

## In mild winters the old thrive like weeds

This winter many local councils will be praying for bad weather. Mild weather in recent years has meant that old folks, like weeds and other pests, are living too long. This has led to the cluttering up of old people's homes throughout the land with geriatric inmates.

By living too long old people use up all their own assets from their property and life savings, and become a burden on the rest of us. One council in the North East last summer declined responsibility to cover the funeral expenses of one of the inmates of their homes, describing the dead lady as 'business waste'.

This longevity, according to Richard Evans of Birmingham Council on Radio Four's *You and Yours* last week, is causing problems for local authorities. He said the mild winters are making things worse by not killing off pensioners quick enough.

### Chaos in meals-on-wheels kitchen

The BBC's *Good Food* magazine declared in its March 1994 issue: "Britain's population is ageing fast. While Queen Victoria made it to 82, most of her loyal subjects didn't survive past their 47th birthday. But in the space of just four monarchs we have added thirty years to our lifespan".

*Good Food* estimated that "by 2001 there will be twice as many people in Britain over the age of 85 than there were in the mid-1990s". People are living longer despite the inadequacy of community and family care of the old.

In 1992 a report from COMA, the Committee on Medical Aspects of Food Policy, described the diet of elderly people in care as "often inadequate". Though the majority of older people are reckoned to be in reasonable health and can afford enough food, about one in ten could be at risk – those who are ill, frail

or convalescing, and anyone hard up.

Dr Donald Farquhar, consultant geriatrician at St John's Hospital in Livingston, Scotland, says: "What surprises me is the proportion who appear to be deficient in a wide variety of vitamins and minerals". He adds that "malnutrition is not just something that happens to people in the Sudan – malnutrition is alive and well in the UK".

Indications are that this situation is not likely to improve unless there is a change of attitude by people and the authorities. Meals-on-wheels services are now subject to compulsory competitive tendering, with outside companies bidding to local authorities to run them.

*Good Food* magazine gives an account from a carer on a shift in Westminster City Council's meals-on-wheels service: "I was told if the client is dead, do not leave. Dial 999 and wait for the police. This is not a good sign. I have just turned up for a shift. Meanwhile, in the meals-on-wheels kitchen, chaos has



broken out. Seven hundred meals (main course plus desert) in a bewildering array of options (red dot for diabetic, yellow for low salt / low fat, brown for soft food diet) are being heated and stacked into boxes. One van has broken down, two main courses are missing, the gas supply is off, and it's salads for most. My fear of complaints is growing by the minute."

The care in the community policy produced a challenge for services like meals-on-wheels.

### Tameside: tip of national iceberg?

The problem of dealing with the elderly in their own homes or in sheltered accommodation is matched by those in care, as the case of the sacked care workers of Tameside has shown. Recent reports to the striking care workers and the Strike Support Committee suggested deterioration in the diets of inmates in Tameside Care Group's (TCG) old folks homes. Jack Thornley, a director of the TCG, admitted as much in September.

Are Tameside Care Group homes the tip of a rather shoddy national iceberg? The indications are that it is.

Community care funds are not 'ring-fenced'. A spokeswoman from Age Concern last week complained that community care funds are being diverted from care of the elderly by local councils. Recently *Private Eye* reported that Leeds Council was planning to close four old folks homes to pay for a millennium party.

Clearly the old are seen as something of a soft touch as consumers by local authorities. Weight loss is either ignored or seen as a natural consequence of old age. Nobody, not even their own families, seem to be keeping an eye on the nutritional intake of the elderly.

Mack the Knife

# anarchist fortnightly Freedom

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## The MAI is dead. Long live the MAI?

The Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI), a major corporate attack on development, environmental protection and workers' rights (and on parliamentary democracy), has been scrapped. Negotiations on the MAI began in 1995 within the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) – the 29-country club of rich nations – and came to a crashing halt last month in Paris. The final blow to the treaty, whose signing had been postponed six months already, was dealt by the host nation, France. On the eve of the reopening of negotiations, Lionel Jospin, French Prime Minister, described the MAI as “unreformable” and a “threat to the sovereignty of states”, after an influential French commission produced a highly critical report (the Lalumiere Report). A central concern appears to have been the threat to the French film industry from unrestricted Hollywood imports. As the OECD operates by consensus, the withdrawal of support by the French government left the negotiations in an untenable position. On 29th October, Britain finally threw in the towel. Trade Minister Brian Wilson said that the treaty should be abandoned: “Sometimes it makes sense to draw a line and start again”, he said in London. The *Guardian* reported that “The UK has been one of the most enthusiastic supporters of the MAI. But Mr Wilson indicated that the Government was ready to scrap the treaty and start again.”

The abandonment of the MAI is a significant blow to corporate ambitions, and a (partial) victory for popular forces. In the July/August issue of *Z* magazine, Noam Chomsky described the postponement of the signing of the MAI in April as “an important event, worth considering carefully”. He wrote: “In part, the failure resulted from internal disputes – for example, European objections to the US federal system and the extraterritorial reach of US laws, concerns about maintaining some degree of cultural autonomy, and so on. But a much more significant problem was looming. It was becoming increasingly difficult to ensure that the rules of global order would continue to be ‘written by the lawyers and businessmen who plan to benefit’ and ‘by governments taking advice and guidance from these lawyers and businessmen’, while ‘invariably, the thing missing is the public voice’ – the *Chicago Tribune*’s accurate description of the negotiations for the MAI ... without public interference”. Chomsky cited reports from the *Economist*, the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, *Time* magazine, and the *Toronto Globe and Mail* all agreeing that the delay had been in part due to “a global band of grassroots organisations, which, with little more than computers and access to the Internet, helped derail a deal” (The *Globe and Mail*). The most terrified commentary

came from the *Financial Times*, in an article which was cited in the last issue of *Freedom*. “Fear and bewilderment have seized governments of industrialised countries” as the secret negotiations to impose the MAI “have been ambushed by a horde of vigilantes whose motives and methods are only dimly understood in most national capitals”. The hordes included “trade unions, environmental and human rights lobbyists and pressure groups opposed to globalisation”. The abandonment of the Treaty is also, in part, due to the threat of accountability posed by these terrifying hordes.

The *Financial Times* responded to the imminent demise of the MAI with world weary resignation. The treaty, the paper commented on 20th October, “seems in danger of grinding to an embarrassing halt. Does this matter? Not much”. Why not? “The issue the agreement was meant to solve – worries over the sanctity of assets held overseas – is scarcely today’s hot topic”. This was a highly misleading description of the thrust of the Treaty. The World Development Movement (WDM), one of the leading British critics of the proposed treaty, has been pointing out four main dangers from the MAI, based on their reading of a leaked draft text of the agreement. (I amend them only slightly below.)

1) *The MAI would transfer rights from citizens to transnational companies.* The already

limited democratic rights of citizens and powers of elected local and national governments over business investment in their territories would be largely transferred to corporations. Under the MAI, transnationals would have been granted the right to establish in any sector, in any country, in whatever form they chose. A ground-breaking feature of the MAI was that it would grant foreign companies the right to sue local and national authorities in a (business-dominated) international tribunal. Companies could sue for past damages and for hypothetical future damages.

2) *The MAI would undermine development opportunities for the poorest countries.* Though negotiated in the OECD as an agreement between the rich countries, the whole purpose of the agreement was to include developing countries, and to grant transnationals unrestricted access to the markets and natural resources of Third World nations. The WDM points out that “No country has ever developed under the rules the MAI would impose”. South Korea and the other Asian tigers (and in fact all industrialised nations) have developed by using precisely the interventionist policies that the MAI would rule out.

3) *The MAI could dismantle legitimate social and environmental laws.* Foreign companies could sue governments over laws and

policies which would affect them more heavily than a domestically-owned company. The US-based Ethyl Corporation sued the Canadian government over Ethyl’s dangerous MMT additive under similar powers in the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) – despite the existence of a clause in NAFTA supposedly setting environmental and labour standards for the NAFTA countries. In that case, the Canadian authorities gave in before the case was complete. It is quite likely that the MAI would have been used in a similar fashion to intimidate local and national governments into dropping or not passing social and environmental protection laws.

4) *The MAI would remove powers of local government and undermine local initiatives.* The WDM wrote: “A recent study in the USA identified hundreds of State and local laws that would be ruled out under the MAI. In response, the US negotiator proposed that all US State and local government be exempted from the MAI, revealing that the country pushing the MAI refuses to apply it at home.” Under the MAI, local authorities could not require investors to employ local people, use local suppliers, or remain for a minimum period of time – even if such laws were applied equally to both foreign and domestic companies.

(continued on page 2)



‘Gold’ bars outside the German Embassy in London earlier this year, when protesters called for western powers to reduce the debts of the world’s poorer countries. The imitation bullion symbolised the plan – opposed by Germany – to fund debt relief by selling the IMF’s gold reserves. Germany’s post-war debts were cancelled 45 years ago, which is one reason why Germany today is one of the richest countries in the world.

— OBITUARY —

# Mary Canipa



Photo by Vernon Richards

Mary Canipa and Jack Robinson: protesters in all weathers

We were sorry to hear of the death of Mary Canipa last month. She was diminutive and self-effacing and was one of those people who would automatically undertake a dozen routine jobs in the work of Freedom Press in the 1950s and 1960s: minding the bookshop, folding, addressing and stamping the paper, selling it at meetings and setting out and running a bookstall at fairs and summer schools, as well as making overseas visitors welcome.

Together with her equally small but far more assertive partner, Jack Robinson, she would set out on demonstrations like the

Aldermaston Marches, and would never dream of complaining about getting soaked, nor about dragging around a satchel-full of unsold papers.

In the 1950s she and Jack settled in Fulham and in the 1970s moved to Boxford in Suffolk, where they became a local institution and where her typewriter was seldom out of use, whether producing copy for *Freedom* or earning an income to pay the rent.

After Jack's death she moved back to her birthplace, the Isle of Man, and was cared for there in her last years by her sister Margaret.

(continued from page 1)

Chomsky commented in *Z* magazine in May that the full import of the MAI could not presently be accurately described – in part due to the secrecy surrounding the project, in part due to certain basic social realities. Even if we had the full text of the MAI, and a detailed list of the reservations entered by the signatories, and the verbatim record of the proceedings, we would still not know what the MAI meant. “The reason is that the answers are not determined by words, but by the power relations that impose their interpretations”. The ‘worst case’ analysis could come true “if ‘power remains in the dark’, and the corporate lawyers who are its hired hands are able to establish their interpretation of the purposely convoluted and ambiguous wording of the draft treaty”. There were also less threatening possibilities that might be realised – depending on the strength of popular forces determined to constrain corporate power. What has actually happened is that the treaty as a whole has fallen apart – for a variety of reasons, as Chomsky pointed out. After the *Financial Times* ran their apocalyptic piece on the ‘hordes’ threatening the MAI and other international trade agreements, Charles Arden-Clarke of the World Wide Fund for Nature International wrote in to point out that “Government ministries other than trade and finance and parliaments had a crucial role [in delaying the treaty signing], as they analysed and reacted to the implications of the treaty”. Arden-Clarke pointed out that the new ‘trade

agreement’ (an inaccurate term) “impinges far more directly on the policy-making territories of other government ministries, such as environment, health, development co-operation, etc.” Lionel Jospin, explaining France's withdrawal from the negotiations on 18th October, said that the MAI threatened “the sovereignty of states, which are asked to commit themselves in an irreversible manner”. This was partially true. What was actually being threatened was the sovereignty of *some* states. The threat was proportional to the weakness of the country. The *Financial Times* pointed out after it became clear that the MAI was doomed that one major factor in the failure of the treaty was the behaviour of the USA. Many had branded the MAI “as neo-imperialism”, the *Financial Times* noted, and “This accusation was given credence by the US's behaviour over the MAI's proposed disputes mechanism: when it realised this could be used against Washington, it cooled on the idea”. As on the issues of US State and local government laws, the US sought to protect itself from the corporate vandalism it wished to impose on others.

British trade minister Brian Wilson said on 28th October: “I think this is an opportunity to start with a blank piece of paper, to define our objectives afresh, and then seek to pursue them on an open and consensual basis” – within the World Trade Organisation, for example. The battle is won, but the war to contain (and reverse) increasing corporate power is decidedly not over.

Milan Rai

## Launch of the Syndicalist Alliance

Anyone following the not so recent debate on syndicalism (vol. 59, nos. 4, 5 and 12) might have wondered what happened to the proposed Syndicalist Alliance. Well, now an answer can be found in the first issue of *The Syndicalist* (designated Summer 1998, although I believe the intention is to bring out regular monthly issues) and a supplement ‘special issue’ prepared for the Anarchist Bookfair.

Issue one announces “Syndicalist Alliance launched” and explains why such an organisation is necessary in terms of the positive interventions its members intend to make. Although not stated explicitly, the organisation has come into being as a response to what is perceived as ‘purism’, i.e. the extreme adherence to anarchist principles in all things which leads you to drop out of participating in social change (albeit piecemeal) where it is most likely to happen. Another way of looking at the issue of purism is to see it as a function of resources. Small organisations simply have to make choices of where to be active, and this can be difficult when individuals are bound in their own particular set of circumstances. There seems nothing intrinsically contradictory in involving yourself in the union and at the same time promoting industrial (anarcho-syndicalist) networks, but an emphasis on the latter would obviously stretch limited human resources. The Syndicalist Alliance has chosen to be active “inside trade unions, trades councils, unemployed groups, environmental direct action groups, strike support groups, in fact wherever people are genuinely struggling against the state or capitalism”, an approach which to my mind would not be unfamiliar to most anarcho-syndicalists. Articles in issue one report on industrial stuff such as the Glasgow social workers, Tameside care workers, the dockers currently in Australia and latterly in Liverpool, a recent victory of the Dublin Brickies and the Spanish posties, interspersed with news on road protests, Reclaim the Streets, the oil industry, prisoners and human rights. The paper makes no bones about borrowing, some attributed (*Schnews*, *Corporate Watch*, Workers Solidarity movement) some not; I am told that they aim to generate more of their own stuff in future.

The Syndicalist Alliance belongs to ‘the international syndicalist family’, or at least that part of it that does not belong to the

IWA, that being the CGT of Spain and the SAC of Sweden and others. Splits, I'm afraid, are only to be expected between the purists and the mucky realists – the same arguments occupied the likes of Thomas Mann in this country at the start of the century, and the CNT and the anarchists in pre-revolutionary Spain. Today we need to add to these the pressing question of how to respond to the march of casualisation and globalisation and the changing nature of tasks at work, and the larger question of how to organise in such circumstances. Indeed this argument was not satisfactorily resolved at the founding conference in Bradford, and the very question of whether an alliance was what the times demanded was foremost in the minds of several of those who were among the initiating group. When so few people turned up to the Bradford Conference, this question seemed to be answered; but those who insisted that the Syndicalist Alliance would provide a much needed ‘pole of attraction’ were set on their course, but lost several comrades overboard as a result. Only time will tell now whether the launch will lead on to fortune or be forever bound in shallows. To my mind there is certainly a need for the kind of work that the Syndicalist Alliance propose, and for regular bulletins on industrial struggles. They are right too, to emphasise the importance of environmental issues and the very large movement involved in such struggles. Whereas it seems clear that the environmentalists are becoming more and more aware of the class issue, and identifying with workers' struggles in the context of opposing capital and state, it is difficult to imagine them being drawn into the traditional syndicalism, given their lifestyles and the type of work they will take up. It would seem wise, then to allow at least some space for ‘dreaming’ amongst all the doing.

We are not, I dare say, living in revolutionary times, but if these are ever to arrive unexpectedly, we will be left high and dry unless we have the ability to organise industrial society. A traditional kind of pragmatic syndicalism would provide a starting point, but it must set a course for the future, not the past.

JL

*The Syndicalist*, issue 1, summer '98, costs 30p for 16 pages, published by the Syndicalist Alliance, 39 Sheriff's Highway, Hedon, Hull HU12 8HA.

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.

*The East End Years: A Stepney Childhood* appeared in German translation a few years ago. This is its first publication in the original English. In exploring his origins as an artist, Fermin Rocker conjures a moving and colourful picture of his remarkable father, anarchism and of the Jewish East End. Rocker's story reminds us that the visionary topography of his paintings has its roots in a lost world.

192 pages

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The dispute on Tameside continues ...

# Sacked care workers fight on

When around thirty sacked care workers – all former employees of the Tameside Care Group (TCG) – were denied access to a meeting of Tameside Council in October, it was inevitable that there would be anger and frustration. In the ensuing struggle which arose, when the care workers sought to gain access to the Town Hall in Ashton-under-Lyne, one carer was injured and a supporter was knocked to the ground when a burly council porter fell on top of him.

In this dispute, these kinds of protests occur frequently. Over the last seven months since this official strike began when the care workers refused to accept new contracts with cuts in their pay and conditions – for the second time in five years – and were then sacked, there have been numerous protests. Initially, the action was confined to mounting pickets outside the elderly persons homes run by the company but this has evolved and developed into a form of guerrilla warfare, where buildings are occupied and individuals are targeted for special treatment.

On one occasion a protest took place outside the Huddersfield home of Alan Firth, the managing director of the TCG. Posters which had his face on them, were placed along the street outside his home and even on his house. The garden gnomes were also violated by having stickers put on them. Council meetings have been disrupted by strikers wearing Hitler-style moustaches in order to lampoon the Leader of the council who they claim runs a dictatorship and who also wears a moustache. Agencies who supply scab labour to the TCG have seen their offices occupied by strikers and their supporters and the premises of Jack Thornley and Partners, a firm of local solicitors, have also been occupied. Mr Thornley, is a trustee of the TCG.

As a trustee of the TCG, the Labour-controlled council in Tameside is targeted frequently by strikers. One sacked care worker, Doris Middleton, is the wife of the Mayor of Tameside, Councillor Jim Middleton. Not only does the council hold a 'golden share' in the company but it was also responsible for setting up the company in 1990, when it was formerly known as Tameside Enterprises Ltd (TEL).

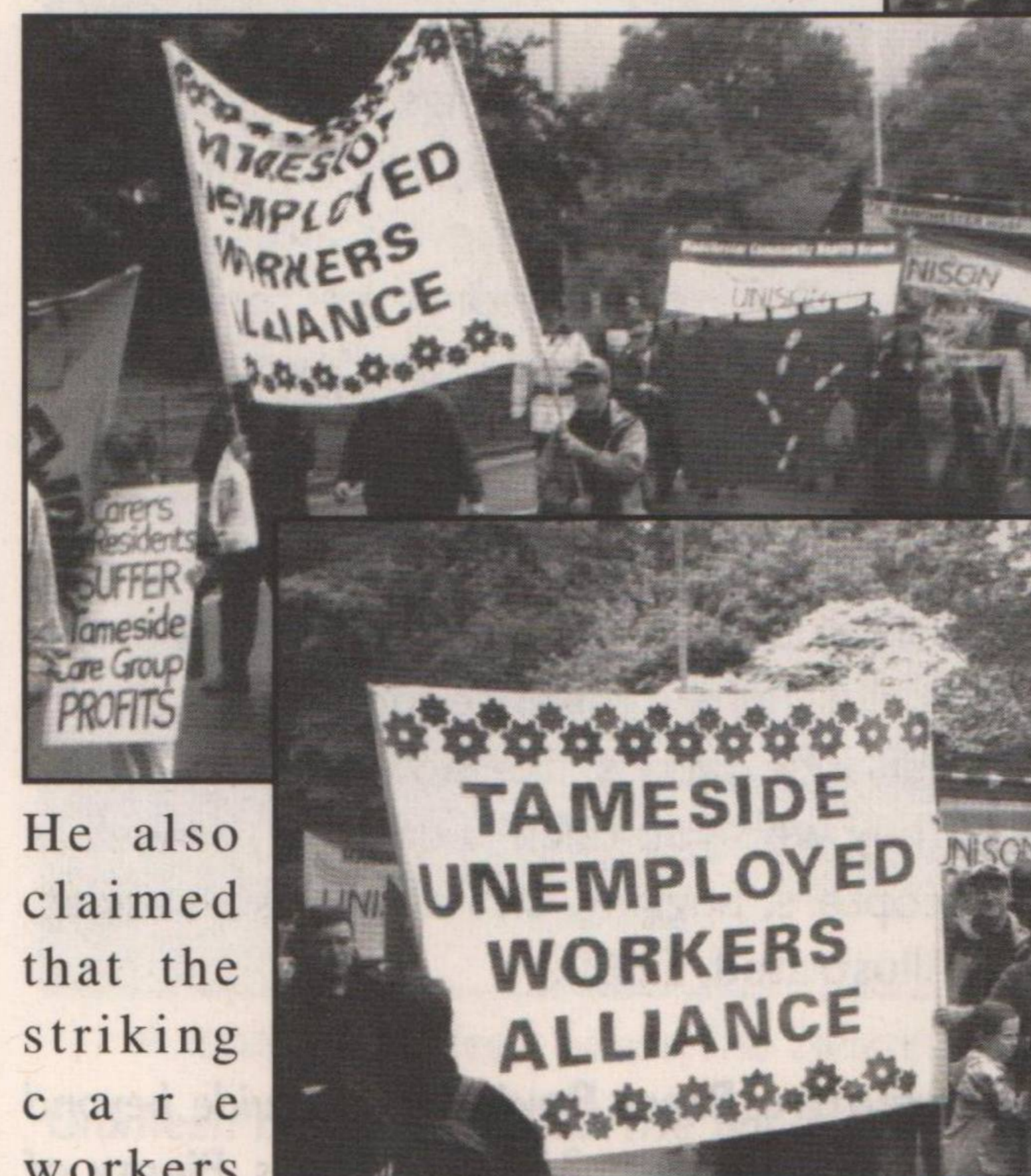
In 1993 it was discovered that TEL had debts of over £2 million and the company attracted national media interest for a scandal involving corruption, cronyism, and managerial incompetence. It was also investigated by the police fraud squad. The council also stands accused of renegeing on a legal agreement which guaranteed that council staff who transferred to TEL would have their nationally-agreed rates of pay and conditions guaranteed into the future and could return to the employ of the council, if this quasi-privatisation did not work out.

Despite its own obvious involvement in the TCG, the Leader of Tameside Council, Councillor Roy Oldham, says that this is a dispute between a private company and its workforce. In July, he told a council meeting, "We have no direct link with TCG other than a single transferable share". However, behind the scenes, the reality is very different from that which is portrayed by Councillor Oldham.

The company trustees, include the Labour MP Andrew Bennett as well as other prominent local Labour Party members such as Mike Custance and Jack Thornley. As the secretary of the Tameside NUT, there have been calls for the membership of the NUT to de-select Mr Custance. Likewise, there have

been calls for unions such as the TGWU to sever its connections with the firm Jack Thornley and Partners. Mr Thornley has threatened to take legal action against the trade union UNISON, if protests continue at his offices.

Councillor Oldham has also admitted to banning the UNISON branch secretary, Noel Pine – who he regards as unprofessional and unskilled – from using his facility time to represent the sacked care workers, forcing him to book unpaid leave to attend meetings. In September, he told *Tribune*, the paper of the Labour left: "We don't pay people good money to represent staff who don't work for us – that's ridiculous".



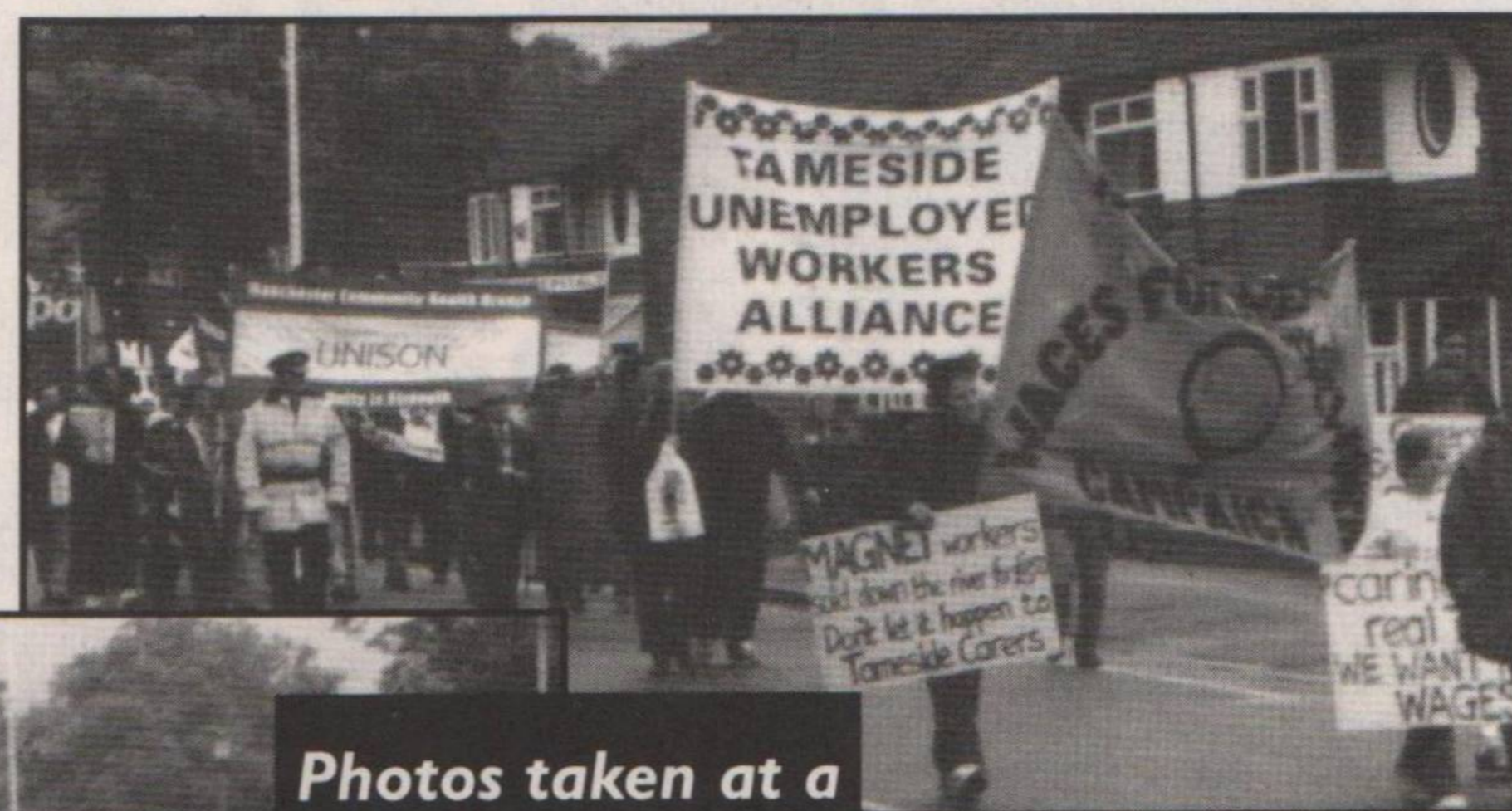
He also claimed that the striking care workers

were being "whipped-up by some people in the Socialist Workers' Party, for their own political ends.

The local UNISON branch, have reported how council employees have been threatened with disciplinary action if they attend meetings to discuss the strike or even if they attend picket lines in their own time. The branch have also been given notice that the present union facilities agreement – which determines such things as the amount of time off with pay for union duties – is to be withdrawn. This is seen by many as an attempt by the council to put pressure on the branch to curtail the action being taken by

the striking care workers, which is beginning to bite.

Even local library staff have been forbidden to display information which "seeks to canvass support for the care workers' dispute". A recent management instruction to library staff, states: "It has been decided at the highest level that libraries will not display posters or other literature canvassing support for the care workers' dispute. If you



Photos taken at a demonstration earlier this year showing solidarity with the sacked careworkers on Tameside.

are asked to display such items, please explain that we are not at liberty to do so".

When I enquired at my local library as to why it had not been possible to display a leaflet advertising a 'public hearing' about the care workers dispute in September, I was told that the leaflets

had been shown to the Leader of the Council, the Chair of the Leisure Services Committee and the Chief Executive, and that they had decided that the leaflets could not go on the library notice boards. Nevertheless, I was able to obtain from my local library a free copy of the *Tameside Citizen*, a sycophantic news sheet, which is produced by the council and which contained an highly biased article on its front page about the care workers dispute.

As if to echo his master's voice, the Chief Executive of Tameside Council, Michael Greenwood, is now claiming that the care workers strike has been hijacked by political extremists and agent provocateurs. Following

**— COPY DEADLINE —**  
The next issue of Freedom will be dated 28th November, and the last day for copy intended for this issue will be first post on Thursday 19th November

the protest outside Ashton Town Hall, he told the *Manchester Evening News*: "I believe there are agent provocateurs with the carers. It is clear that the small number of former care workers who are still running the dispute have been hijacked by extreme political groups".

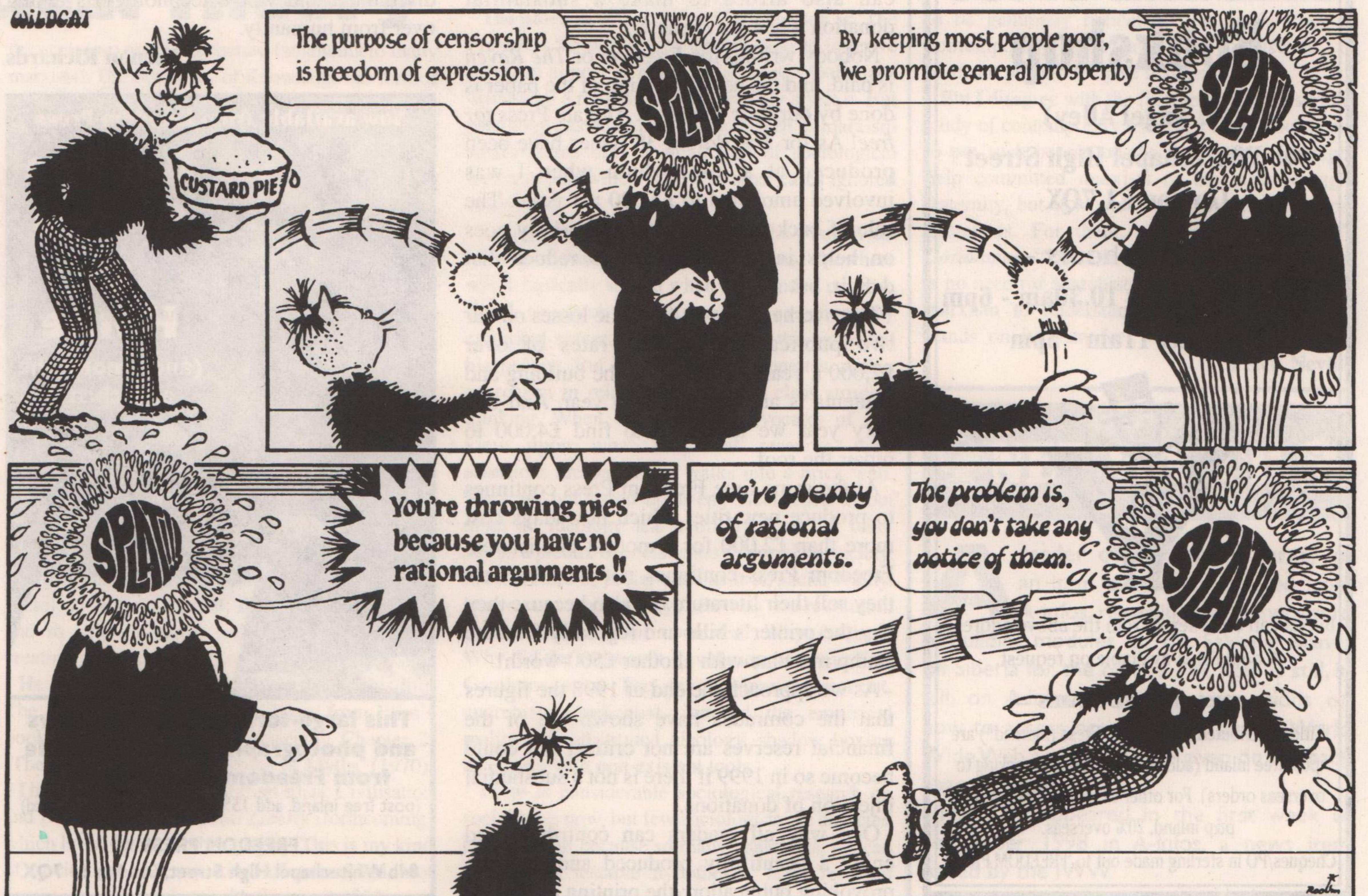
This is emphatically denied by the strikers and is seen as a cheap ploy by the Labour council to undermine public support for them. However, as with all good plots, there is always a twist in the story.

What the *Manchester Evening News* article failed to reveal, is that Mr Greenwood is also the secretary of the Tameside Community Care Trust which, according to Tameside UNISON, is registered to the council offices and is the parent company of the Tameside Care Group, who have sacked over two hundred care workers. Clearly, if this is correct, there may well be a conflict of interest and duty. Moreover, it is also known that the Borough Solicitor, David Parr, has recently written to UNISON threatening to take legal action against the union if the striking care workers continue with their action against the council.

Although Councillor Oldham, would like the public to believe that this strike is merely a dispute between a private company and its workforce, there are few people who are prepared to believe him. Despite strenuous efforts by the council to silence its critics and to intimidate its own employees from giving support to the sacked care workers, the strikers are in a defiant mood.

Outside Ashton Town Hall one care worker, Pauline Carmody, told the *Manchester Evening News*: "It has been a hard struggle over the past seven months, but we are determined to carry on protesting. Roy Oldham has ruined our lives and we won't go away". With the sacked care workers of Tameside, who are overwhelmingly women, Roy Oldham, has met his nemesis.

Derek Pattison



# FOOD FOR THOUGHT ... AND ACTION!

Some more recent arrivals at the Freedom Press bookshop



Cartoon taken from the Anarcho-Surrealist Calendar 1999

**White Poppies**, issued by the Peace Pledge Union. Every year at this time many pacifists and anti-militarists of all persuasions wear white poppies as an alternative to the ubiquitous red poppies worn so ostentatiously by the same sort of people who caused and supported the First World War. In 1921 the first red poppies were sold to commemorate Armistice Day, when the millions of dead of the so-called Great War are remembered. Yet by 1933 this symbol had already become tarnished by being intimately bound up with militarism and the Women's Co-operative Guild launched the white poppy as the symbol for the anti-war movement, which would work towards peace without the trappings of militarism. This November is the 80th anniversary of 'the war to end all wars' and the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Tell that to the victims of all the wars since. The poppies are 60p each, plus 19p postage and packing for up to thirty, post free if ordered with other items.

**The Anarcho-Surrealist Calendar 1999**\* It's big, it's back, it's better than ever, and it's cheaper than last year's. Suitable either as a desk or a wall calendar, it sports a page-to-a-month, with pertinent quotes from various international trouble-makers, and twelve full-page anarchist/surrealist cartoons and collages. Be amazed at 'Rupert Changes his Mind' wherein Mr Murdoch switches to the anarchist cause; be inspired by 'Alice's Big Adventure' on anarchist education; thrill to 'The Time Traveller' where the utopian society is reached by machine; laugh at

'Arnold Mutton, *enfant terrible*'; and collapse with hysterics as the Marxist-Leninists apologise for having been wrong all along! Plus 'Noirville', 'Genetic Futures' and more. There's also a special double-page comic strip on 'Government'. A4 size, £3.95.

**Without a Trace**: a forensics manual for you and me\* by Moriarty, Hooligan Press. On one of our recent forays into the depths of Freedom Press's subterranean caverns where many timeless literary gems are stored – accompanied, as always, by heavily armed guards – we lighted quite by chance upon this blast from the past, this rave from the grave, which we had thought long out of print. Buried in a box wrongly labelled with another title were a few dozen copies of this classic on how to do things that need doing but might be, shall we say, slightly illegal, and get away with it. Still relevant after all these years and covering scores of topics, it is intended to help you cover your tracks. Forensic science is not unbeatable, and this contains a mine of information on how it works and how to take counter-measures. It also describes police communications systems and call-signs, surveillance methods and anti-surveillance tactics, like how to shake off a tail (hey, who you callin' a donkey?) as well as helicopters, bugging, and a lot else besides. A4, illustrated, £2.00.

**Alternative Press Review**: your guide beyond the mainstream, no. 3/1, CAL Press. Plenty of good reading in this long-awaited issue, whose

arrival coincides with the opening in London of the first branch of the US bookshop chain, Borders. They, and the other chain, Barnes and Noble, are two of the biggest outlets for books in America, and are currently being sued by the American Booksellers Association and some independent bookshops for unfair practices which it is claimed threaten the existence of small publishers, distributors and independent bookshops. In addition to an account of this battle there are excellent reports on how the publisher of the respected investigative magazine *Covert Action Quarterly* sacked all three editorial workers for no apparent reason; why Virgin Megastores pulled all Chumbawamba's CDs off the shelves; and how two pirate radio stations, Steal This Radio and Radio Mutiny, challenged the US government to close them down and arrest them. The *Alternative Press Review* reports that they're still on the air. There are also lengthy features on the possible future direction of alternative radio, and on the attacks on public radio in the USA. Erotic alternatives are discussed in an interview with Brenda Leow, editor of *Eidos* magazine (*Everyone Is Doing Outrageous Sex!*), which is complemented by two other articles, 'Same-Sex Marriage' and 'Power to the Pussy'. *Miaow*. Daniel Brandt contributes a very important article, 'Journalism and the CIA', covering the history and development of the agency's use of, and often ownership and financing of the press, including magazine and book publishers. Included is an interesting and useful list of people who work or have worked for the CIA in one capacity or another whilst ostensibly working as reporters, commentators, editors, television presenters, columnists, pundits, television and newspaper executives, owners and publishers. As Brandt admits, it is a short list compiled hastily from information to hand at the time, only running to a few dozen, whereas the true figure is estimated to run to several hundred. Even so, there are some well-known names on it, and for further information an e-mail and website address are given. And all this is before you even get to the book and periodical reviews. Very good value, 68 pages, £3.50.

KM

## What better bargain?

In the last issue of *Freedom* (31st October) the Freedom Press group announced that for 1999 the price of *Freedom* and *The Raven* would remain unchanged. As somebody involved with the finances of Freedom Press for more years than I dare to admit, I hope that it is an incitement to all subscribers who can afford not only to pay the full subscription but who can also afford to make a substantial donation when they renew.

Nobody writing for *Freedom* or *The Raven* is paid, and the actual printing of the paper is done by our dear friends at Aldgate Press for free! As for *The Raven*, 38 issues have been produced at a loss, which when I was involved amounted to £1,000 per issue. The sale of back numbers which obviously goes on helps in the long term to reduce that deficit, but ...

The overheads, apart from the losses on our two publications, include rates of over £2,000 a year, insurance on the building and contents is another £2,000 a year. And this very year we have had to find £4,000 to repair the roof.

At the same time Freedom Press continues to produce new titles which nowadays cost more than £2,000 for a modest publication. Freedom Press continues not only because they sell their literature but also because they pay the printer's bills and regularly feed the stamp machine with another £500-worth!

As we approach the end of 1998 the figures that the comrades have shown me of the financial reserves are not critical but could become so in 1999 if there is not a substantial injection of donations.

One way all readers can contribute and enjoy a beautifully produced and thought-provoking publication: the printing of *George*

*Orwell at Home* has been fully paid for by two Freedom Press supporters (see donations list) which means that every copy sold is a contribution to Freedom Press finances. What better bargain could you get in this capitalist world?

To my old comrades – who, like me, have no future – *Freedom* and Freedom Press are vital in an age where human values are being discounted and where technology is taking over from humanity.

Vernon Richards

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— ANARCHIST NOTEBOOK —

# A Grameen Bank account



A rural Bangladeshi house. The concrete corner posts and roof sheeting are funded by the Grameen Bank and will survive floods. The bamboo walls are made by the family. When the floods come, the family will climb on the roof and will sling their belongings from the roof trusses.

Photo by Hassein Awmar

It is intriguing to note how television, radio and the press (for example, *The Guardian Weekend* on 31st October) have focussed their attention on the Grameen Bank serving the poor in Bangladesh and its founder Muhammed Yunus. Not much of this comment points to the way the banking system in Britain now shuns the poor, closing branches on the desolate estates which no longer provide any lucrative customers. The nearest British equivalents are of course the credit unions which have been started in several parts of the country to fill the gap that banks have emptied. Last year *The Guardian* revealed that 28% of Birmingham's population had no local access to banking services. Cheap credit, easy for the wealthy, is denied to the poor, with the result that, as Ben Rogaly put it in that paper, "the biggest providers of credit in Ladywood ward are the 'legalised loan sharks', the private companies who peddle loans door-to-door around the housing estates. Agents encourage people to take loans well beyond their means, then put the pressure on with weekly visits."

I learned about the Grameen Bank ten years ago in Baltimore. I had been awarded a lot of money to write a book about the problems of the 'inner city' and one of the conditions was that I spent some of it looking at the model of city regeneration provided by the United States and admired by Mrs Thatcher's ministers in whose footsteps I trod. They went to admire the regeneration of central Baltimore, but I found that just a few minutes walk away from the glamorous harbour area renewal, I could stumble into urban poverty on a scale beyond my experience. I was talking to some of the people associated with Howard Ehrlich and the magazine *Social Anarchism*, and two of them, Chris Stadler and Michael Mazepink, thrust in front of me copies of an article by Kenneth Grundy in the *Philadelphia Enquirer* explaining that the Grameen Bank made very small loans at low interest rates to very poor people. It was unique in its focus on landless peasant women as members. Mazepink and Stadler wanted to find ways of importing this kind of initiative in the poverty belt of their own city. Ten years later the United States has at least 200 organisations built on the Grameen Bank ideology.

Obviously it needs many more. *The Guardian*

feature was by far the most interesting thing in that paper and consisted of Mohammed Yunus's explanation extracted from his book *Banker to the Poor* (Aurum Press). He explains that: "I soon discovered the world's basic banking principle, namely that: 'The more you have, the more you get.' and conversely that 'If you don't have it, you don't get it.' Our clients do not need to show how large their savings are and how much wealth they have, they need to prove how poor they are, how little savings they have.

To my amazement and surprise the repayment of loans by people who borrow without collateral is much better than those whose borrowings are secured by enormous assets. Indeed, more than 98% of our loans are repaid because the poor know this is the only opportunity they have to break out of their poverty."

And he added the explanation that, 'now we have more than 2,000 employees and 1,112 branches in Bangladesh. The staff meet more than 2,300,000 borrowers face to face

each week, on their doorstep. Each month we lend out more than \$35 million in tiny loans. At the same time, almost, a similar amount comes back to us in repayments. If Grameen was to work, we had to trust our clients. From the very first day, we decided that in our system there would be no room for the police. We never use the judiciary in seeking repayment of our loans ... we do not involve lawyers, or any outsiders ... there is no legal instrument between the lender and the borrower. We feel our relationship is with people, not with papers."

For anarchists there are reflections of Proudhon's abortive mutual People's Bank of 150 years ago. The contrast is the steady success of the Grameen Bank and the fact that the vast majority of its borrowers and lenders are women. Another of its activities has been its housing programme. We have been reminded this year of the fact that the rural poor in Bangladesh are the victims of regular floods that sweep away their livelihood, their homes and possessions. The Grameen Bank initiated a housing programme based on a basic kit consisting of roof sheeting bought in the market with loans rather than prescribed by the bank, a latrine cover slab, and four reinforced concrete corner columns, two of which can be carried in one rickshaw. Walls and windows are provided by the dwellers and made of jute or bamboo.

In flood conditions, the family can sling its belonging from the roof trusses and climb onto the roof. The corner posts remain for the next rebuilding. *The Architectural Review* explains that: "The walls are not permanent; indeed, when they are not washed away, termite attack and other forms of biological decay necessitate their being replaced every two or three years. But this is not expensive and can be seen as part of a continuous process of growth and change: the houses are forever being adapted and extended ..."

Anyone familiar with housing aid programmes will recognise how different the Grameen Bank's modest approach to the appalling situation of Bangladeshi peasants is from the World Bank approach which enriches international city speculators while very little trickles down to the intended recipients.

Colin Ward

## Beyond Critical Theory

Larry Gambone's article 'Critical Theory Today' (31st October 1998) is most welcome but it seems to be operating from first to last within the same paradigm: Marxism. I agree with his final comment: "Too much of what passes for anarchism in North America espouses a New Class agenda" but Anglicising it with the substitution of 'Britain' for 'North America' and 'class struggle' for 'New Class'. The important thing is to get away from the marxian paradigm.

When Gambone says: "Contemporary Critical Theory has its origins in the Frankfurt School founded by socialist intellectuals in the 1920s" one must remember there is the physical place and the later ideology.

In relation to the place, we are talking about the Institut für Sozialforschung (Institute for Social Research) of the University of Frankfurt in the 1920s and '30s. Its director was Max Horkheimer and included Theodore Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Leo Lowenthal and Erich Fromm among its ranks. When they fled Germany to escape Nazi suppression most went to the United States where much of their writing was ideologically typecast as 'The Frankfurt School'. But they were not alone in Frankfurt.

Sharing the building in Frankfurt was the Department of Sociology under Professor Karl Mannheim, the former teaching assistant of Max Weber, a major exponent of the Sociology of Knowledge which in its early stages could be seen as a debate with Marx, but Mannheim indicated that knowledge simply could not be explained by

the economy or class structure (anathema to many marxists). The Sociology of Knowledge has formed a major foundation of sociological theory, especially within the sociologies of literature and science.

Mannheim's teaching assistant was Norbert Elias, another Weberian, who developed an entirely new approach to state formation, civilisation and de-civilisation. In his early work he referred to this as figurational sociology and later process sociology. I have indicated for some time the importance of Elias's work to anarchism. This is not to say Elias saw himself as an anarchist. He was apolitical all his life, but apolitical towards left-wing rather than right-wing thinking. As Stephen Mennell and Johan Goudsblom say in *Norbert Elias: On Civilisation, Power and Knowledge* (1998) pages 8 and 9: "... he possessed a profound dislike of all political ideologies which always in his view involved both self-perception and distortion of social reality. They were all instances of fantasy-laden thinking, he argued, and the task of sociology was to unmask the myths of all kinds and to help influence and improve society by creating more realistic knowledge about it."

He also admitted he had never voted in his life. The ideas expressed here are taken from Elias's book *What is Sociology?*, especially Chapter 2, 'The Sociologist as a Destroyer of Myths' (1970).

I have a review article 'Norbert Elias: Civilisation and De-civilisation' in *Total Liberty* (forthcoming) which has a detailed bibliography. This is my kind of sociology and my kind of anarchism, not persisting with a debate with the ghost of Marx as

do many so-called class struggle anarchists.

The problem with marxian thinkers such as 'The Frankfurt School' is they operate as if to improve marxism almost as though they were theologians discussing a religion, not to critically reject it. But sociology has other paradigms as well as marxism which forms only a small part of sociological theory, a part which is now in most cases ignored as archaic.

I remember, to use an analogy, the Poulantses/Miliband debate in *New Left Review* and elsewhere which basically started when Miliband, a marxist, dared to check up on marxist assertions by empirical research. To Poulantses this appeared blasphemy. But the same idea operates within anarchism in relation to so-called class struggle thinking. When one asks the advocates of this view upon what empirical research their assertions are based one walks into a brick wall. They are not based upon empirical research but upon an ideology learnt off by heart. In other words a picture or social class imposed on society, not a picture of social class as it is, social reality. Do you not wonder why there was "no revolution in the industrialised countries? Why fascism? Why did the Bolshevik Revolution turn sour?" as Gambone asks. The revolutionaries, marxist, anarchist, syndicalist, ignored the empirical reality and substituted ideology, shadow boxing an enemy with non-existent tools.

There is considerable sociological research on social class now, but few sociologists are attracted to anarchism because so many anarchists, instead of offering testable hypotheses, offer research results before the research has even started.

As Gambone says elsewhere: "Anarchists need to be genuinely radical, to get to the root of contemporary problems, not obfuscate: to confront power, not give it substance".

But I disagree with the final sentence: "A serious study of contemporary Critical Theory could help to put such people on the right track". It might help committed marxists or the class struggle fraternity, but it would thoroughly confuse most anarchists. For them, to quote Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*: "There it a world elsewhere". There is no need for anarchists to have to trawl through marxism to understand anarchism. Anarchism stands on its own feet.

Peter Neville



A reader queried the accuracy of an item which was collated from A-infos, regarding the manufacture of building modules for the Sakhalin islands off Siberia for the oil rigs. The item is still, in full, on A-infos (archives). Instructions on how to access both *Freedom* on the World Wide Web and A-infos are given on the back page of *Freedom*.

The item appeared in the first week of September 1998 in A-infos, a news item issued by the IWW.

JR

## — SENEGAL —

**Creating a strong social movement**

This is the second and final part of the interview with Moussa Diop, a Senegalese militant in the education and trade union sectors, which appeared in *Le Monde Liberaire*. The first part appeared in the last issue of *Freedom* (31st October 1998). Having covered the various initiatives in the fields of popular education and general social alternatives which have been put in place following the disengagement of the state in the social field in this article we consider the question of social struggle and the current state of the social movement.

*Le Monde Liberaire*: You have described to us a dramatic social situation affecting a number of young people who find themselves on the streets alongside street educators who understand the social situation brought about by the economic situation and the political regime and are instigating numerous popular initiatives at the level of education, health and everyday concerns on a basis of self-management and raised social consciousness. But does there exist behind all this movement for a social alternative a commitment from trade unions and political organisations which would try to bring all these initiatives together into some kind of network?

**Moussa Diop**: No, in reality the unions and the political groupings are not getting involved in all the structures we have described (district education centres, 'Women's Bank', food co-operatives, recycling workshops). People become involved as individuals, above all as 'citizens', as inhabitants of a district even if they are also often members of a political or syndicalist organisation. You have to realise that in 1973 in Senegal there was a kind of May '68 which became the launch-pad for raising the awareness and the start of engagement in the political process for a number of people. The majority of people who today are the driving force behind the initiatives that we have described have come from this movement. They are Muslims, Trotskyists, Syndicalists, ex-Maoists who are active in the grassroots because their political organisations aren't. At times, when there are emergency situations linked to repression such as arrests we are forced to call on the progressive political parties so that they can ask questions at the National Assembly. In Senegal there is a bourgeois attitude to human rights. Groups which are concerned with human rights only function when democratic political parties are affected by repression. When children die of hunger or are imprisoned, nobody seems concerned with their plight. I have never seen a human rights organisation visit a Senegalese prison in order to denounce the conditions of detention. We face considerable problems forging a link between the political and the syndical and that of the social alternative. One of my objectives is to encourage the different people involved to get a better grasp of the overall picture and to help them see the

connection between all the activities they are involved in. Now it is necessary for people to be able to analyse the situation, study the problems they face and to globalise their response. There is truly a need to motivate people. But lots of people have changed and evolved and many people join with us on a regular basis. We have succeeded in attracting many people involved in education. We have also succeeded in getting them involved in the various initiatives going on at a district level. When I am asked where education ends I reply that it isn't at the doors of our institutional structures. I have no territory, I am a man of Senegal, a man of the world. When I need to intervene I feel no need to imprison myself in mental territories. That is what it means to create and have a political consciousness.

**LML**: Exactly. You speak of political consciousness, managing to face up to the state. I'd like you to speak a little about the social movements in Senegal. What has been happening recently?

**MD**: In Senegal, for sometime now, we have seen what is called policies of structural management. These policies are imposed by the IMF and the World Bank. They impose on us anti-worker and anti-social laws which have serious repercussions. These policies have culminated in a wave of privatisations. The SDE (Water Company) and the railways have been privatised. Since then many regions have been without a railway. This causes serious transportation problems in those areas highly dependent on agriculture. In addition to this the privatisation of SDE has led to a 3% increase in water prices. If this goes on, in five years access to drinking water will be difficult. If electricity is also privatised we will face the same problem there. Today there is an important struggle addressing this issue. Whilst the state promised not to sell off more than 33% of the national electricity company at the last moment everything was offered to the private companies. This provoked a strike. What is of interest is that the official union, linked to the Socialist government, the CNTS (National Confederation of Senegalese Workers) is largely a minority influence on the movement. The union which has been most involved in this campaign is the SUTELEC (Electricity Workers' Union)

which is affiliated to an independent union and is not linked to any party.

It is this independent union which has taken charge of representing the workers' demands. But, with the hardening of the strike movement, the government has decided to liquidate this union. A decision which was reinforced by the fact that, recently, the World Bank and the IMF called for a period of social peace in Senegal so that investment may continue. It was in this way that a policy of purifying the social movement was launched. When the SUTELEC cut off the electricity just after the World Cup (if they had done this earlier the movement would have been very unpopular) the state press along with the private press which is, in point of fact, a free press and often at the forefront of a fair number of issues, opened fire on the movement. There was a concerted media attempt to turn people against the strike action. The secretary of the Senegalese CNT which is close to the socialist party joined in the attack denouncing the movement and calling for sanctions because the strike was preventing commissioners from doing their work and was causing too much hardship for the people in general. The state took advantage of all this to unleash a wave of repression by focusing on supposed acts of sabotage in order to arrest the leaders of the independent union. UNSAS (National Union of Independent Senegalese Syndicalists) to which SUTELEC was affiliated launched a solidarity campaign on the one hand informing people about the real issues involved, the reasons for and the goals of the strike and at the same time calling for the release of the imprisoned militants. It had to be pointed out that this strike is profoundly popular in the sense that workers are fighting for democratic access to electricity, the right for everyone to have access to it even in the most isolated of communities which is far from being the case in Senegal. When I left Senegal, a large demonstration organised by the wives of the strikers had been put down in the same way as almost all the solidarity marches. About forty women were arrested. At each demonstration there were arrests.

Not only were 27 Syndicalist leaders arrested but they were also sacked from their jobs. Normally there is a correct procedure to be followed when people who have been imprisoned are to lose their jobs. Now that the strike is over there are a whole loads of reasons given for sacking the majority of the militants which are not within the rules.

**LML**: To conclude can you tell us a little more about the Syndicalist groupings, UNSAS and the CNTS, that you have mentioned?

**MD**: UNSAS is a union of those radical left wing unions who recognise first and foremost the class struggle. At the heart of this group are the most significant membership group which is the teachers. The independent teachers union has been involved in some pretty hard struggles. A year ago, there was a long battle over pension questions which was supported by the majority of the profession. A few years ago this union represented about 25% of state employed trade unionists and today it gets the support of the majority of its members when it launches an action. The CNTS on the other hand, which is linked to the regime, represents the illusionary involvement of working people. It uses a radical worker type language, very left, but follows policies which are worse than those of the right. The union's leader is a former exile from 1958 who negotiated his return to the country in exchange of a pile of concessions. He is a strike breaker and the mastermind of the move to liquidate the independent unions. The great weakness of the democratic movement in Senegal, of the people who are fighting for real citizenship, real respect, but also on behalf of all of the peoples of the world is that the different actors involved have real difficulty in bringing all the threads together. If they could come together, co-ordinate themselves, define their common aims we could build a powerful social movement. For my part this is what I am trying to do with the local people in the towns

**David of the Durruti Group, Lyon**  
(taken from *Le Monde Liberaire*,  
September 1998)

**INTERNATIONAL  
JABILUKA ACTION DAY**

The 20th October is International Jabiluka Action Day, with anti-Jabiluka protests happening in Osaka, Cologne/Bonn, and Madrid, as the World Heritage Committee prepares itself to decide whether to list Kakadu National Park as World Heritage in Danger.

Protesters in Cologne will mount a protest in front of the Cathedral, itself registered as World Heritage, and then take the protest to the Australian embassy in Bonn.

In Madrid, the call for action on 20th October has met with a strong response from a number of environmental groups. People in Spain are horrified by the idea of mining anywhere near World Heritage sites, especially since a disaster at the Donana national park last spring, when millions of litres of water bearing high levels of cadmium, zinc, and lead were released after a tailings dam at a Swedish-owned mine broke open after millions of dollars had already been spent on retention works. The Madrid protest group will attempt to hand a letter of protest to the Australian ambassador at 12 noon, Madrid time.

In Osaka, a protest will be held in the centre of the city near the Umeda railway station. Japanese utilities are the largest customers of Energy Resources of Australia, the company that wants to mine Jabiluka, and there is a strong movement of opposition to Japan's

ambitious nuclear construction plans.

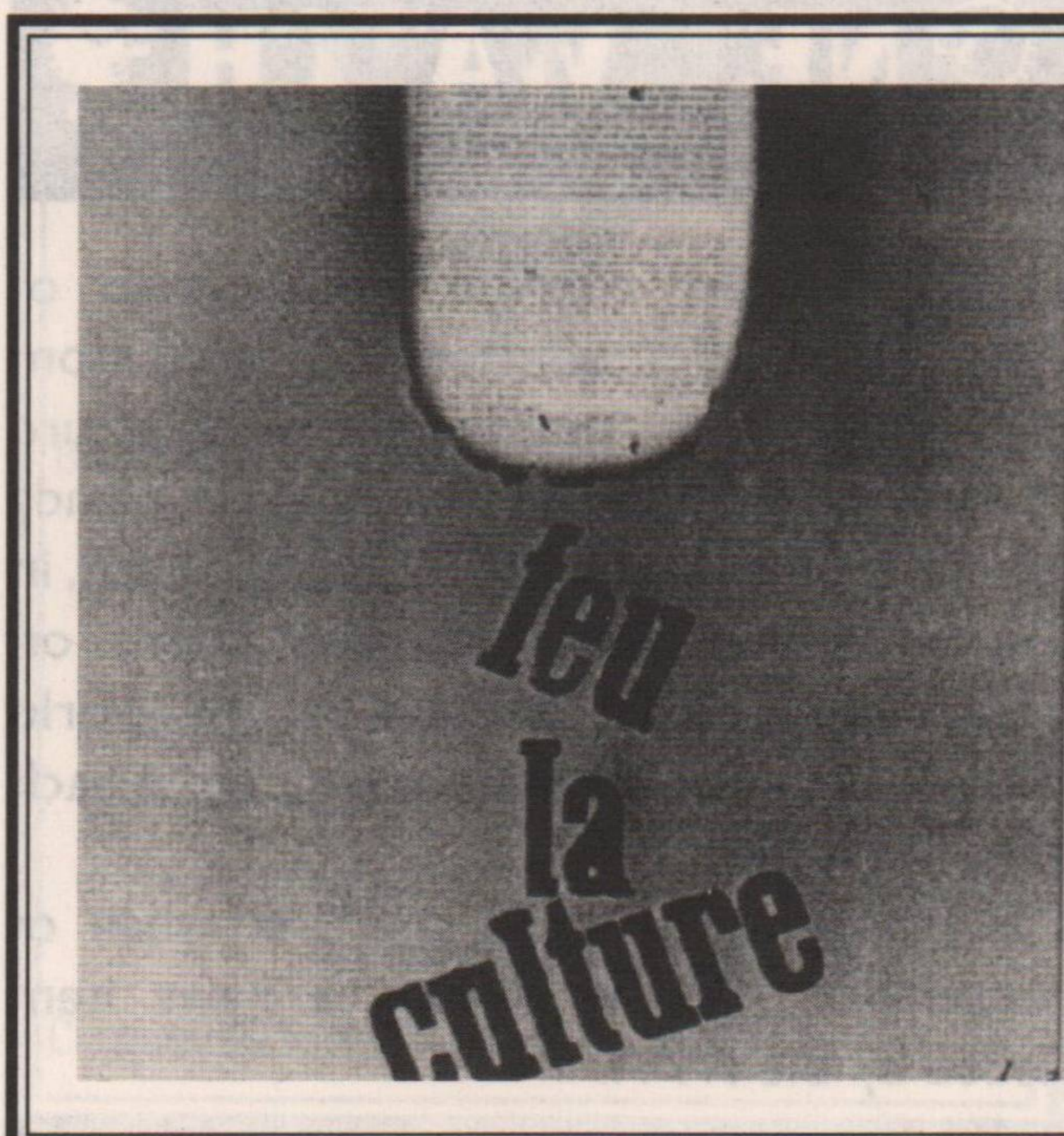
These protests come as Jabiluka is on the eve of a crucial visit by an unprecedented High level inspection team from the World Heritage Committee, who will be in Kakadu on 25-26th October, and in Canberra on 30th October. The high level inspection team, headed by World Heritage Committee chairperson Professor Francesco Francioni and Director of the World Heritage Centre in Paris, Berndt Von Droste, has the task of compiling a report on whether Kakadu National Park should be placed on the list of World Heritage in Danger. The matter will then be discussed and decided when the WHC next meets in Kyoto in November/December.

The widespread protests indicate that there is considerable international concern about the way in which Australia is going about promoting uranium mining in Kakadu national park in the face of public opinion polls indicating that 67% of all Australians are opposed to the Jabiluka project, and that only 7% favour it.

**CONTACT: Australia:** John Hallam on 61-2-9283-2006 h61-2-9810-2598

**Germany:** Bernhard Mogge and Werner Aron on 0011-49-221-739-28-71

**Osaka:** Ueno Satoshi on 0011-81-6-712-9955.

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**Rich and Poor**



Hello Brussels, I'm on the 73 bus. I'm six foot tall and am wearing a kilt. I'm on my way to a gig now, call you later.

Is that the Swiss Police? Have you got that? Especially important that I'm going to a gig. Don't forgot the name of the bands. Kropotkin's Lighthouse and the Anarchs. Got that? Call me Paddy.

Paddy, we have got your movements recorded for the past six months. Have you read the *Sonntage Zeitung*? Your mobile phone has an in-built monitoring and tagging device which can be accessed by police and intelligence (note the distinction) agencies. We have everybody on our files and can tell you the movements of all mobile phone users down to a few hundred yards, and going back at least half a year. Aren't we clever?

So tell me, where was I ten minutes ago. Easy Paddy, you were on your way to a gig, incidentally what pattern is your kilt? There is somebody here would be very interested. Do you want to know, Paddy, what we do with all this information. We keep nothing to ourselves. We directly pass it on to the United States Security Agency, transferring all target information from the European mainland via the strategic hub of London, then by satellite to Fort Meade in Maryland via the crucial hub at Menwith Hill in the North York Moors of the UK. So by the time you alight your No 73, Paddy, there will be a few people at the bus-stop wanting to look up your kilt to see what's there.

Charming, if you want to know there is a book on your secret power stashed up there (Hager, 1996). This conversation is monitored now like all other satellite phone calls, internet, e-mail, faxes and laundry-lists at Sugar Grove and Yakima, at Waipohai, at Geraldton, in Hong Kong and in the charming Cornish unit at Morwenstow.

You amaze me, perhaps you even know the password?

Don't tell me, is it the Swiss Police Dismisseth us? Look, matey, we know all about you. How you siphon out from your indiscriminate interceptions using key words, such as bollocks.

Paddy, you are wrong there. The word is blocks. You are just pulling my leg. You are groping for the word 'block', which is on the list to identify communications about off-shore oil in an area where the seabed has yet to be divided into exploration blocks.

In the case of phone taps the procedure is known as *Mantis*. With telexes it is called *Mayfly*. So you can intercept such dangerous terrorist groups as the Salvation Army, Christian Aid or Amnesty International by keying in a code word.

The staff at Menwith has grown since the 1980s from 400 personnel to 1,800. Such big ears, such capacious minds, such shits. Everyone of them a fully certified human being. But some of them still use the old password. Repeat after me: 'The Leith Police dismisseth us? No swiss rolls for them, eh?'

Incidentally, do you know what an A point is? No, it isn't. Yes, it is. Alright Paddy, you even got that right.

The A point (without debate) is an agreement adopted on the nod without any written record. It just is, nobody knows who put it there or how to remove it.

What, you just go into a meeting and that's it. Once the A point enters, that's the law?

Paddy, you just missed getting off to your gig. And there was a reception committee to meet you. And you should not have thrown your mobile out of the window. It could have hurt one of our best A point agents. Come back. Paddy, don't be a naughty boy.

**John Rety**

**Genetic Engineering**

Dear Freedom,

I have been wondering whilst reading the on aging debates on genetic engineering, just how the subject fits into anarchism as a whole. After all, when talking to comrades about just what anarchists do and believe, direct action by anti-GE activists seems to pop up quite often. I couldn't understand the relation of anarchism to such activities. I know anarchists are opposed to oppression in all its forms: monopoly, states, laws, etc. But I've yet to be oppressed by a soya bean! I know that some GE products are protected by patents, and even have been developed so as to only 'work' when in contact with other certain GE products, thus protecting the patents and allowing the holder to escape competition and protect their profits. But this means, all the more, that we fight the states that grant patents and intervene in such competition. Fighting the GE product on this basis is like blaming the gun for a murder rather than the murderer. I also know that some 'meddling with nature' has produced negative results. But we can use genetics to put this right – maybe we shouldn't have meddled, but it's a bit late to do this now.

So what is the relation of anarchism to the anti-GE activists who dig up fields of crops that are engineered? Surely it must be anti-pathetical. After all, digging up crops is, according to those who do it, 'protecting our interests', but it's not a service I asked for, thank you very much, just like the nanny-state, and the government that 'serves my interests' without my permission. Such anti-GE protection must, therefore, be forced upon me and is thus a violation of my liberty and is oppressive. They treat us as children. and patronise us in the supermarkets, saving us from the responsibility of making a choice whether or not to use GE products, of taking our own lives into our own hands. Well, frankly, you don't have the right to destroy the crops I might want, that workers have produced, or to make my decisions for me. Credit us with a little responsibility: *LEAVE IT TO THE MARKET*. You could help us make an informed choice with journals and stickers put on supermarket shelves, but you can't prevent us from having a choice. In short, as an anarchist I detest the oppressive activities of those superstitious primitivists who destroy crops, and fight them as I would fight the police or the state.

**Richard Garner**

*[Meddling with nature is as old as cultivating vegetables, and the only thing new about genetic engineering is the level of scientific expertise, which is politically neutral. We share out correspondent's dislike of the authoritarianism of 'superstitious primitivists' – though we were not aware that the people who dug up crops had described themselves as anarchists – and his argument that opposing genetic engineering rather than the state is to blame a gun for a murder rather than the murderer, echoes the anarchist argument that it is capitalism that causes war, and not armaments.]*

*However, when he claims that we should oppose the states that "intervene in such competition", we begin to suspect that we have a free-marketeer in the camp! May we point out that a market, any market, is based on a price system in which his choice as a consumer is restricted by his income, and by the number of owners of the fields of beans? It is elementary economics that no market can of itself ensure that everyone's needs are satisfied, or that resources are fairly allocated, or that any particular socially-desired ends are attained; and for generations*

*these have been causes for economists to advocate government intervention in the market – in Britain a hundred years ago the Fabians and Social Democrats who founded the Labour Party – and including legislation to protect us from adulterated foodstuffs.*

*This is in complete contradistinction from anarchism – and so far as we at Freedom are concerned, this means anarchist communism – which is the only political theory to combine liberty of the individual with social co-operation and which involves the abolition of land ownership, wages and prices.*

*When our correspondent asks us to "leave it to the market", we ask ourselves how his view fits into anarchism – Editors.]*

**Orwell at Home**

Dear Comrades,

I would be very grateful if you could send me a copy of *George Orwell at Home*. Vernon Richards's marvellous photos have long been the most striking visual element in books on Orwell.

**Roger Mortimore**

**David Lyle**

Dear Freedom Press,

Please find enclosed a small donation in honour of the memory of David Lyle who died recently after a bad fall downstairs. David was a lifelong supporter of the ideas promoted by Freedom Press and a long-time subscriber to *Freedom*. His daughter Mary and myself felt David would have preferred such a donation to flowers.

**Mark Benjamin**

**Michael Hyde**

Dear Freedom,

Thank you for publishing Colin Ward's review of Michael Hyde's *City Fields, Country Gardens* (*Freedom*, 3rd October). Unfortunately Michael Hyde died a few days before the review appeared. A full obituary appeared in the *Guardian* on 7th October. The *Freedom* review was the first review to appear, and Michael Hyde's family were very pleased to read it.

**Ross Bradshaw  
Five Leaves Publications**

**The Meaning of Freedom**

Dear Freedom,

John Rety is mistaken about the word 'freedom' ('Rich and Poor', 31st October). True, in Chaucer's time it was used to mean 'nobility, generosity', but this meaning was not the original.

A century before Chaucer, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, 'freedom' was being used to mean 'exemption or release from slavery or imprisonment; personal liberty'. The Chaucerian usage was a later development which became obsolete.

Apparently the word 'free' comes from a Sanskrit root which means 'to love'. The *Oxford English Dictionary* explains: "The primary sense of the adjective is 'dear'; the Germanic and Celtic sense [enjoying personal liberty] comes of its having been applied to the members of a household connected by ties of kindred to the head, as opposed to the slaves."

The root meaning of 'freedom', then, seems to be a condition or state in which you are treated as a 'dear one', a loved one'; or a domain or realm where everybody is treated so.

**Francis Ellingham**

**Meaning of Anarchy**

Dear Friends,

Please find enclosed a cheque for £99 for you to spread among the funds.

There seems to have been a lot of mentions of the word 'anarchy' recently in the press. Usually used in the derogatory way. It does at least give an opportunity to give them the more constructive meaning of the word.

Thanks for all your work.

**[name and address supplied]**

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

**Cowardice of the Peace Movement**

Dear Freedom,

To answer Ciaron O'Reilly (17th October), I didn't construct this God, it is that of the Council of Nicea, which is also the name of the creed Ciaron presumably recites every Sunday. If he sits mute through it then I welcome him to the ranks of the atheists. But can he say don't bleed for me JC, I'll answer for my own shit?

Ciaron is right in saying it is the poor who have the language of belief. This is corroborated by Primo Levi in his experience of the death camps – it was believers who survived. Fundamentalism is adaptive, when times are really hard then blind faith (in anything) will help you through (see the film *We Once Were Warriors*). Freud's concept of 'therapeutic illusion' obviously applies here. We fortunately are not in that position and can still say there is no truth, only human opinion.

Ciaron is also right in the secularity of the

English peace movement. Atheists like Bertrand Russell and our own Nick Walter made a great contribution. They are the Levis of the Enlightenment. For them reason is the measure of all things, but I would say it is a goddess that failed. It seems to me that Ploughshares, secular or not, commits one to a life of endless incarceration – if I understand Phil Berrigan aright – and few have the emotional resources for this. 'C'est formidable, mais il n'a pas la paix' to misquote some general or other. There have been some dreadful tragedies of people broken by imprisonment. A century ago a spectre stalked Europe, and that too ended in dreadful tragedy: St Karl's heart was in the right place, he just got the theory wrong! Now I feel that the shadow of the carpenter, freed from his obnoxious dad, may be able to pick up where he left off, pick up the banner of revolution so betrayed by the marxists.

**Peter Lumsden**



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**Meetings & Events**

**The London  
Anarchist Forum**

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

**— PROGRAMME 1998-99 —**

**13th November** JC the Revolting Peasant:  
the work of J.D. Crossan and the Jesus  
Seminar (speaker Peter Lumsden)

**20th November** The Decline of Western  
Civilisation (speakers Eve Segure and  
Jocelyn Chapman)

**27th November** Movement Against the  
Monarchy (symposium)

**4th December** General discussion on  
the future programme

**11th December** Symposium on behaviour  
in anarchist meetings

**18th December** Christmas social

**8th January** General discussion

**15th January** What is an Anarchist  
Movement? The *Problem* for Newcomers  
(symposium)

Anyone interested in giving a talk or  
leading a discussion, please contact Carol  
Saunders or Peter Neville *at the meetings*  
giving your subject and prospective dates  
and we will do our best to accommodate.

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

**Red Rambles**

A programme of monthly guided walks in  
Derbyshire, Staffordshire and Leicestershire for  
Socialists, Libertarians, Greens, Anarchists and  
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 22nd November**

Meet at 11am at Surprise View car park on  
A625 Hathersage to Sheffield road (1 1/2 miles  
out of Hathersage on left) for 6 to 7 mile walk  
to Stannage Edge via Carl Wark ancient hillfort.

**Telephone for further details  
01773 827513**

**A SOCIALIST CONFERENCE  
14th to 15th November 1998**

Crown Inn, St John Street, Bridgwater, Somerset

**A discussion of working class struggles and ideas:  
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**organised by the Revolutionary Socialist Network**

**For further details ring 01278 450562**

**— CONFERENCE PROGRAMME —  
Saturday 14th November**

- 10.30-11.00 Registration
- 11.00-12.30 Solidarity Lost (Glen Burrows, RMT Bridgwater)
- 12.30-1.30 Lunch
- 1.30-3.00 Working Class Culture and Social Change (Tony Taylor, UNISON, Wigan)
- 3.30-5.00 Racism, Strikes and Riots (Dave Chapple, CWU, Bridgwater)
- 8pm until late: Black music social with jazz, reggae, blues, soul. £1 entrance (free to conference members)

**Sunday 15th November**

- 10.00-11.30 Bourgeois Politics (Malcolm Ball, UNISON, London)
- 11.45-12.30 Bravererman's Monopoly Capital: the Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century (Graeme Imray, NATFHE, Liverpool)
- 12.30-1.30 Plenary Session.

**Cost of Conference: £3.00 waged / £1.50 unwaged.  
Saturday lunch menu available, from £2 to £5**

*Join us for the weekend, one day or one  
session - whatever you can manage.  
We look forward to seeing you.*

Glen Burrows, 1 Blake Place, Bridgwater, TA6 5AU

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