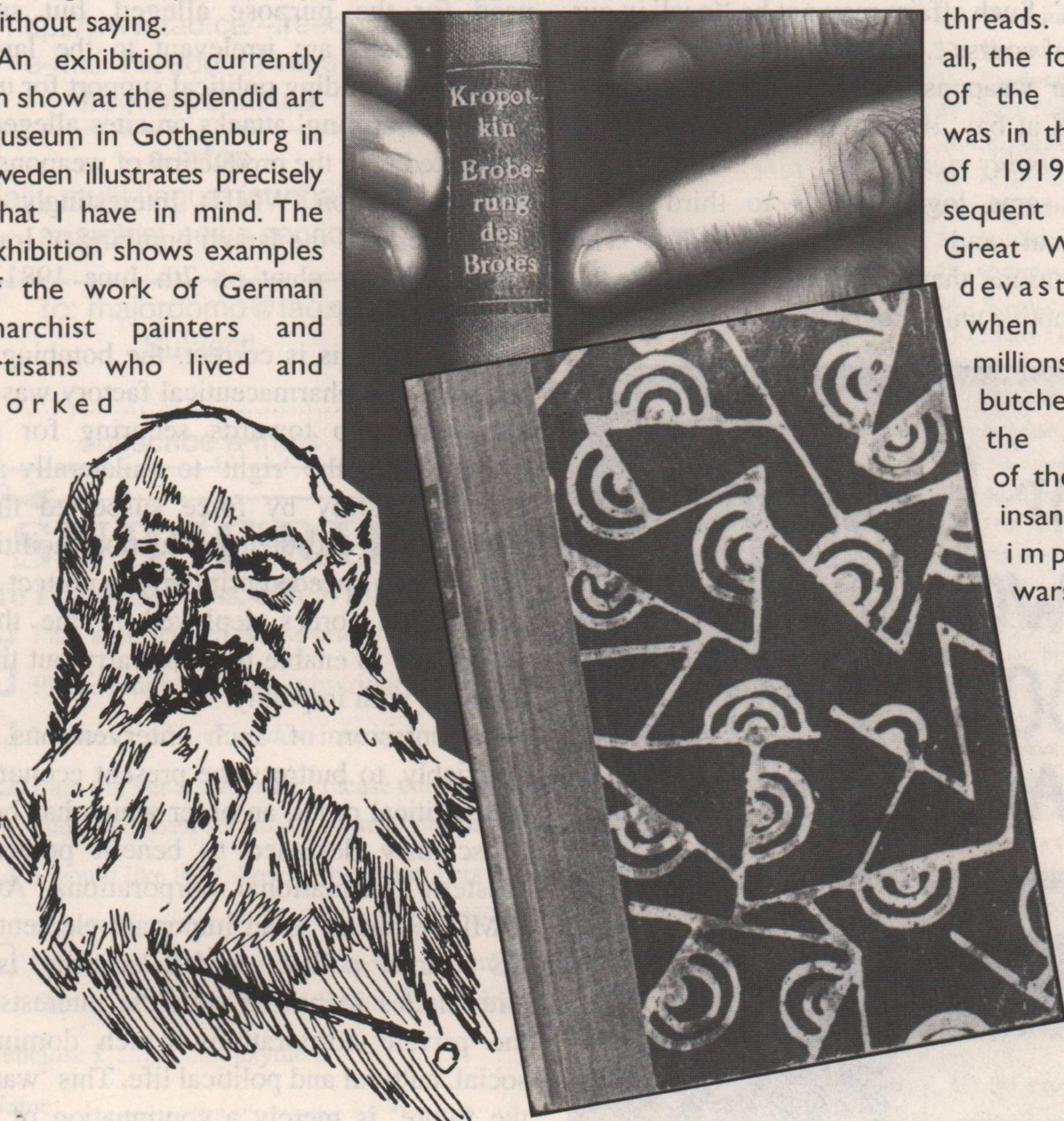
Most of the drawings which are shown consist of the work of Paula Modersohn-Becker. She draws in a simple and strong style and she is able to transmit both emotion and intellect, if anything strengthened by the passing of years.

Certainly the Gothenburg Museum's exhibition is a proper tribute to this little known anarchist group's work.

Readers in Denmark should look out for this exhibition, which will transfer to Brandt's Klädfabrik Museum in the town of Odense in September.

John Rety

Milan Rai



Kropotkin's *Eroberung des Brotes*, cover designer unknown, Worpsswede 1919.  
Drawing of Kropotkin by Heinrich Vogeler taken from the book.



# Portsmouth Smokey Bears Picnic

The first picnic, in 1994, was one of a series of actions in Portsmouth in defiance of the Criminal (In)Justice Act and Supported the campaign to legalise cannabis. It attracted more than a thousand people – negligible policing, no trouble, no arrests. The second year there were sound-systems and live bands – again negligible policing, again no trouble, again no arrests. Though the third and fourth picnics faced intimidation from the police, they still managed to attract a large number of supporters.

Rather than be put off by the police intimidation the organisers of this year's picnic appeared to have made sure that there was more publicity in the 'alternative' press than in previous years. The fifth picnic was to take place on Sunday 16th August 1998. The local paper, *The News* carried a three-quarter page story the day before about posters promoting the event being pasted on a church notice board! The church minister complained to the police and local paper, thereby ensuring more publicity than a dozen fly-posting teams could ever hope for! Also, as the picnic followed the huge legalise cannabis demo and rally in London in March, hopes were high that it would attract

a large number of anti-prohibitionists.

The recently launched Portsmouth Anarchist Network (PAN) agreed to support the event and produced a leaflet entitled, *Why Anarchists Oppose Cannabis Prohibition*. The aim of PAN's leaflet was to inject some class-struggle revolutionary anarchism into an event (albeit using direct action) that appears to make 'reformist' demands.

On arrival at the common, one member of PAN carrying a paste up table (a potential erection!) was immediately spotted by two coppers who walked straight up to him. One copper pointed a video camera at him while the other informed him that he had reason to believe that the paste up table was going to be erected, thus breaking council by-laws. The anarchist called to the disparate crowd to gather round. A crowd assembled around the minor confrontation. This created a focus for the crowd and caused the police to become extremely nervous (one was seen to tremble). The anarchist insisted that he wouldn't erect the table and told the police that, even if he did, breaking a council bye-law was a non-arrestable offence. Even though they took his details, the coppers backed off. The crowd cheered and anarchist leaflets were distributed

to people eager to see what all the fuss was about.

Soon after this the police retreated further because the number of protesters swelled to at least six hundred – a hundred or so more than last year – with another couple of hundred coming and going throughout the day. Despite the numbers there was no sound-system. However, drums, guitars and even one or two ghetto-blasters found their way onto the common. Some fly-pitching took place which would have been impossible at the last two picnics. Bongos were lit, and a two-foot joint (I kid you not) was smuggled on to the common to be smoked by a long and eager queue – I pity the last person who toked on that soggy roach! Six arrests were made, mostly on the outskirts of the common for possession.

With the police keeping their distance PAN members erected their stall. An anarchist flag flew above the stall, and crowd, and was the only flag visible from a distance. Indeed, the anarchist presence was crucial in giving a revolutionary angle to the event, and some of the protesters may now see cannabis prohibition in the wider context of social control as a result.

This is an issue that anarchists can get involved in. Obviously the drugs barons and gangsters (at the top of the production and distribution pyramid) will never win our support. However, the victims of cannabis prohibition are predominantly working class people, many of whom languish in prison on drugs related offences. Also, the issue is used to justify draconian laws and ever more intrusive surveillance technology (i.e. CCTV). The Drugs War is very much a part of the Class War, although obviously not central to it. It is used to create an 'enemy within', diverting attention from the problems inherent in capitalism. As libertarians we would be wise not to ignore the gains to be made by involving ourselves in the fight against cannabis prohibition.

A 'Smokey Bears Picnic' is being planned for Hyde Park, London, on 26th September to mark the seventieth anniversary of cannabis prohibition. The meeting point will be Speakers Corner at 1pm.

Written by a member of the Portsmouth Anarchist Network (PAN)

— COPY DEADLINE —  
The next issue of Freedom will be dated 19th September, and the last day for copy intended for this issue will be first post on Thursday 10th September

## — OBITUARY — John Aitkenhead

John Aitkenhead, founder of Kilquhanity House school, died on 21st July 1998, aged 88. At first, when the school opened in 1940, it was run according to the principles laid down in A.S. Neill's books about Summerhill school. But the founders quickly learned to conform to the actual practice of Summerhill. All decisions were made by the weekly council meeting, at which teachers, farmhands, cooks and pupils each had a single vote, but the council was manipulated by the adults into voting for compulsory bedtimes and compulsory classes.

In the 1950s I went to a party at the school, invited by some anarchists whose children were pupils there. I mentioned to John the curious paradox of a 'free' school which was fee-paying. He told me that in fact, half the pupils present were the children of staff members: "This is a luxury for those prepared to devote their lives to it".

There are free communities which survive in the capitalist world by manufacturing toys for playgroups, or by running conference centres. Kilquhanity was a community which survived by educating rich kids. All goods were held in common. Cigarettes (to which in those days almost all adults were addicted) were a communal resource on which people drew as needed. In addition to keep in the community and school places for their children, members of staff were each paid ten shillings a week.

John did not proclaim himself an anarchist, but he gave his school an anarchist motto: "liberty, equality, and inefficiency".

Donald Room

# Hang about a bit ... I can't believe that!

Some twenty years ago bombs went off in two central Birmingham pubs. All the media immediately attributed it to the IRA, with no possible allowance for any other party. However those who then knew Birmingham centre pubs knew that one was a student pub, the other an Irish pub, sufficiently committed to Irish struggles that it was used for meetings by Troops Out, by the Republican Clubs, and – thinly disguised – by Sinn Fein. People in the know identified two of the victims as themselves members of the IRA and at least two others as active members of Troops Out.

It did not seem rational that the IRA would target their own people so those of us in the West Midlands who supported British withdrawal from Northern Ireland tended to suspect that MI5's dirty tricks department might know more about it than did the IRA. When people were charged and later convicted we talked of a frame-up; but that meant the case got bogged down whether these particular people were the IRA bombers concerned, therefore begging the real question.

Of course the IRA is an army, a clandestine one at that, so like MI5 and all others such it is hierarchical, undemocratic, apt to manipulate ordinary people to fit its aims, and totally insensitive to the real aspirations of the community around it. But, while it is always possible for hostile propaganda to say 'these are such crazies, they bomb for the sake of doing so, they don't know what they want', that doesn't mean it is likely that they are so crassly stupid as to target people broadly on its own side.

However the military mind is such that secrecy about its own side's doing, and especially its defeats, is deemed essential. Though rumour has it that the IRA engaged in an internal inquiry; found out that after their Coventry cell was arrested, an MI5 agent posed as an IRA member there and founded a new Coventry cell, and that he organised the bombing in Birmingham – at one and the same time discrediting the IRA, killing some of its members and semi-friends and alienating it from others; this has never been made public.

Now, twenty-odd years later, at a time when the Cold War has ended, there appears to be peace dawning in Northern Ireland, and many MI5 agents are worried about the security of their jobs. At a time when the bulk of the IRA has been

forced by sheer exhaustion to make a peace, which many of its members consider concedes too much, we have a similarly unlikely story. A dissident splinter is alleged to have bombed a town 70% of whose population are Catholic, a town where the largest single group on the local council is Sinn Fein. They allegedly ignored the military targets in the town and chose to put the bomb as far away from these as possible within the town centre.

Once again the story is justified by the claim that 'they are crazies, they don't know what they are doing'. It conveniently allows the demand that Gerry Adams should inform on the dissidents and hand over weapons. The demand is made in the full knowledge that if Adams did either, he would be totally discredited and the ceasefire would be over for good.

Laurens Otter





# Murray Bookchin: a square peg in a round hole?

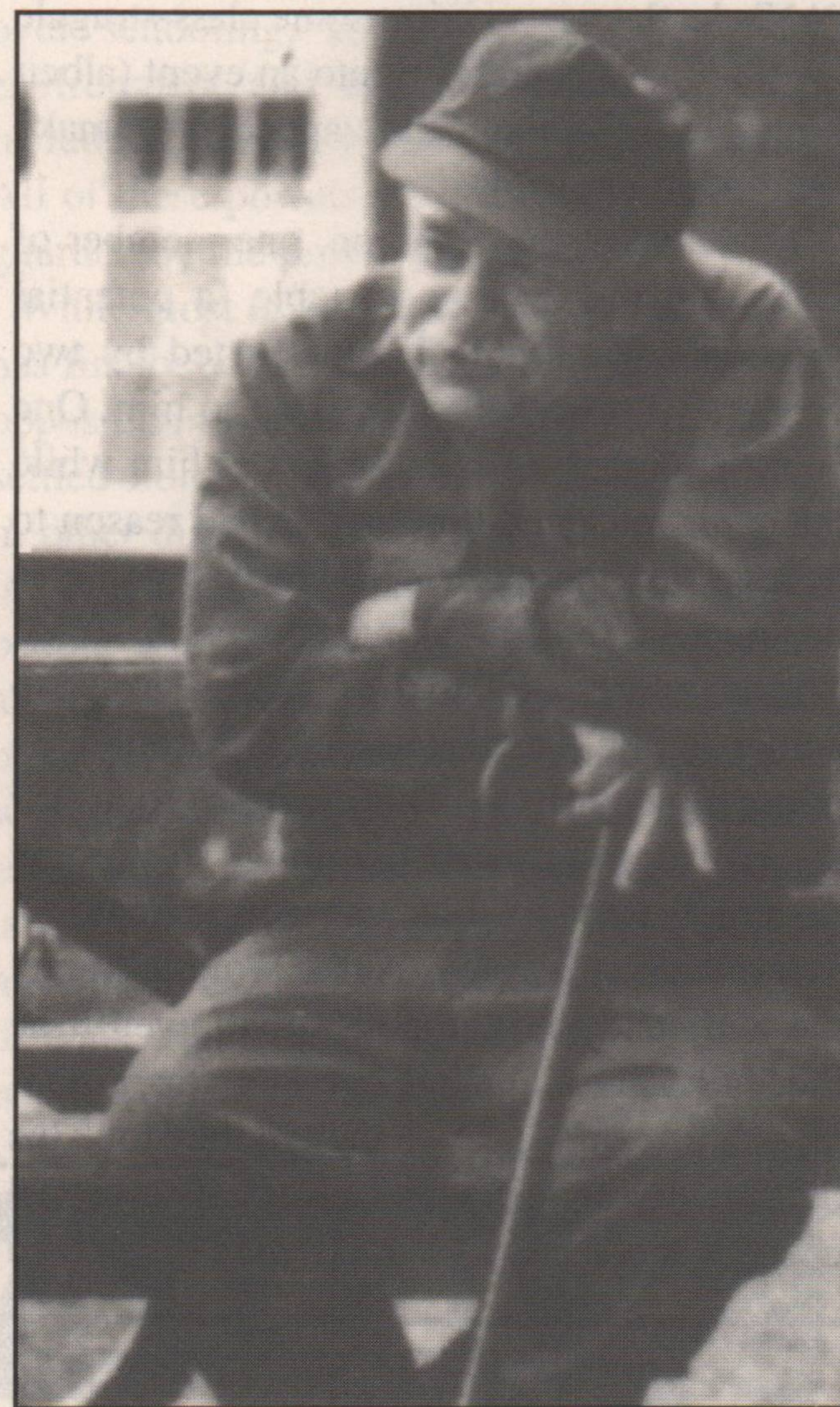
Murray Bookchin has been an anarchist for years, or so he claims. Now in *The Murray Bookchin Reader* (edited by Janet Biehl, and available from Freedom Press at £15.99) we have available a book containing a selection of his key texts, from 1962-1995. The book is a fascinating read and a must for anyone unfamiliar with the man's work. Bookchin is now regarded as a major figure in anarchism, in fact the *The Independent* goes as far as to describe his books as "classic statements of contemporary anarchism". It is undeniable that Bookchin has written some fine works on anarchism and has brought us (or revived) many important ideas. However the picture is more complex than the glowing blurbs on the book cover would have us believe. Following the acrimony surrounding his recent book, *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism*, Bookchin has been transformed into a character that many either love or hate, he has added further division to an already divided movement. Some hail him as 'the great reviver of anarchism', while others now decry him as its 'grumpy old man' or even question his claim to have ever been an anarchist at all. One thing they all agree on is that Murray is someone you just can't ignore. This new book gives an insight into how this double image has come about.

While a critic of a lot of Bookchin's later writing, even I have to admit that much of his earlier work is rather good. Bookchin's greatest influence has been within the ecological movement, in particular his promotion of the ideas of biodiversity and dialectical holism. And as was said in a review in the *New Scientist* these ideas are of crucial importance for today's world. Even conservative pro-ecology pundits use some of Bookchin's concepts without realising their radical origins. While many of us might view ecology as just another ideological paradigm it remains true that the old reductionist-mechanist, instrumentalist paradigm is now defunct and an alternative is urgently required. Bookchin's importance is in his development of an ecological model that emphasises both responsibility and freedom, in a way that is compatible with an anarchist world-view, without falling into the

misanthropic excesses of deep ecology and anarcho-primitivism. A concise overview of Bookchin's ecology comprises the first part of the book.

Where Bookchin begins to go awry is his extension of these ideas to society in his 'social ecology'. While in principle it seems an inspired idea to extend the ecological model to society, as a way of demonstrating the importance of values like social diversity, freedom, mutual aid and responsibility, this is not what Bookchin does. As the book reveals, Bookchin was originally a Marxist (and quite a Stalinistic one according to some critics) and though he later mellowed and became an anarchist he retains a kind of Marxoid determinism that undermines his claim to be a libertarian. For Bookchin, his ecology is not just a functional model (as ecology is usually understood) it is *Reality* (with a capital R). This leads him on (through the very real connection between the 'natural' and the 'human') to propose a deterministic social ecology that is rooted in the 'reality' of ecological, natural evolution (for Bookchin the 'human' equals the social). In an embarrassing mis-reading of Fichte (Bookchin should really keep to areas he understands) he describes humanity as nature becoming conscious, a process driven by natural forces, and from this develops a kind of materialistic Hegelianism. True, although Bookchin starts out as one of those failed Marxists who joined the anarchist movement, mistaking it for a radical form of anti-hierarchical communism, he does incorporate genuine anarchist ideas into his theory, such as spontaneity, flux, human potential and a distrust of imposed order. But he does so only within the context of historical determinant forces. At one point (in his essay 'Two Traditions: Anarchism', page 144) he makes the bizarre claim that anarchism differs from Marxism in the former's "determination within the framework of forms created by the revolution". While this may be true of some Marxist influenced anarchist cul-de-sacs it has never been true of anarchism as a whole, which has always emphasised self determinism. But perhaps this is one of the 'historically superseded' notions Bookchin is described as 'releasing' us from in the introduction to the section on anarchism. Thank you so much, Murray. If social ecology is taken as a model for an effective and fulfilling society Bookchin has given us a powerful basis for experimentation (and his works lose nothing for being taken in this way), but otherwise it becomes just another oppressive dogma, and Bookchin is a master of dogmatism.

One of his dogmas, that promoting a rounded society producing fully functioning Renaissance-men, is in perfect accord with the anarchist desire for the balanced development of the individual and rejection of over-specialisation. But in Murray's absolutist prose it sounds like hollow utopianism, and at times brings to mind Juvenal's famous jibe at "hungry little Greeks". Closely related to this side of Bookchin are his overt political views. The sections on Marxism, anarchism and 'libertarian municipalism' give a great insight into Bookchin's world-view here, as well as a lucid account of both anarchism and Marxism in general. What comes out very strongly is the change that appears to have occurred in Bookchin since the '60s. His early accounts of anarchism are some of the



Murray Bookchin

best I've read for a long while (his account of the Spanish collectives is particularly fascinating), he also gives a marvellous account of anarchism that includes such descriptions of it as "... a libidinal movement against coercion of any kind" and "the resistance of the oppressed to all forms that seek to imprison the spontaneous development of social order", which bring about "an upsurge of mass movements, in some cases wildly Dionysian in character, that demanded an end to all systems of authority, privilege and coercion" and a "revolution ... to make it possible for each individual to gain control of his everyday life". All wonderfully ecstatic stuff, but this is the young 'Marcusian' Bookchin speaking, not the 'grumpy old man' of today with his patriarchal lectures on rationally ordered

societies, structured institutions, material pre-conditions of freedom and uncompromising anti-autonomy stance. All of which ultimately culminate in his entirely non-anarchist 'libertarian municipalism', based on a form of direct democracy and rule by the majority. But is this just symptomatic of an anarchist over the hill as some claim or is something deeper also involved? Even Bookchin now admits he has never been an 'orthodox' anarchist, he always held on to much Marxist theory and maintained a rigid patriarchal, sociocentric viewpoint. With hindsight, elements of this can be seen in some of his early apparently radical statements (including some of the above). Most strikingly in his remark that people must be "free to fulfil their potential as members of society". In his attack on 'individualist anarchism' he has never been able to see that authentic anarchism is neither egoistic or sociocentric, but rather based on a free interplay between the two (as Bakunin saw it, both in complement, oscillation and conflict). Similarly in his attack on the wider issue of 'irrational' and 'lifestyle anarchism' (categories that seem to include anything Bookchin can't fit into his totalising world-view) he fails to realise that it is just this individual subjectivism that is the result (if anything is) of his "natural evolution" that drives our species to "ever increasing complexity and subjectivity". But Bookchin cannot abide anything that stands outside of his narrow vision. As society has evolved in ever more libertarian directions he has found himself (like many anarchists of his ilk) left behind, his dogmatism forcing him into an increasingly reactionary position. Come on Murray, reread that quote in the front of your own book: "We must always be on a quest for the new, for the potentialities that ripen with the development of the world and the new visions that unfold with them" (*On Spontaneity and Organisation*, 1971).

Steve Ash

## Anarchism and

Two news items have appeared recently, about people attempting sabotage for ideological reasons.

At Faslane naval base, the site of Britain's 'independent deterrent' of nuclear submarines carrying American nuclear weapons, three people carrying hammers swam to within fifty feet of a submarine, and were congratulated by the guards who arrested them on getting so close.

At Totnes, hundreds demonstrated outside the magistrate's court, where two people pleaded not guilty to criminal damage, trashing a field of maize at the National Institute of Agricultural Botany.

Neither group of saboteurs describe themselves as anarchists, but it is proper to consider whether anarchists should support them. Contrary to what some believe, anarchists do not automatically approve of all sabotage, whatever the objective.

Of the Faslane incident, the answer seems to be an unequivocal yes. Their act could only be symbolic, but its effect was to call attention to the existence of what nobody denies are weapons of mass destruction, liable to be used just because they are available, and dreadfully dangerous whether they are used or not. Calling attention to

these horrible things is a necessary first step in moving public opinion to get rid of them.

Of the Totnes case, the answer is not so cut and dried. It appears the saboteurs thought the maize was 'genetically engineered', modified by chemical intrusion into the DNA, rather than by the old-established method of selective breeding. Anyone can make a mistake, but suppose they had been right. Should anarchists approve of sabotage against genetic engineering, or would this be merely anti-scientific, pandering to the superstitious fear of 'interfering with nature'?

In the second half of the nineteenth century, anarchist writers like Bakunin, Reclus and Kropotkin thought that scientific and technological progress would contribute to a happier world, and most anarchists agreed with them. In the second half of the twentieth century, we are not so sure.

Nuclear fission, which it was hoped would supplant the dangerous and unhealthy use of coal, has turned out to be even more dangerous and unhealthy. Advances in food production and medicine have cut down infant mortality, as was hoped, but thereby set off a potentially disastrous human population explosion. Mechanical and civil

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— ANARCHIST NOTEBOOK —

# Local motors

In over fifty years of reading the anarchist press I have never seen reference to the fact that anarchists use cars. In the '50s I tried to introduce in *Freedom* some discussion of the gang system of car building as then worked in Coventry, but today your car was probably built by an international corporation from components made all over the world. And according to a recent Consumers' Association report, even apparent rivals are suspiciously similar under the bonnet.

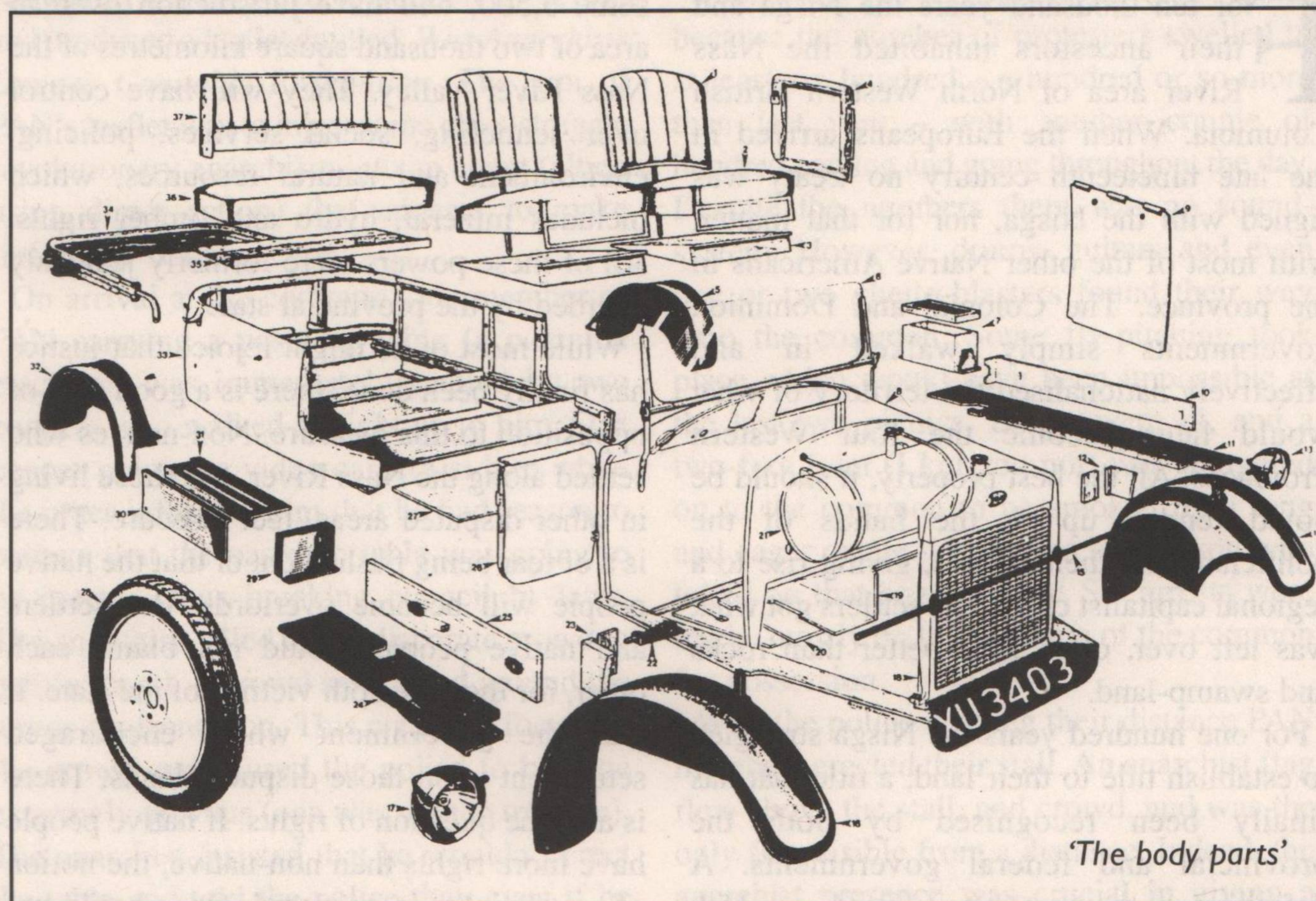
But when the century was young, every coach-builder, blacksmith and bicycle-maker was picking up a new language and grasping the idea of new inventions like carburettors and sparking plugs. They all dreamed of building a motor car.

Plenty of them did, not just in the West Midlands with its engineering tradition, but all over the country, and people took a pride in their local cars, just as they did in their local cheese or pies or bacon.

It wasn't until I read Nick Baldwin's A to Z of the cars of the 1920s that I learned that there were an incredible 404 makes of car on sale in Britain then. There was only one X, the Xtra, and only one Z, the Zephyr. This wasn't the Ford Zephyr, but a 12-horsepower car made in my local Suffolk fishing port, Lowestoft. It was too under-capitalised to succeed. But the three men who made it went on to make high-performance pistons for cars like the Aston-Martin. They relied on producing fishing floats to stay afloat financially.

Theirs wasn't the only East Coast car. The Woodbridge Engineering Company launched a four-seater tourer in 1922. And at Grimsby in Lincolnshire the tiny 350cc Lloyd two-seater was built. It had four-wheel independent suspension and was kept alive through the good luck that the Gas Light and Coke Company, then responsible for London's gas, bought a fleet of them for its inspectors.

One of the joys of the child car-spotter of the 1930s was the fact that they all sounded different. Just as today you can recognise the Citroen 2CV from that other simple, durable and therefore 'crazy' car, the Reliant Robin, so you could always identify the two-cylinder Jowett from Bradford or the chain-



driven Trojan from Croydon.

The Jowett brothers, Ben and Will were "forged in adversity" as Will's grandson put it to me, since they were the sons of a drunken blacksmith, working at the mill from 6.30 in the morning, and attending Fairweather Green School in the afternoon, from the age of eight until thirteen. They had built the first Jowett car by 1906 and started production of "the world's most economical car" from 1910 onward. It was made until 1937, and "the little engine with the big pull" was rated and taxed as seven horsepower, while the coachwork got bigger and more comfortable, and became a familiar sight as a Bradford van or lorry all around the world.

Will Jowett's grandson Michael drove me round the hills north of Bradford in his immaculate model which is as old as I am, and explained the firm's most celebrated slogans: "The pull of an elephant, the appetite of a canary and the docility of a lamb".

The company's downfall was the result of trying to catch up with more sophisticated cars in an overcrowded market. What paid the wages in the post-war years was the

Bradford van exported everywhere as the ever-reliable version of what Americans call a pick-up truck. But the firm died in a series of messy take-over around about 1954.

Jowett's publicity was put together, not by an advertising agent, but by the firm's buyer, Gladney Haigh, with home-made slogans like, "Turns Milestones into Smilestones". His favourite claim for the Bradford van was: *Simplicity/Economy/Strength - thrives on hard labour.*

This is where the strengths of the Jowett met those of the Trojan from Croydon, designed by Leslie Hounsfield. This compulsive inventor's notebooks include the self-setting mousetrap and the Hounsfield camp bed. But his big job was "the simplest car in the world". He claimed it was so incredibly cheap to run that boot leather and socks cost more.

He designed it in 1910 after interviewing chauffeurs to learn what went wrong with

cars. It had solid tyres and soft suspension since roads in those days were strewn with horse-shoe nails. The starting handle was by the driver's seat, and the two-stroke engine was underneath it. The easy-change gearbox was like the one on Henry Ford's Model T and the chain drive simplified transmission.

The sound was unmistakable, and everyone knew when a Trojan was creeping up the road. As soon as the first world war was over, Leslie Hounsfield built ten Trojans at his workshop in the Purley Way, Croydon and managed to interest Leylands who had an empty aircraft factory at Ham Common near Kingston on Thames and were happy to buy the right to build this incredibly unorthodox car there from 1922 to 1927.

Far from being dismayed when Leylands decided to surrender their rights on this primitive vehicle, Leslie leapt at the chance to make it himself with his own team, and if he were around today he would certainly challenge us to produce a modern vehicle that did so much with such a small fuel consumption.

He was lucky because the Post Office bought large numbers of Trojan vans. Brooke Bond Tea had a fleet of well over 5,000 to deliver to retailers, and Trojans used to advertise that "even the errand boy can be trusted with the Trojan".

By the 1930s the inventor had left the firm he founded. His great-nephew Brian Hounsfield explained to me that "He found the commercial side difficult. He just wanted to produce the perfect car". But the revised version of his delivery van survived in production in the Purley Way until 1964. And when Don Williams, an enthusiast, drove me through the Surrey hills in the Trojan tourer he has owned for 42 of its 70 years, everybody stopped to wave at us.

Both of them told me that this slow-speed car with a minimal fuel consumption, only seven moving parts in the engine and nothing to go wrong, was the kind of vehicle we really need in the next century.

Colin Ward

## Primitivism

engineering, which displayed human ingenuity for all to see, is being superseded by electronic engineering, which is equally ingenious but invisible and mysterious.

The doctrine of primitivism, that humanity would be better off without science and technology, has been around for a long time in the form of 'lo the poor Indian' sentimentality. With the recent failures of science it has attracted quite a loud minority. Some anarchists embrace primitivism, and there are even primitivists who think anarchism and primitivism are the same thing.

The murderous primitivist 'the Unabomber' is sometimes called an 'anarchist' by ignoramusses who identify anarchism with any non-governmental bomb planting, such as that of Guy Fawkes or the real IRA. But there are also self-styled anarchists who celebrate him as an anarchist, although his manifesto makes it clear that he is not an anarchist. *Industrial Society and its Future*, paragraph 4: "This is not to be a political revolution. Its object will be to overthrow not governments but ... the technological basis of the present society".

The contention that what is natural is good, and what is technological bad, is difficult to

defend given the ordinary uses of 'good' and 'bad'. Smallpox is natural. Vaccines are technological. Earthquakes are natural. Earthquake prediction is technological. Poor eyesight in middle age is natural. Spectacles are technological. Yes, we can point to technological disasters, but the general trend of technology is to make life better. Technology means intentionally altering our environment to suit ourselves, an activity characteristic of humans and of no other organisms (that we know of).

So it is held that the natural is good and the technological evil, not as a contentions to be argued about, but as a matter of definition. One extreme primitivist advocates giving up speech, since that technical accomplishment is the basis of all others. Another advocates eliminating technology by the elimination of humanity. This may not be reasonable, but it is logical.

Most anarchists are neither primitivists, nor followers of fashion. When a primitivist idea becomes fashionable, as in the case of blanket condemnation of genetic engineering, we should not condemn it out of hand, but neither should we embrace it out of hand. We should think about it.

DR

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## — OBITUARY —

**Jack (Yankel) Frager**

3rd January 1903 to 7th March 1998

Anarchist and labour activist Jack Frager died this spring, at the age of 95. Born in Ukraine, in the village of Ismeryuka, raised in Mogeliev-Podolske, he was a youthful participant in the Russian Revolution of 1917. In order to escape being conscripted into the Red or White armies, he fled to Romania, went through Danzig, and made it to Argentina, where he lived for eighteen months. While in Buenos Aires, he self-published *Gustav Landauer* on anarchism, in Yiddish, and never lost his enthusiasm for Landauer's ideas. He arrived in New York in 1923.

Jack was an unhyphenated anarchist. He served on the Committee to Defend Sacco and Vanzetti, made arrangements for Emma Goldman's last US speaking tour, made his own speaking tours of the US during the 1930s, helped found the Libertarian Book Club of New York city in the late 1930s, was on the editorial board of *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* (The Free Voice of Labour) a Yiddish language anarchist newspaper, was active in the Painters' Union (which included fighting against a Communist takeover and, in later years, against corruption) and taught labour history at Brookwood Labour College. He had a life-long interest in Yiddish language and culture, published Yiddish literature, and was active in the League for Yiddish. An ardent peace activist, he marched against the Vietnam war and nuclear weapons, and was arrested several times. At one demonstration a young woman was crying as they were being taken in. "No tears," Jack exclaimed, "we won't give them that satisfaction! Instead, we sing!" He was last arrested at age 88 during a Hiroshima Day protest, for painting the shadows of bomb victims on sidewalks in New York City. The rain washed away the evidence, so the charges were dropped.

When he was 80, he visited Spain to meet with the resurgent, post-Franco anarchist movement. At 87 he visited Ukraine.

Jack raised a family with his partner, Myra (May Frakt), who he married in 1939. Jack and Myra had three children. He worked as a house-painter, then as a foreman and estimator. In 1968 he retired, and he and Myra travelled the country. They settled in Florida in 1980, and in 1985 Myra died. In 1993 his daughter Cheshire brought him back to New York as he began to suffer from Alzheimer's disease. "Daddy was indefatigable," said his daughter Cheshire. "When he sought anti-war and Yiddishkeit groups in Florida and didn't find them, he started them. He never lost his ideas, energy or commitment". In the early 1990s Jack was on the *Meander Quarterly* mailing list.

The War Resisters' League and the Libertarian Book Club co-sponsored a memorial tribute to Jack on 9th June at the Brecht Forum.

Ed Stamm  
(based on information provided by  
Cheshire Frager)

**International of  
Anarchist Federations**

The sixth congress, which took place in Lyon last year, charged the Italian Anarchist Federation (FAI) with the secretariat of the IFA (Internazionale di Federazioni Anarchiche). The new address of the secretariat is: IFA, Casella Postale 17127, I-20170 Milano, Italy Telephone and fax: ++39-02-2551994 e-mail: ifanarch@tin.it

Massimo Varenco  
IFA Secretary, Milan

**The Nisga Land Claim Settlement  
A Victory for Everyone**

For ten thousand years the Nisga and their ancestors inhabited the Nass River area of North Western British Columbia. When the Europeans arrived in the late nineteenth century no treaty was signed with the Nisga, nor for that matter, with most of the other Native Americans in the province. The Colonial and Dominion governments simply walked in and effectively nationalised the territory of what would later become the four Western Provinces. All the best property, it should be noted, ended up in the hands of the politicians and their friends, giving rise to a regional capitalist class. The settlers got what was left over, often little better than rocks and swamp-land.

For one hundred years the Nisga struggled to establish title to their land, a title that has finally been recognised by both the provincial and federal governments. A definitive agreement was signed on 15th July. The Nisga, whose population number

some 5,500, will have jurisdiction over an area of two thousand square kilometres of the Nass River Valley. They will have control over schooling, social services, policing, environment and natural resources, which includes mineral, hydro and timber rights. All of these powers were formerly jealously guarded by the provincial state.

While most of us might rejoice that justice has finally been done, there is a good deal of opposition to this measure. Non-natives who settled along the Nass River, and those living in other disputed areas, feel insecure. There is a fear of being pushed out or that the native people will become overlords. But settlers and native people should not blame each other, for they are both victims of the state. It was the government which encouraged settlement upon those disputed lands. There is also the question of rights. If native people have more rights than non-native, the notion of equal rights is sundered. One should not be too quick to dismiss this argument as

evidence of 'racism', for it is a legitimate concern. A society where different groups have different rights is a society on the road to re-feudalisation. The abolition of the principle of equality also leads to further division and conflict, something that can only serve the needs of the ruling elite.

However, these fears might be offset by another development. A number of mayors and municipal councillors have begun to wonder out loud to the press that if the Nisga have control over social welfare, police, development, etc., why not their area too? Why not decentralise these provincial powers to all local governments? There are no county governments in the Western Provinces and municipalities have little autonomy. This was a deliberate act by the colonial and territorial (federal) governments as a means of limiting democracy and allowing the state maximum control. Hopefully this successful land claim will give rise to a movement demanding a Swiss-style cantonal government in British Columbia. Should this be the case, the Nisga victory is truly a victory for everyone.

Larry Gambone

**NET WATCH****Self-Government Fair**

A fair is announced for 3rd to 6th September in San Martino in Rio (Reggio Emilia). It is organised by the Emma Goldman anarchist group with a very ambitious programme of politics, theatre and music. For further details and accommodation the address given is: C.so Palermo 46 I-10152, Torino, Italy.

**No-one is illegal**

Reports have just reached us that two more border crossing camps have been set up by the Neisse river which flows between Germany and Poland. Reportedly there are 10,000 border patrols on the German side alone trying to prevent 'illegal immigration' into Germany. The Polish Army, always known for its savagery against the poor and undocumented, scuttled a ferry-boat taking refugees across the river. Comrades held a press conference to protest against this atrocity and issued a proclamation stating that *no-one is illegal* and asking the population to obstruct the border patrols. The demonstration was supported by local taxi drivers who have been victimised by the police for aiding refugees. Comrades state that there have been many deaths hushed up by the authorities in trying to prevent illegal immigrants to enter Fortress Europe.

**Free Radio Berkeley**

This low-power community radio is still off the air, since the the 'Feds' have raided the premises and confiscated equipment. So much for the Fifth Amendment, or is it the the Fifth Amendment to the Fifth Amendment?

**Anti-nuclear arms in  
Russia**

Nuclear protesters have set up camp near the Kola nuclear plant, which they have described as old and dangerous and possibly the greatest risk in the world since Chernobyl. The authorities have counter-attacked by sending the police in and by inspiring calumnious articles in the local press varying from 'Terrorists near nuclear plant' and 'Greens under Black Flags'.

Because of Kola's proximity to Scandinavia many of the protesters are from Norway, Sweden and Denmark. Address given is krugl@aprec.ru.

**Millennium burp**

Computer experts in the US are worrying about the already well publicised millennium bug which in their opinion will shepherd in the social revolution through the back door. The point is that the failure of central and other computers to respond to the number 2000 will result in the complete breakdown of the issue of 'welfare checks' with city hospitals refusing to accept claimants, banks will not honour cheques, there will be no drinkable water and supermarkets will have empty shelves.

**Wobblies organise**

Seattle, which was once a logging country with a very large IWW membership, has recently set up a new IWW branch. Although logging as such is finished, Sedro Wooley are employing cheap labour in their manufacture of building modules destined for the Sakhalin Islands off Siberia for the oil rigs.

**Belgian collective  
against expulsions**

The Social Centre Squat in Brussels continues to be in the forefront of the struggle. This time it has organised a demonstration outside the detention centre for illegal immigrants at Steenokerzel. Four hundred comrades kept up the demonstration all day and managed to break the windows of the improvised prison, allowing over twenty people to escape detention.

compiled by JR

**Another anarchist  
dies in jail**

Following on from our report in *Freedom* ('Sadness and Rage in Italy', 23rd May 1998) we are sad to bring you the news of another death in Italy. This is a statement from **El Paso Occupato** forwarded by the European Counter Information Network, Italy.

Soledad hanged herself (we don't have any reason to doubt it) on Friday night (between 10th and 11th July 1998) in Benevagienna (Italy), where she was living under house arrest in the community 'Sotto i ponti'. Her body has been taken to the hospital of Mondova, as required by a magistrate who was very upset because of the unexpected interruption of his fishing day. Actually we don't even know his name. Many journalists, as usual, arrived immediately but they were chased away.

Soledad was an anarchist, 22 years old and she was Argentinean. She has been in Italy since September 1997. During the investigations on the sabotages against the High Speed Train Project (TAV) in Val Susa, she was accused of being a member of an armed organisation called 'Lupi Grigi' (Grey Wolves) which claimed responsibility for only one such sabotage (there have been a dozen of them and almost all happened before summer 1997). She was arrested with other two anarchists, Silvano Pelissero and Edoardo Massari at the beginning of March, 1998. The charges were reduced after the suicide in jail of Edoardo Massari (see previous report in *Freedom*, 23rd May 1998).

Soledad then was put under house arrest in Benevagienna; Silvano was moved instead to the high security prison of Novara. At the moment he is on his twentieth day of hunger-strike asking for house arrest and in order to know the date of his trial. The magistrate who is holding the inquiry into the sabotages against TAV (the inquiry was supposed to finish on 7th May) is Maurizio Laudi.

The famous 'arsenal' found in the cellar of the Casa Occupata in Collegno (Turin), where Silvano, Soledad and Edoardo lived, has been never showed to the public and no expert evidence has ever been presented.

The media are working to construct a part for Silvano, describing him as an agent provocateur.

There is nothing to add and nothing to be shouted out. Move (think globally and act locally).

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# Reclaiming our Space

Dear Comrades,

In his/her letter to *Freedom* (15th August 1998) Bud produced an interesting critique of my article, 'Reclaiming our Space'. One or two of the points Bud made were well thought out and I found much of it somewhat nostalgic, but there are a few points I'd like to clear up.

Firstly I was not contrasting the initiatives of the RTS organisers (bohemian or otherwise) with the 'working class initiatives' behind the Social Justice March. I support any productive action that attacks the state, by any anarchist group or 'working class' activists seeking to empower themselves. The RTS article was written soon after the actual event and carried much of the enthusiasm and energy generated by it, hence the 'uncritical' positive tone. I rarely remember being enthused at any other protest demo.

What I was contrasting was styles of activity and their accompanying mindset. I used the two events as an example of changes in the anarchist movement which could be positive if we work with them correctly or as negative as Bud pessimistically suggests if we don't. Whoever organises any such event (what kind of people they are, what they are 'all about' etc.) is only of

interest to anarchists and the police, when a genuinely libertarian event is on the participants are in control (whether the organisers like it or not, and if they are anarchists they'll love it).

What matters is not 'understanding', as Bud mockingly puts it, but consciousness and perception. In reality the Social Justice Marches could have been just as 'fun' as the RTS events (some claim they were more so) and people at the latter don't always look as if they're enjoying themselves. But what matters is the perception of the event, the RTS was better attended because it sounded like more fun. Many of the people were there to party and probably weren't over interested in political issues as such. They would have been turned off by an event that *sounded like* a moralistic drag, as would most people. But they may well have rioted if someone tried to stop their fun. This is what anarchism is about in its better forms, the affirmation of free life (for everyone) and the hatred of its enemies. It is not (or shouldn't be) a crypto-christian moral attempt to make a better world and whine about injustices. That only perpetuates suffering by fostering illusion. I'm not saying the SJM events were motivated by this necessarily, but we all know that some comrades are and it marginalises us from real people. Justice is not something that can be obtained or given (or even taken) it only emerges from free and egalitarian relationships. One of the values of reclaiming public space is it reopens human dialogue. We all want to bring 'social justice into the everyday' but not all of us want to be the slaves of an abstract ideal, we want something real and human. I believe that ultimately this can only come about after a violent insurrection, and 'class antagonism' is one part of this. I look forward to the eradication of both the ruling and middle classes.

There's plenty of time to riot, but preferably in a bourgeois area - there were no bourgeoisie in the Seven Sisters Road, only a few of their working class quislings amongst the police, and they were kept on their toes. Class struggle (against the bourgeois mindset and its physical manifestations, both human and institutional) is important but it is not central, nothing is. The mistake has been to confuse Bakunin's pragmatic strategy with a Marxoid or Syndicalist ideology. Today we need several strategies (the age of 'master-plans' and mass organisation is over),

strategies that range from class struggle to 'positive energy' struggles with tactics that range from rioting and armed conflict, through workers self-organisation and resistance to populist street partying and carnivalesque confrontations (and even dada, something far more potentially radical than anything that ever came out of the bourgeois head of Charlie Marx), all are part of a potential network of struggles but need to be applied at the most effective place and at the most productive hour. Some of those present at these events and even some events themselves may be orientated towards reformism, but that doesn't mean they cannot serve a more radical purpose too. People obsessed with one approach are usually driven by something other than their own intelligence and free will and often lack a sense of humour, an essential requirement of any serious revolutionary.

(Mr) Prometheus Rex

◇ ◇ ◇

Dear Friends,

Is the RTS that makes disrupting traffic its only motive, that ditches theory and ideals in favour of technical immediatism (Letters, 15th August) the same RTS that consistently supported the Liverpool Dockers and striking Tube-workers? That has emphasised 'the car' is systematically imposed and is not just the custom of a particular group of people and that has reaffirmed the ideal that direct action is not a tactic but the practice of self-rule? Are these "reformist in character" activists who "are content to drop politics as such" the same activists who joined the first

'March for Social Justice' and, in contrast to the March's stated 'demands' on the incoming government, declared: "never mind the ballots - reclaim the streets" calling for "direct action ... to create a direct democracy in a free and ecological society"?

Had your letter writer 'Bud' actually read any RTS leaflets or the literature handed out at many street parties he or she may have found an answer to the question begged: "What else is here in the RTS vision?" For instance a pamphlet handed out in its thousands at the Birmingham site of the recent 'global street party' - itself an amazing show of international organising and solidarity directed against, not just 'the car', but global capitalism - stated: "The global street party, with its challenge to private space and celebration of defiance, is part of the growing worldwide movement against the enclosure of our future. The global street party is not an end or a victory in itself, but a premonition of the time when the present conditions of our lives will be no more than a memory. If we do not leave the street today and begin to work in any number of ways for communities instead of corporations, for people not profit, then the euphoria of today will recede to leave a ham memory and a crowing sense of powerlessness."

'Bud' makes the mistake of believing everything she or he reads in the papers (in this case the anarchist paper *Freedom*) forgetting that what a reporter says something is about, may not be the whole truth. If even anarchist 'social revolutionaries' attack the 'actions' of an openly stated revolutionary organisation as reformist 'delinquency', in essentially straw-doll polemics then the 'anarchist movement' indeed has cause for concern.

Weiser

## How would we live?

Dear *Freedom*,

I have been reading *Freedom* under the double supposition that it is a paper which advocates anarchism and that anarchism is an ideology which advocates the abolition of the state, so I am puzzled by the publication of so many articles which seem to advocate the provision of welfare and/or work by the state. I can't help wondering how some of your contributors would live if the state were actually abolished.

Anna Freeman

## Monopoly Money

Dear *Freedom*,

I did not claim that Milan Rai confused monopoly with oligopoly (letters, 4th July). However, the notion of monopoly as oligopoly is not accepted "in economics" as he claims in his response of 18th July. Neo-classical economists prefer the strict definition, as do some marxists - see Dwayne Ward's *Towards a Critical Economics*, page 153: "In conventional economics the term is oligopoly". I am not being pedantic about this. It is necessary to use clear and unambiguous terminology and not use propaganda words when attempting to do a serious analysis.

As for technology under alleged monopoly, Baran and Sweezy in *Monopoly Capital*, pages 91-96, state that under competitive capitalism technological innovation occurred at a greater rate than under contemporary monopoly capitalism. Their whole book is also centred around the idea that monopoly capitalism has a strong tendency to stagnate. To me, this indicates technological slow-down. Raymond Lubitz in Bell and Kristol's *Capitalism Today* is of the same opinion.

If one simply must study marxist economics there are much better works around than Baran and Sweezy's Stalino-Keynesian opus. As well as the previously mentioned Paul Mattick, try Gamble and Walton's *Capitalism in Crisis*, James O'Connor's *The Fiscal Crisis of the State* and Makoto Itoh's *Value And Crisis*.

Larry Gambone

## Rape of Socialism

Dear *Freedom*,

After reading Donovan Pedely's letter of 15th August and re-reading Brian Bamford's review of 20th June, I'm pleased to retract much of what I said in my letter of the 18th July. I gladly concede that Donovan has written a profound work which should be of immense value to serious students of labour history as well as activists of the movement. I agree with all the points made by him and also those of the editors and have nothing but admiration for him for embarking on such a big task, thereby providing the movement with a much needed analysis of the decline of 'Labour' from an anarchist standpoint.

My original comments arose from my laziness in recent years and consequent disinclination to read books of more than 250 pages.

My sincere thanks and appreciation to Donovan for all his good work.

Neil Fisher

[Donovan Pedely's *The Rape of Socialism* is available to *Freedom* readers at £10, plus £1 postage]

## Libertarian Municipalism

Dear *Freedom*,

The statement of the Libertarian Municipalists (*Freedom*, 15th August) says it "favours politics in the sense of direct democracy - community self-management through citizens' assemblies". At the same time it asserts a belief in anarchism. Herein lies the major flaw and contradiction of Libertarian Municipalism. That is, democracy by anyone's definition is a form of government. It is the rule of the majority. Fifty percent plus one establish the laws which are enforced by the threat of violence - the reliance upon police, jails and courts. These are the attributes of the state. Anarchy, on the other hand, entails a society without rulers, without government, jails, police or courts.

The anarchist preference is for group decisions by consensus because this more clearly protects the rights of minorities. Democracy and majority rule readily become the tyranny of that majority. Consensus is most important when considering matters of fundamental policy. Majority vote may be more amenable when dealing with particulars.

An important model for Libertarian Municipalism is the New England town meeting which certainly has many desirable features, but I would think that a better model for the anarchist would be the Friends (Quaker) meeting for business in which decisions are arrived at by consensus or 'sense of the meeting'. Such an arrangement is also observable in many of the world's peasant communities.


Another problem with Libertarian Municipalism is that it confuses small with freedom. The chances for greater freedom are no doubt greater in a smaller social grouping, but that is no guarantee of freedom.

Tyrannies can and do exist in small communities, in municipalities, even in ancient Athens. Some of the most flagrant examples of tyranny in the United States have been in municipal regimes. In addition, in my youth I was exposed to the New England town meeting system in which much time and money was devoted to the maintenance and expansion of an armed police force.

Libertarian Municipalism seeks to break nation-states down to municipalities which are essentially micro nation-states. If I am not mistaken, in Montreal, Quebec certain Libertarian Municipalists ran for city council. In other words they sought elective public office to administer - to rule - a city which has a larger population and maintains a larger armed police force than more than two dozen existing nation-states.

Libertarian Municipalists are decentralist democrats. This may be better than being democratic centralists, but they are not anarchists, and because they are not they, too, will become mired in the cesspools of power and violence.

Harold Barclay

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**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

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