

# INBREDOM

anarchist fortnightly

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50p

## The Left: Campaigning for Votes not Change

We are not sure how many *Freedom* readers also read *Red Pepper* magazine. Not many we suspect, but if you do it will not have escaped your notice that plans seem to be afoot to establish a new left-of-centre political party. In Scotland where the Scottish Socialist Party hopes to get 20% of the vote in the forthcoming elections to the Scottish Parliament this has already happened. Elsewhere the Independent Labour Network founded by ex-Labour MEP Ken Coates will be promoting an election agenda in this summer's European elections.

The view that there would be substantial support for a new left party is not restricted to Britain. Across the Atlantic, where in last year's mid term elections nearly three quarters of all Americans did not bother to vote – the lowest number for fifty years, a new Labour Party has been formed backed by unions.

Nick Cohen in an article in February's *Red Pepper* claims the reason why many working class people in Britain did not vote in large numbers during the last election was because there was no party standing that represented their views. "Sensible working-class voters abstained"

from voting Labour, Cohen says, "deciding that there was no point in supporting a party that despised them". Cohen ignores the fact, though, that there were parties standing in the election that did claim to represent working-class views. Arthur Scargill formed the Socialist Labour Party (SLP) before the 1997 election and stood candidates in every constituency. He believed that the SLP would receive votes from disaffected Labour supporters and trade unionists. The SLP got absolutely nowhere, losing all its deposits. One suspects, though, that Scargill would not be too welcome in Cohen's 'genuine' left-of-centre party as Cohen believes a new socialist party should aim to appeal to trade unionists, old Labour supporters and disaffected Liberal Democrats!

The creation of the Scottish Socialist Party, Coates' Network and Cohen's article all show that the traditional left senses that the space created by disillusionment with Blair, along with the possibility of proportional representation being widely introduced, has created an opportunity for a new party to be a realistic possibility.

There is no doubt that prospects for promoting radical ideas is greater than it has been for a long time. What is so depressing, though, is that faced with massive global social and economic inequalities, the collapse of the welfare state and the real prospect of environmental disaster, the left's response is to try to create yet another political party. This will absorb the time and energy of many good activists who will end up campaigning for votes rather than change. It is also in danger of shutting down debate about other alternatives. One of the purposes of *Red Pepper*, for example,

was supposed to be to act as a debating forum for radical red, green and black views. The magazine describes itself as "where red meets green, anarchists take on socialists". Instead it risks becoming a house journal promoting only a revamped version of old Labour.

Voting is an irrelevant activity. The decline in the number of people voting in both America and Britain reflects, not the desire for another party but instead a growing disillusionment with parliamentary politics in general.

An opportunity, however, exists in all this for anarchists. People are fed up with politicians. People do want change and many are fed up of waiting. Direct action 'organised' by non hierarchical groups is occurring all the time – a mass borrowing of books from a library threatened with closure which emptied its shelves until the local council reversed its decision, parents in the night painting a zebra crossing in front of their children's school because their local authority refused to, roads and buildings being reclaimed, ramblers organising walks on the grounds of landowners who bar their way. Examples abound.

All these are a million miles away from electoral politics and, although, most people involved would not necessarily describe themselves as anarchists they are examples of people taking control and responsibility of their lives. It is important that if there is going to be a debate about the future direction of radical politics in this country that anarchists put forward their views. Socialists have been trying to change capitalism through electoral politics for over a hundred years. Only anarchism offers a truly radical alternative to capitalism.



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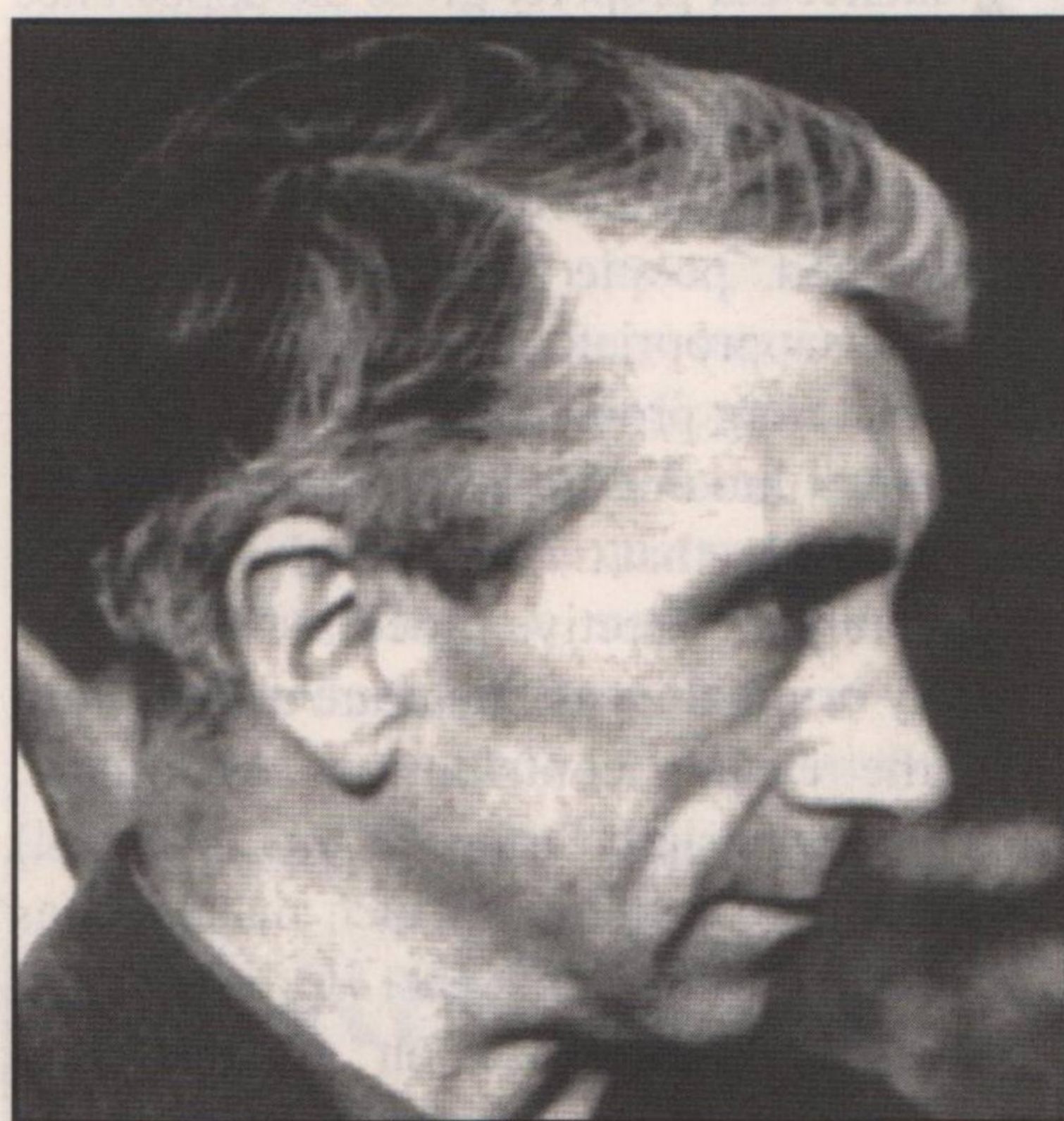
## Hereditary Principle and Honours System

Our society is dominated by domination. The most obvious form of domination is the class system; others are the domination of the middle-aged over both young and the old, of men over women, of natives over aliens, of intellectual over physical workers, of celebrities over nonentities, and so on.

The oldest form of domination is the hereditary principle, which is one of the widest and strongest forces in human nature (whether it is genetically or culturally acquired). The family is the most resilient institution in human society, most people have the greatest feelings of loyalty towards their own relations, most property is passed to spouses and children, and many important positions are obtained by inheritance rather than other methods.

Above all, political power in almost all places at almost all times has belonged to families, and even when the hereditary principle has been removed – as in ancient Greece and Rome – it has often been restored at a later date. Only a few centuries ago, almost all the states in the world were ruled by hereditary monarchs, surrounded by gangs of hereditary aristocrats. One of the most striking developments in modern history has been the decline of this principle, not only in so-called democracies but also in dictatorships. Whereas Cromwell and Napoleon tried to pass power to their descendants, for example, Communist and even Fascist rulers have seldom done so.

Nowadays the hereditary principle is



The anarchist Herbert Read caused controversy by accepting a knighthood in 1953. His 212-page book, *A One-Man Manifesto*, is available from Freedom Press at £6 (post free inland)

becoming politically incorrect. All over the world, powerful people are accused of 'nepotism' if they follow the ancient practice of giving positions to their relations. This tendency is actually spreading beyond the hereditary principle; in this country, for example, powerful people are accused of 'cronyism' if they follow the equally ancient practice of giving positions to their friends. The one area where the hereditary principle still flourishes is in business, where rich people still give jobs to their children as a matter of course – though the kingdoms tend to collapse when the king dies.

Britain, which was one of the pioneers of the democratic revolution, has nevertheless retained more hereditary survivals than almost all other democracies, but now these are being removed even here. The monarchy is protected by irrational taboos and is virtually powerless, so it may survive the trend, despite increasing unpopularity; an elective monarchy or presidency presents many difficulties, so it may not emerge, despite increasing popularity. But the House of Lords now seems certain to lose the hundreds of hereditary peers who have always dominated it, even since the influx of life peers since 1958; and the House of Commons is no longer automatically open to the children of former MPs and peers.

It remains to be seen what forms of patronage will replace the old ones. Our parliamentary system is dominated more than ever before by political parties, whether in local and regional and national and international assemblies, and the party caucus will probably replace the old sources of power and privilege in all areas of society.

But people crave more than just power or privilege. They honour honour, wishing not only to obey and be obeyed but to honour and be honoured. Both rulers and ruled love

titles as well as positions. So there are kings and princes and emperors, dukes and marquesses and counts and earls, barons and baronets and knights and esquires, chamberlains and heralds and equeries and stewards, keeping the names long after the functions have disappeared; even mere Mr and Mrs began as Master and Mistress.

There are uniforms and orders, decorations and medals, services and prayers, rituals and ceremonies, half-military and half-religious, through which our society becomes literally as well as metaphorically spectacular. British people, who are more informal in ordinary life than most other people, become more formal in such circumstances – as in our royal weddings and royal funerals, tawdry imitations of the triumphs of the Roman Empire or the festivals of the French Revolution – and this country is more pervaded by these empty forms than almost any other.

As part of the democratic revolution, however, so-called honours had to be distributed more widely. The end of the First World War was marked by the creation of 'The Most Excellent Order of the British Empire', with an ascending hierarchy of Members, Officers, Commanders, Knight or Dame Commanders, and Knight or Dame Grand Cross. Twice a year, hundreds of people are appointed to what is called an 'Order of Chivalry', long after any of them ever rode a horse and also long after the British Empire disappeared, and accept what are revealingly called handles to their names.

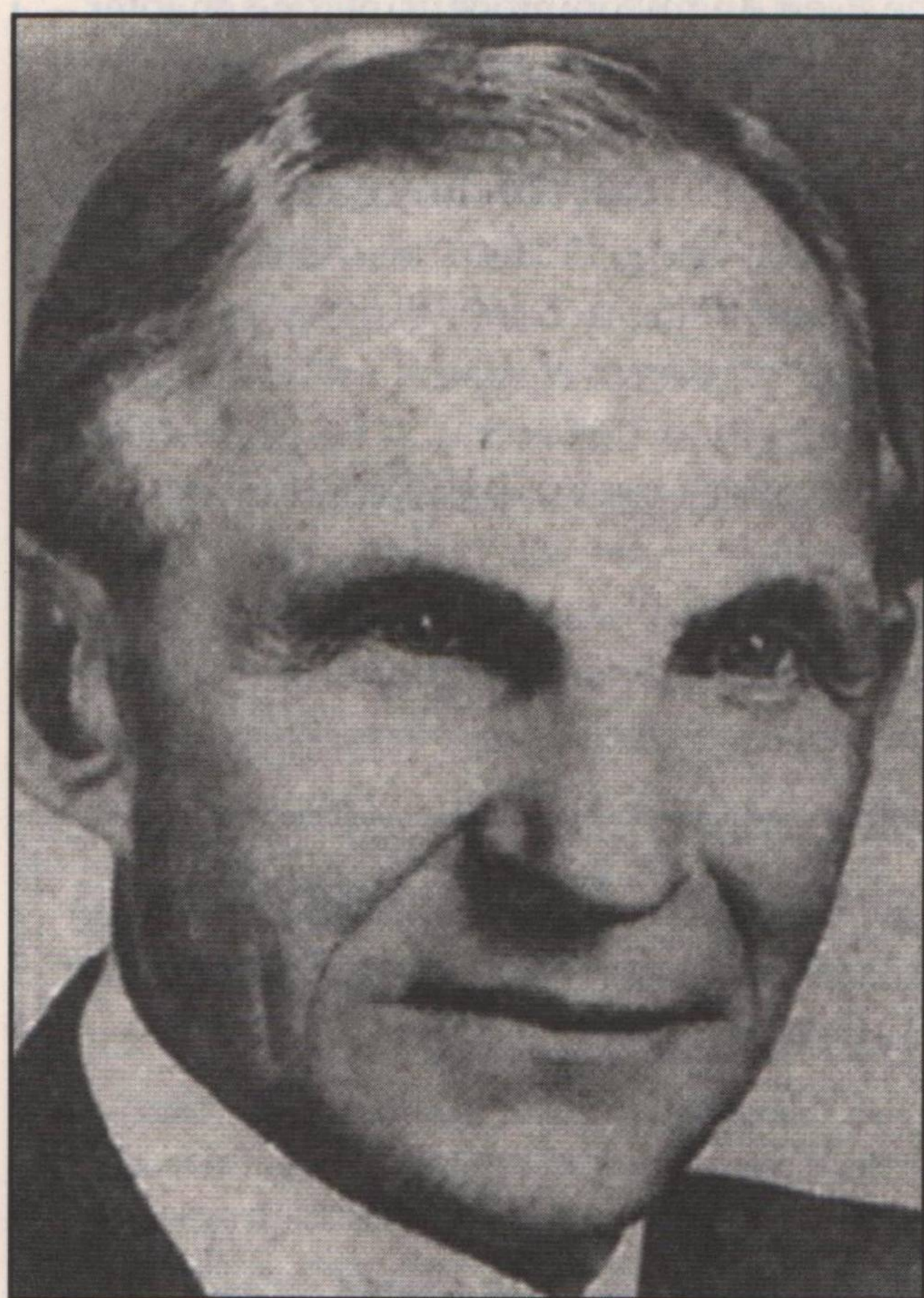
This vast hierarchical system attracts not only conservatives and reactionaries but also so-called radicals and revolutionaries, and not even anarchists are immune. The pathetic procession of Labour politicians and trade-union leaders into the House of Lords has long been a stale joke. (Michael Foot is a very rare exception to this custom.) Margaret Cole, a leading socialist intellectual, accepted the OBE and later the DBE. Her brother, Raymond Postgate, another leading socialist intellectual, sneered at her OBE, but accepted one himself a year later. Charlotte Wilson, the founder of *Freedom* and later of the Fabian Women's Group, accepted the OBE in 1918. Herbert Read, the best-known anarchist in the country, accepted a knighthood in 1953 (to do him justice, largely because of pressure from his wife). George Woodcock, the best-known anarchist writer in the world, refused an invitation to become a Member of the Order of Canada in 1971, but privately confessed that this was partly because he hadn't been offered the higher grade of Officer.

There have been some impressive exceptions. Rudyard Kipling repeatedly refused all national honours, including the

Poet Laureateship and the Order of Merit, though he did accept the Nobel Prize for Literature. Jean-Paul Sartre went further, and refused the Nobel Prize. Tony Harrison has just refused to be considered for the Poet Laureateship. Gareth Peirce, the solicitor who has been involved in reversing so many miscarriages of justice, has just refused the CBE – though bureaucratic muddle led to the surprising announcement that she had accepted it.

Some of the statements made by recusants have been memorable. When the socialist historian R. H. Tawney was offered a peerage by Ramsay MacDonald, he inquired, "What harm have I ever done the Labour Party?" When Virginia Woolf was offered a Dameship, she retorted, "I was always taught never to take sweets from strangers".

The conclusion is simple. The so-called honours system is a system of dishonour. Even the Companionship of Honour and the Order of Merit belie their names when they include so many dishonourable and unmeritorious people. But this is only the façade of the hierarchical system which dominates our existence. The elite who rule our political, economic, social and cultural lives may no longer be a hereditary clique, but they are as objectionable as ever. Bakunin saw long ago that the inheritance of property had to go; everyone sees now that the inheritance of power must go too. But what must go in the end is any imbalance of property and power, and what must come instead is a combination of equality and liberty with fraternity, in which we are all honourable members.



Henry Ford, car company mogul and author of anti-semitic pamphlets. Hitler kept a life-size portrait of him on his desk and decorated him with the Grand Cross of the German Eagle in 1938. German Ford was the second largest producer of lorries for the German army.



Gareth Peirce, the solicitor involved in the struggle to right a series of miscarriages of justice including the Birmingham Six and Guildford Four cases, turned down her CBE awarded in the New Year's Honours List for 'services to justice'.

# Information Liberation

## Information Liberation

by Brian Martin

published by Freedom Press, £7.95 (post free inland, add 15% p&p to overseas orders).

Brian Martin's book opens with Lord Acton's oft-quoted aphorism, "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely". His agenda is to examine absolute power as it manifests itself in control of mass media, and explore means of opposing and undermining its effects; "the corruptions of power can be minimised by equalising power and opposing social and technological control systems that foster power inequalities."

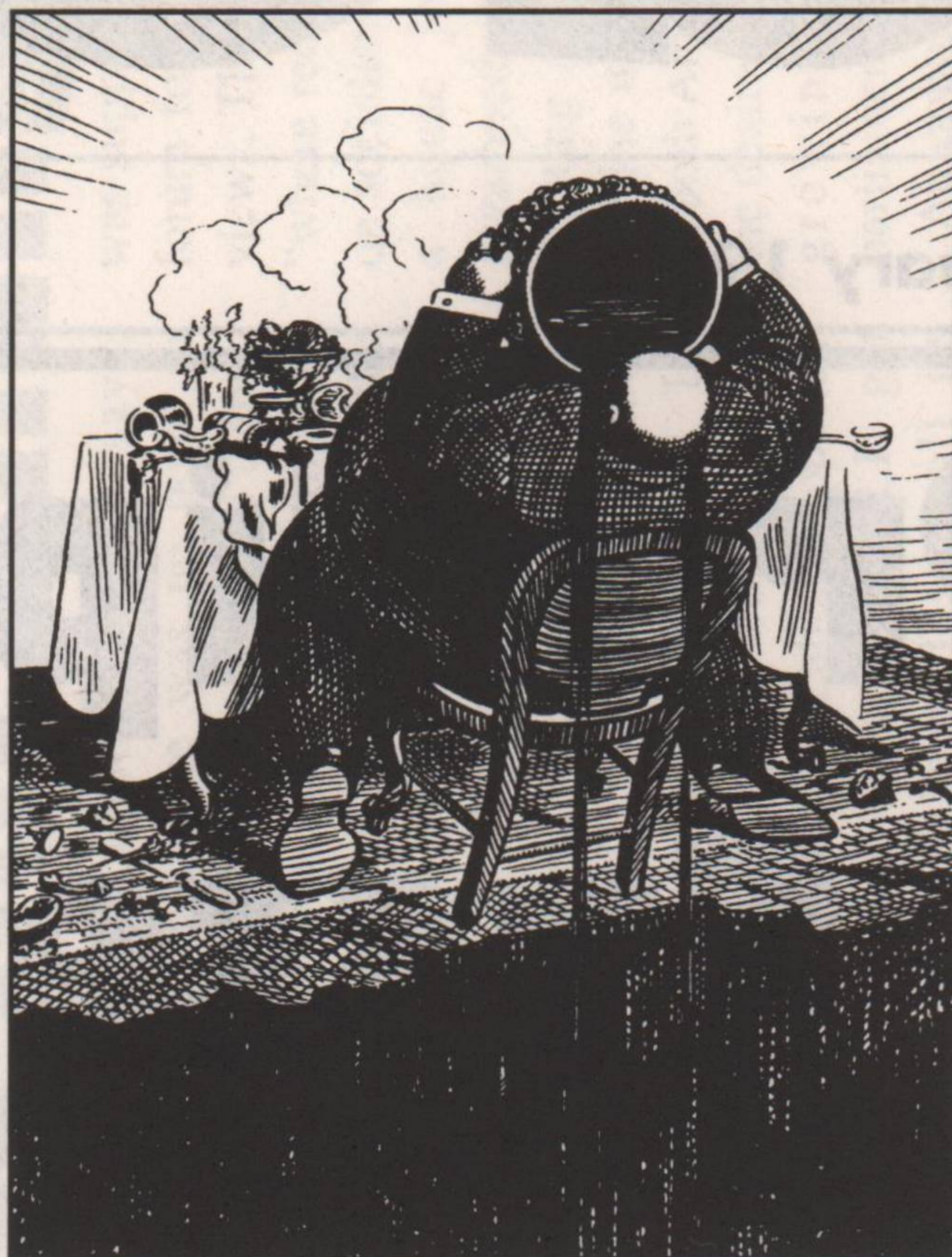
Martin's dissections of the exploitation of the propaganda opportunities provided by control of the communications media are rigorous and well argued. There are particularly fascinating chapters on defamation law, the politics of research and intellectual property. One of the book's strengths is the inclusion of clear examples of the way democratic processes are undermined by the control of information technologies by those with most to lose from the extension of an active democracy. Thus:

"The neem tree is used in India in the areas of medicine, toiletries, contraception, timber, fuel and agriculture. Its uses have been developed over many centuries but never patented. Since the mid-1980s US and Japanese corporations have taken over a dozen patents on neem-based materials. In this way collective local knowledge developed by Indian researchers and villagers has been expropriated by outsiders who have added very little to the process."

### Education for hire?

From the point of view of the classical ideals of higher education, which can be summarised by the phrase 'the pursuit of truth', modern higher education has many failings.

- Knowledge is treated as a commodity, passively accepted and absorbed by student consumers.
- Classroom experience is organised around the premise that learning results only from being taught by experts.
- Knowledge is divided into narrow disciplinary boxes.
- Original, unorthodox thoughts by students, and non-conventional choices of subjects and learning methods, are strongly discouraged.
- Competition prevails over co-operation.
- Knowledge and learning are divorced from social problems or channelled into professional approaches.
- Credentials, the supposed symbols of learning, are sought more than learning itself.
- Performance in research takes precedence over commitment to teaching.
- Most research is narrow, uninspired and mediocre, useful only to other experts or vested interests.
- Scholarly openness and co-operation take second place to the academic rat race and power struggle which involves toadying, backstabbing, aggrandisement of resources and suppression of dissidents.
- Original or unconventional thoughts by staff, or action on social issues, are penalised, while narrow conformist thoughts by staff, or action on social issues are rewarded.



'Rupert Murdoch's TV Dinner'

"In 1985 Avon Lovell published a book entitled *The Mickelberg Stitch*. It argued that the prosecution case against Ray, Peter and Brian Mickelberg – sentenced to prison for swindling gold from the Perth Mint – was based on questionable evidence. The Police Union introduced a levy on members' pay cheques to fund dozens of legal actions against Lovell and the book's distributors and retailers. The defamation threats and actions effectively suppressed any general availability of the book."

Martin is weaker, though, on the means by which control of information can be challenged. The best tactical suggestions reflect their author's background as an activist in the radical science, peace and environmental movements, but, too often, what is offered up amounts to little more than a consumer boycott of information technology. The chapter on 'mass media' is weakest in this regard. Martin suggests that activists should change their own media consumption patterns – "action must begin at home". The notion of television as addiction is proposed, and we are told that "changes in individual behaviour serve several important purposes; they change the perspectives of individuals, they reinforce concern about the issue, and they provide an example (of consistency) to others." This amounts to little more than a moral opposition to monopoly capital, a reducing of political strategy to boycotting the licence fee. People consume television uncritically only to the extent that they participate in any aspect of life uncritically. When material conditions and political fractures combine to bring people to struggle against the state over the determination of their everyday lives, they cease to buy in to the myths built up to hold them in place. In short, people buy into a received history less, the more they are involved in making history themselves. In April 1989, 95 Liverpool supporters died in the Hillsborough Stadium disaster, because a multi-million pound industry was prepared to leave its supporters to flounder in what the Taylor Report called the "shabby squalor" of Hillsborough stadium, and because of the contempt of the police who ignored them and actively contained them as they were crushed to death.

*The Sun* ran a series of headlines claiming that fans picked victims' pockets, urinated on corpses, and attacked the emergency services – all untrue. Newsagents in Merseyside began a boycott. Workers at Ford's in Halewood banned the paper from the plant. Copies were burned in the street. Sales of the paper on Merseyside fell by 38.9%. The media's capacity to dictate the terms of our

conceptions of everyday life is more fragile than they think.

The book contains no analysis of the role, or potential power, of media workers themselves in relation to the images and ideas they produce. There is little discussion of the possibility of subversion of the media, or of the capacity of workers as workers to pull the plug on the whole sorry business. *The Sun*, again, can serve as an example of what can be done. In May 1984, during the Miners' Strike, print workers refused to print an article about NUM leader Arthur Scargill entitled 'Mine Fuhrer'. The paper was distributed with a blank front page. In September of the same year four issues of

*The Sun* were lost over a battle with the NGA over an editorial which described miners as "Scum of the Earth".

Martin is much better looking at possibilities for developing alternative media, and the use of the Internet as a space for free debate, including setting up 'defamation' havens on the Net. *Information Liberation* should be read – it is incisive in exposing the extent to which the information we use to plot the course of our lives is edited by media bureaucracies, and its message, that "social structures are not fixed", is supported by a wide ranging, if flawed, discussion of means by which significant change can be brought about.

Nick S.

Intellectual property gives the appearance of stopping unfair appropriation of ideas although the reality is quite different. If intellectual property is to be challenged, people need to be reassured that misappropriation of ideas will not become a big problem.

More fundamentally, it needs to be recognised that intellectual work is inevitably a collective process. No one has totally original ideas: ideas are always built on the earlier contributions of others. (That's especially true of this chapter!) Furthermore, culture – which makes ideas possible – is built not just on intellectual contributions but also on practical and material contributions, including the rearing of families and construction of buildings. Intellectual property is theft, sometimes in part from an individual creator but always from society as a whole.

In a more co-operative society, credit for ideas would not be such a contentious matter. Today, there are vicious disputes between scientists over who should gain credit for a discovery. This is because scientists' careers and, more importantly, their reputations, depend on credit for ideas. In a society with less hierarchy and greater equality, intrinsic motivation and satisfaction would be the main returns from contributing to intellectual developments. This is quite compatible with everything that is known about human nature. The system of ownership encourages groups to put special interests above general interests. Sharing information is undoubtedly the most efficient way to allocate productive resources. The less there is to gain from credit for ideas, the more likely people are to share ideas rather than worry about who deserves credit for them.

For most book publishers, publishing an argument against intellectual property raises a dilemma. If the work is copyrighted as usual this clashes with the argument against copyright. On the other hand if the work is not copyrighted, then unrestrained

copying might undermine sales. It's worth reflecting on this dilemma as it applies to this book.

It is important to keep in mind the wider goal of challenging the corruptions of information power. Governments and large corporations are particularly susceptible to these corruptions. They should be the first targets in developing a strategy against intellectual property.

Freedom Press is not a typical publisher. It has been publishing anarchist writings since 1886, including books, magazines, pamphlets and leaflets. Remarkably, neither authors nor editors have ever been paid for their work. Freedom Press is concerned with social issues and social change, not with material returns to anyone involved in the enterprise.

Because it is a small publisher, Freedom Press would be hard pressed to enforce its claims to copyright even if it wanted to. Those who sympathise with the aims of Freedom Press and who would like to reproduce some of its publications therefore should consider practical rather than legal issues. Would the copying be on such a scale as to undermine Freedom Press's limited sales? Does the copying give sufficient credit to Freedom Press so as to encourage further sales? Is the copying for commercial or non-commercial purposes?

In answering such questions, it makes sense to ask Freedom Press. This applies whether the work is copyright or not. If asking is not feasible, or the copying is of limited scale, then good judgement should be used. In my opinion, using one chapter – especially this chapter! – for non-profit purposes should normally be okay.

So in the case of Freedom Press, the approach should be to negotiate in good faith and to use good judgement in minor or urgent cases. Negotiation and good judgement of this sort will be necessary in any society that moves beyond intellectual property.

The two extracts (above and left) taken from our new book by Brian Martin are intended to be controversial. The editors welcome correspondence on the topics covered.

INFORMATION LIBERATION  
by Brian Martin  
FREEDOM PRESS

**Information Liberation:**  
challenging the corruptions of information power  
by Brian Martin

Information can be a source of power and, as a consequence, be corrupting. This has ramifications through a number of areas. These is a need for a radical critique that is accessible and oriented to action. Several topical areas are addressed, including mass media, intellectual property, surveillance and defamation. For each topic, a critique of problems is given, examples provided and options for action canvassed. Not every topic relevant to information power is addressed – that would be an enormous task – but rather a range of significant and representative topics. This book will fill a major gap in a very popular field.

**Freedom Press      192 pages      £7.95**

# Municipal misdemeanours

## Tameside bosses furious at Tribune

This month the left-wing Labour paper, the weekly *Tribune*, received letters challenging them for articles claiming that Tameside Council still had control of Tameside Care Group. Both Alan Firth (the TCG's £45,000 a year manager) and Roy Oldham (Tameside Council leader) are believed to be furious.

Previously Mr Oldham had told *Tribune* that the council is only a 'minority shareholder' and, according to *Tribune*, "could not reverse the dismissals". The Labour Council has a 'golden share' vote on the TCG board of directors.

There has been a long-standing promise from the Labour Council in writing that its former staff of careworkers would be "re-employed if their terms and conditions deteriorated at TCG". When, last May, over two hundred care staff working in homes for the elderly were sacked after refusing to accept pay cuts forced through by the TCG after the company declared a profit of £750,000, the council didn't, it is claimed, keep this promise.

Now the council bosses and the TCG boss, Alan Firth, are going to *Tribune* complaining about its report on 22nd January. They claim that *Tribune* was wrong to quote strike coordinator Pam Walker as saying: "At the initial hearing [of the industrial tribunal case] Mr Firth admitted that Tameside Council still

controlled TCG as the major shareholder". She added: "His statement was minuted and it is on the record".

Last week Pam Walker told *Freedom* that Mr Firth is "splitting hairs". She says, to the barrister's question "Who owns the company [TCG]?" at the industrial tribunal (pre-hearing) last December, Mr Firth responded "You know the company [TCG] is owned by the council [Tameside]".

It seems that UNISON solicitors are studying information at Companies House to get to the bottom of the mysterious relationship between the Labour council and the TCG.

In December the sacked careworkers won the right to take the TCG to the industrial tribunal. Part of the workers' case for unfair dismissal will be based on proof that the TCG has been paying agency staff £3.50 an hour, well over the £2.80 they tried to make the sacked union members swallow.

The cost of all this mismanagement, legal action, agency staff, taxis to break through the picket lines and propaganda explaining the Labour council's position, will of course be paid by the long-suffering council tax payers of Tameside, Greater Manchester.

got £2,600 to buy a car and more for clothes. Then all she had to do was pose naked and service folk with a 'quickie' and sometimes she was paid just to chat, go out for a meal and 'have a laugh'.

A better bet than earning £40 a go in Hull's red light area, where Humberside police are now looking for the killer of hooker Samantha Class.

Ms Frangopulo says working for the council was easy money, staying at the £130 a night Grand Hotel in Southampton and being taken out by Poverty Action officials. The Forum was set up in 1995 by two hundred councils. Councils outside Rotherham could, claims *The Observer*, be dragged into the scandal as the police inquiry goes on.

## In Doncaster it's 'Donnygate'

New Labour is anxious about council bosses in places where Labour has been in office for too long and have developed slack morals. Today 10,400 out of 22,000 councillors are Labour in Britain, and 202 out of 404 councils have Labour majorities.

Competing with Rotherham's 'sex on the rates', nearby Doncaster Council Labour bosses are sinking into a bog of fiddles including property deals, junketing and fraudulent expenses claims. To date there have been 24 arrests, including thirteen Labour councillors.

This month former public works committee chair, Leonard Dyson, 54, became the fifth to be jailed in the 'Donnygate' scandal. His crime of expenses fraud is reported to be tiny compared with others who are targets of this two-year police inquiry into Town Hall corruption in Doncaster.

*The Observer* states that "Labour's attempts to clean up Doncaster have been an embarrassing failure". It seems that the Party vetted all candidates for the May elections last year. Malcolm Glover, the new council leader, was set to lead a clean administration. Months later he was charged himself.

Since the scandal became public, 22 Labour councillors (out of fifty) have resigned, lost their seats or announced their intention to resign. Up to now the costs of the two inquiries into council corruption in Doncaster amount to half a million pounds.

## Mr Darling's interminable interrogations

Last week Alastair Darling, the Secretary of State for Social Security, announced his new Welfare Reform Bill. He called his new proposals "harsh, but justifiable", claiming that "there is no automatic right to benefit".

Some critics call this 'pandering to Middle England', but the government claims it wants to end the 'something for nothing culture' which costs Britain £98 billion a year in benefits. Clearly the jobless young will be targeted in particular, but the pundits warn that claimants of income support, housing benefit, council tax benefit, widow's benefit, severe disability allowance and invalid care allowance could be subjected to regular interviews.

Mr Darling, writing in *The Independent*, declares: "The new regime will be far tougher than people thought. People will be asked to come in for interview. We will not apologise for our determination actively and repeatedly to keep people's minds on what they could be doing with their lives rather than claiming benefit."

This is all good tub-thumping stuff, but will it amount to more than yet another bout of New Labour rhetoric? Or is it a serious attempt to stop benefits to those social security claimants who don't either attend or perform well at back-to-work interviews?

Clearly Alastair Darling wishes to challenge the 'defend the welfare state' mob who are still stuck in the age of the Attlee government of 1945. Mocking the old left, Mr Darling writes: "The welfare state has been subjected to more crusades than most. Too often these have been crusades to defend the *status quo*, reacting to the symptoms of huge social and economic failure, but refusing to confront and deal with their causes".

The reactionary and conservative position of the old left makes New Labour appear aggressively progressive. But the solutions of New Labour, though dazzling, are seemingly *symbolic solutions to real problems*. Every few months we get a new outburst and fanfare when some new policy is revealed, then it fast begins to fade like a piece of ephemera.

The editorial in *The Independent* suspects this when it says: "The cycle of 'something for nothing' soundbites must be broken".

Unemployment is a real problem, not something invented by the unemployed themselves. The government talk as if the jobs were there for the taking, and that all we needed is some supercilious labour clerk to give us a 'restart' interview.

What really affects the level of



Alastair Darling, Secretary of State for Social Security

unemployment is the state of the economy and the quality and quantity of education and training.

But, if Mr Darling is serious about interview enforcement, this will probably shake up the libertarian Groundswell campaign and others into opposition. We must wait and see.

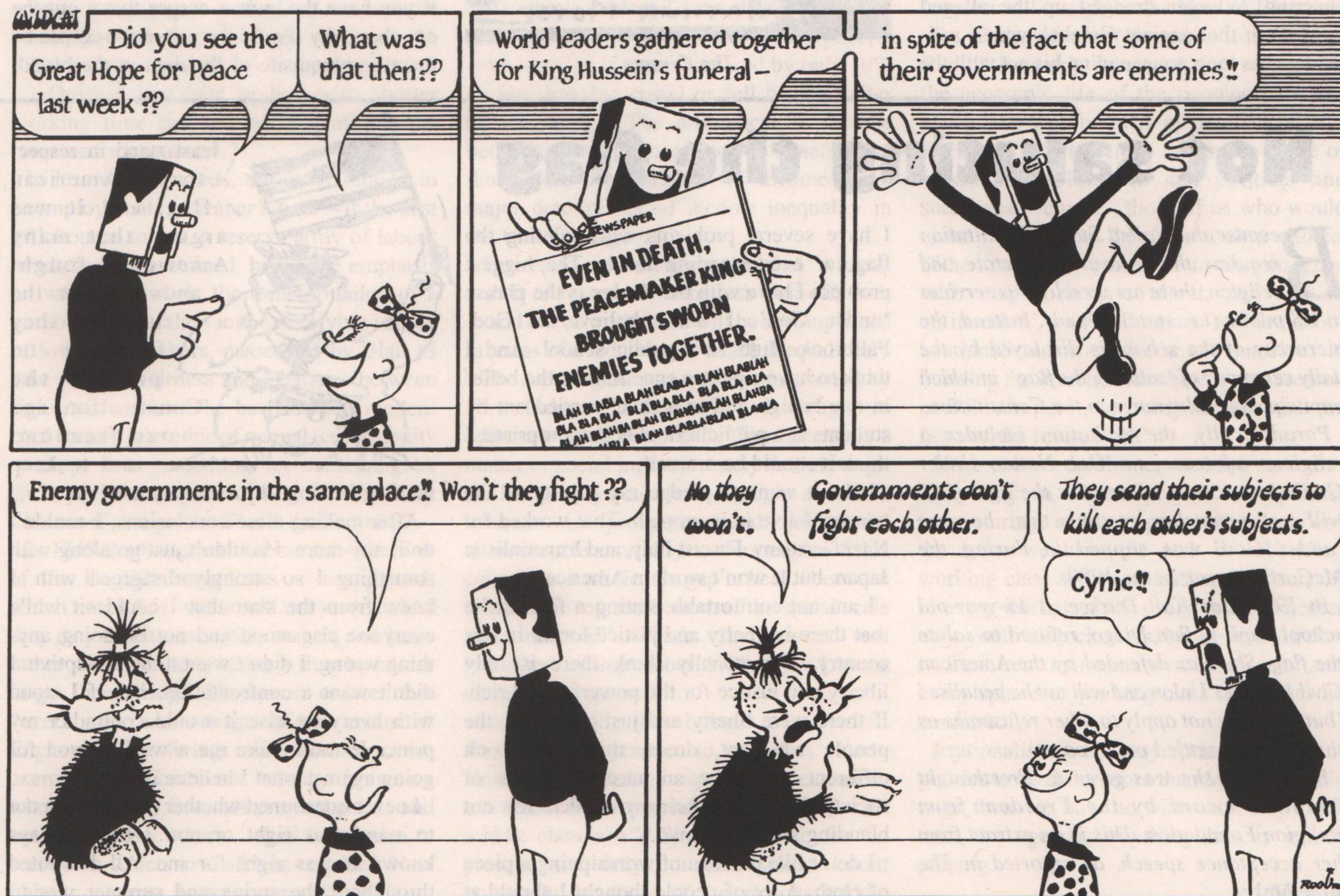
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## Labour's political prostitutes

Another Labour Town Hall scandal has a prostitute, Jayne Frangopulo, claiming she got envelopes filled with £200 every time she attended meetings of the National Local Government Forum Against Poverty. She claims other girls with 'sex on the rates' stories have yet to come forward.

*The Observer* (7th February) reports that police are investigating claims that Garvin Reed, deputy leader of Rotherham Council, and officials Bob Bone and John Cooke spent £50,000 on alcohol, partying and sex. *The Observer* says: "It is one of the many unsavoury stories of town hall sleaze threatening to hit the government as Labour prepares for local elections in May".

Ms Frangopulo was housed in hotels in Rotherham, Southampton and Norwich during Poverty Forum conferences. She was paid to carry out administrative duties. She



# The Mittwochsgesellschaft debate

All readers of *Freedom* are of course conversant, least of all me, with the debate that took place in Berlin 1783 to 1784 orchestrated by the Berlin Mittwochsgesellschaft over a paper submitted by Johann Mohsen asking to know "What is to be done to enlighten our fellow citizens?" – and the answer is of course to keep on agreeing with what your 'fellow citizens' are mouthing and get a reputation for being intelligent.

The debate was as ever over censorship and the perennial affluent rising middle class to know what is being said behind the cliquish Golden Key loo and the sycophantic closed doors of Head of Departments. The M society was dominated by the Prussian intelligentsia who, as in every type of large meeting, manipulated an audience only too eager to mouth their own honed opinions and then to slump back into their hired seat. The M society was a semi-secret society whose printed self-opinions were freely circulated among its members and to all the top brass who might be interested, but to claim to be a secret organisation is the dream fantasy of small boys and the politically naive and ends up looking like a masonic fruitcake with one trouser leg rolled up.

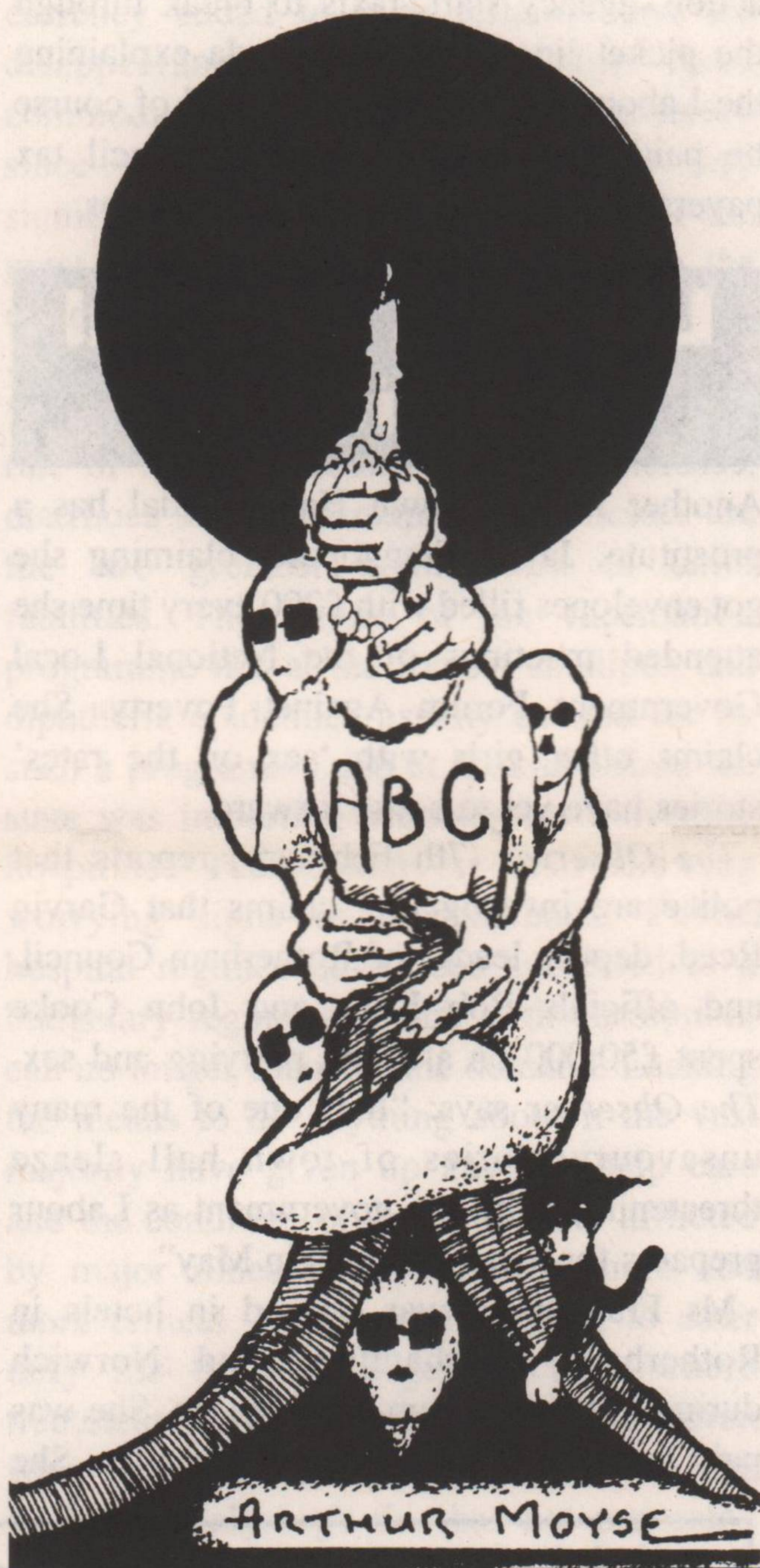
It was Mohsen, the King's physician, who set the moral tone of the gathering by stating that "it is our intention to enlighten ourselves and our fellow citizens" but sadly what they were demanding was not enlightenment as that ol' end in itself but the secret information relating to their own occupation.

The reason for this is that all members of M were employed as bureaucrats, semi-bureaucrats or servants of the State and Zollner, a Charite bible-basher, argued to a nodding of heads that even "incorrect popular ideas" needed to be upheld in order not to shatter we the horny-handed in our indoctrinated views of the world and Stalin, Hitler and the Catholic Church could not have agreed more while Wlomer argued that in preserving principles that hold together the edifice of our State, and that applied to custom and religion, a free press and free speech should not intrude. Never one to miss a curtain call and to leave while they're cheering, Wlomer dredged up the alleged wisdom of the 'ancient Greeks', whose sell-by date has long gone, ending his act with the

claim that "among the Greeks the wise imparted only to their pupils those truths which they did not think their fellow citizens were ready for".

My only contact with the ancient Greeks was when, during the meal break in a pre-war ghastly foundry job, I daily bought a fried sausage with fried onions between two thick slices of bread and all I ever asked of the ancient Greek who fried all of that was the correct price. The members of the M society were united in a common cause, and that was their own self-interest in relation to their own middle-class bureaucratic place within their society and the stability of their economic way of life, but then was it ever different.

Within the meeting Klein rose to maintain that the reading matter of we the Great Unwashed (of which I am one) needed, he



The Censors

argued, a vigilant censorship even though as a weak-kneed bleeding-heart liberal Klein pleaded for freedom for scholars and their philosophical discourses, but control should be in *force* over what the masses read so, my horny-handed companion, cancel your daily browse through the editorial column of *The Times* for these people argued, nay agreed, that it is the muck on your shovel that should determine your access to the printed, written or visual image.

If there is a slight mocking smile and a murmured 'but Arthur that was over two hundred years ago', I turn to dear old George Orwell, a true blue saint if ever there was one, and Tony would endorse that in that while George was absolutely opposed to censorship as curtailing human freedom in Orwell's review of Dali's autobiography Orwell, as I recall, attacked it as a disgusting book but, wrote Orwell, it is a work of art and as such should be published whereas, wrote Orwell, he would only censor those obscene postcards imported from the Middle East and that George is censorship which means the vice police, courts, arrests and prisons, with prison warders, George, with prison warders to stop those furtive peerings in the factory loos.

A distant associate of a distant time wrote of me in their circulated *belles-lettres* that I would sit in the White Hart pub surrounded by my 'sycophantic friends' while I held forth. God if only it were true for, as I try desperately impart light into those four closed minds, I accept it as a living demonstration of the futility of censorship. I am, to use correct medical usage, what is known as a crazy mixed up kid and therefore my views on any subject are of value and in the matter of absolute censorship I do not know for unless the freedom to communicate is absolute then there is censorship, but then in social groupings should the freedom be absolute for if my demand to communicate endangers the innocent welfare of others.

Within the arts bestiality follows on from nudity to simulated copulation, but now the arts will claim that they have a need to enact necrophilia as an art form for we have had the dead sheep and the dead human head and if you have the human corpse to act out the ego then why should the use of the corpse be the sole perquisite of the man in the blood-

stained white coat. I know that if two companions are walking alone then they practice censorship on their tongues for their companionship, true or false, is deemed more important than for the triumph of blurring out a worthless 'truth'. We move into groupings we, reluctantly or nay, are part of a social unified whole and therefore it would seem that we should impose on ourselves that degree of print, picture, literary discipline that we would desire for ourselves. Have I an answer? Nay, but I would see one small safeguard in a multiplicity of press, arts and the rest until censorship by the sheer weight of communication bilge kills censorship.

Prior to the European invasion the Germans were said to be planting anti-personnel foot mines and the explosive was contained in a cigar-size wooden box without a single piece of metal so they could not be detected by the unfortunate mine searchers. But just before the invasion we were given a short piece of crudely printed paper to tell us how to defuse these wooden mines if found and in large letters the paper was headed "This must not fall into the hands of the enemy". And how we laughed for we were young, witty and intelligent and told shaggy-dog jokes and we giggled at 'the fools in high office ... the Germans know how to defuse the wooden mines', but in the early carnage of invasion we witnessed that the Germans did know that we knew and in those early days they altered the wooden mine detonators and too many mine-sweeping RE engineers had a hand or foot blown off because of *they* knew that *we* knew.

Unlike you, comrade, I have no slick easy answer regarding censorship within a society, but I enjoy listening to gossip and slander and wait for the middle-class intelligentsia to demand that the government open more and more secret files, but this I know, every time an authority agrees to open a secret file all the meaty juicy bits will have already been salted away in another secret small back room and we chase shadows. Flood our world of human communications with more lies, slander, rubbish, truth and laughter for in that massive flow of mental bumph lies our salvation. 'Anything in the papers today or on television?' 'No, just the usual fucking rubbish'.

Arthur Moysé

## Not saluting the flag

Because the United States Constitution requires the separation of state and religion, there are no religious services in US public (i.e. state) schools. Instead, the hierarchy of the school is displayed by the daily ceremony of 'saluting the flag', in which pupils pledge allegiance to the Constitution.

Paradoxically, the recitation includes a religious reference, to 'One Nation Under God'. American readers over the age of 65 will not remember reciting this, because 'under God' was slipped in during the McCarthy terror, in the 1950s.

In 1998 MaryKait Durkee, a 15-year-old school pupil in San Diego, refused to salute the flag. She was defended by the American Civil Liberties Union and will not be penalised (but this does not apply to other refuseniks as the case was settled out of court).

In October she was given a 'Freethought Heroine' award by the Freedom from Religion Foundation. This is an extract from her acceptance speech, as reported in *The Freethinker*.

I have several problems with saluting the flag, or even standing for it. The biggest problem I have with the Pledge is the phrase 'under God'. I don't believe in God. Fallbrook High is a public school. And I think to have a phrase encouraging the belief in one benign god in a ritual carried out by students at a public school is inappropriate. I think it should be omitted.

I don't want to pledge my loyalty to the country I live in in an oath. That worked for Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, and Imperialistic Japan, but it won't work in America.

I am not comfortable stating a flat-out lie that there is liberty and justice for all in this country. I personally think there is only liberty and justice for the powerful and rich. If there were liberty and justice for all, the people who act, dress, think and look different would be an acceptable part of society instead of being ridiculed for not blending with the crowd.

I don't like the idea of worshipping a piece of cloth. A lot of people thought I should at



least stand in respect to the American flag, and it was argued that many Americans fought and died for the flag. But they fought to protect the Constitution and our freedom, not to keep

the flag waving. It just seems so trivial.

After making these conclusions, I couldn't do it any more. I couldn't just go along with something I so strongly disagreed with. I knew from the start that I could sit while everyone else stood and not be doing anything wrong. I didn't want to be disruptive. I didn't want a confrontation. But if I stood with everyone else it would contradict my principles and make me a weak person for going against what I believe is right.

I never questioned whether my decision not to stand was right or not. I have always known it was right for me. All I wanted throughout the spring and summer was to

have my rights respected.

Unfortunately my school does not encourage independent thought or actions. Other students rejected me for my resolve. I was continually told to 'Stand up or shut up'. Other students continually said the Pledge of Allegiance loudly when I walked by them between classes. In June my locker was covered in homemade stickers that said things like 'Respect', 'Stand up or shut up', and 'One nation under God'. Sadly, the Fallbrook High students followed the bad examples set by the school's administration.

On the other hand, a couple of true friends and my family supported me throughout the experience, and I received a great number of supportive and encouraging letters from all over the country, some of which came from your organisation.

I know that I am not alone in my opinions or in my conviction that the true meaning of patriotism is the defence of the Constitution and its guarantees of personal and intellectual freedom. And that is why it gives me great pleasure to accept the honour that you have bestowed upon me this evening. Thank you.

MaryKait Durkee

— ANARCHIST NOTEBOOK —

# Continuity and development



The next generation: will they applaud social change, or just be happy to be 'normal'?

The narrator of *The Cunning Man*, by the Canadian novelist Robertson Davies, explains how, after a childhood without religious indoctrination, he moved to a time of life when he went through "every sort of fare offered to the religious shopper, including the famed Orthodox liturgy" which impressed him most until "the priest produced a large yellow comb and arranged his hair and beard in mid-service".

And most of us know families where the religious belief of the parents ensures that the next generation is bored by the very notion of belief, as well as those where the conscientious avoidance of indoctrination in one generation is deplored by its offspring. Esther Freud wrote a novel *Hideous Kinky* "based on her childhood wanderings with her mother on the hippy trail", which has recently been adapted as a film. The theme was discussed by Natasha Walter under the title, 'Children of the revolution' in *The Independent* (25th January 1999). She notes how the time is right for the book and film, since "the children of rebellious '60s parents are grown up now, they might have children of their own, and they're thinking again about their parents' legacy". She cites a scrap of dialogue from the story where one little girl asks another, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" The reply is, "I want to be normal."

There is an echo here of the remark made by Mary Shelley when a friend asked what her young son would become, with such remarkable parents and grandparents. She replied that she hoped he would grow up to be like everyone else.

Natasha Walter observes that, "it's a complicated business, growing up with parents who are more rebellious than you are. Many

people of my generation grew up wondering if we could ever wholly measure up to our parents' sense of adventure and possibility."

But on the other hand, "it's just too much of a truism to say that the natural movement of the child of rebellious parents is to become besuited and conservative. Michael Portillo seemed to embody that truism in his recent television programme, where the Tory chauvinist returned to the land of his Communist, idealistic fathers." She thinks that, beyond the stereotypes, "a sense of continuity and development is surely both more useful and more accurate". And her own conclusion is worth pondering, just because it is not what the older generation would conclude itself. She believes that her parents' generation changed the world: "Perhaps they didn't change it in the ways they wanted to – they didn't ban the bomb, which was my own parents' over-riding concern. They didn't establish an anarchist Utopia, which was something my father was pretty keen on; or see women and men becoming equal in every way, which my mother would have liked. But their generation did change the world: they made it much more irreverent, less respectful of authority; they created a society that was more tolerant of drugs and sexual freedom, and eager for race and sex equality. They created a revolution in everyday life. But once they get over that feeling of inadequacy, the children of rebellious parents can feel a sense of optimism. They don't have to rebel in the same ways,

partly because some battles have now been won. And the fact that some battles are won makes them realise that nothing stands still, and that they can build on the changes that the previous generation wrought."

This is a very useful reflection, except for those believers in a final and decisive struggle that will simultaneously destroy both capitalism and the state. Anyone who is old has only to look back to those attitudes which were acceptable fifty years ago to see the extent of change in areas like race and sex, however much has still to be achieved. Ask any member of a racial or sexual minority.

All the same, it is sobering to think of all those issues that have dropped off the agenda. After the second world war, politicians of both major parties were committed to the use of the tax system and the social welfare machinery to redistribute income from the affluent to the poor. The worship of the market that took over British

politics after 1979 means that neither party has such an aim any more. I provided the evidence for this from a report by the Rowntree Foundation in this column in *Freedom* for 9th January 1999. A minor aspect of this huge change in assumptions about equality is its application to the world of work. There was a time when workers' control of industry was a social and political aim, seriously discussed among those seeking for non-capitalist alternatives. Today no-one talks seriously about *any* alternatives to capitalism. Our horizons have shrunk from collective change to personal relations. The ideology of the market has expanded to envelop every field of social organisation and the language of the market has changed our vocabulary.

That's another struggle we have to postpone so that another generation can pick it up.

Colin Ward

## The Facts of the Future?

What used to be called 'the politics of the personal' appears to be all the rage with New Labour. We're expected to shed a tear for Mo Mowlem when she tells us that she's "haunted by memories of her alcoholic father". And just as we're expected to be morbidly concerned with their personal trivia – from Mowlem's wigs to Mandelson's armchair – so they presume a mandate to legislate our personal lives. Jack Straw thinks that single mothers should be forced to live in hostels, just as 'fallen women' were detained in asylums in Victorian times, and that they should be coerced into giving up their children for adoption by the infertile middle classes. These middle classes act as both moral talismans and aspirational role models in the Blairite promised land. We are either i) all middle class now, or ii) desperate to transform our lives to become so.

Behind the "awful communitarian rhetoric" (as Samuel Brittan has it) stands a moralistic authoritarianism which mirrors that practised by Blair's feted Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore.

In Bernard de Mandeville's *The Fable of the Bees* (quoted in Marx's *Kapital*, volume 1) we are told that "those that get their living by their daily labour ... have nothing to stir them up to be serviceable but their wants, which it is prudence to relieve, but folly to cure". The Blairite project is precisely about the pursuit of this end: the restructuring of the welfare state to ensure that it exists as an effective regulator of poverty, and hence ensure the maintenance of the proper degree of poverty as a drag-anchor on wages (sorry, inflation, as the Bank of England forever reminds us). New Labour's economic policies with regard to wealth distribution and job creation were set out by Peter Mandelson and Roger Liddle in their book

*The Blair Revolution*: "There is, of course, nothing difficult in principle about creating jobs which the least skilled could fill ... but the cost of such deliberate job creation would need to be met either by consumers through higher prices or by citizens through higher taxes. If, as a result of these extra burdens, there is pressure for higher wages and employers agree to pay them, then costs will rise, competitiveness will suffer and the net gain in employment in the long run may be small. Roughly the same logic applies to the scheme for ... reductions in working hours ... Only if pay falls in line with shorter working time can the number of jobs be increased without rise."

In less weasel words, the only solution to unemployment is cheaper labour – if the cost of labour is to fall, a reserve army of labour needs to be maintained, hence the emphasis on welfare-to-work, the transformation of a purported underclass into a revolving supply of low paid workers, passed off by Blair as "the sense of fairness and a balance between rights and duties. The basis of this modern civil society is an ethic of mutual responsibility or duty. It is something for something. A society where we play by the rules. You only take out if you put in. That's the bargain."

In 1349 the Statute of Labourers – the first of the English Poor Laws – was passed, which noted that "some will not serve unless they may receive excessive wages, and some rather willing to be in idleness than by labour to get their living". The statute ordered that "every man and woman of our realm of England – not living in merchandise, nor exercising any craft, nor having of his own whereof he may live, nor proper land ... and not serving any other ... shall be bounden to serve him which so shall him require". New Labour, it seems, is not so new after all!

Earlier this year the Independent Inquiry into Inequalities in Health, chaired by Sir Donald Acheson, published its report. Amongst its conclusions was the following: "Since 1980, although health and expectation of life have generally improved, the social gradients of many indicators of health have deteriorated or at best remained unchanged. Although this period was also marked by substantial economic growth, income differentials widened to a degree not seen since the Second World War. For the poorest tenth average income increased by only 10% (before housing costs) or fell by 8% (after housing costs). The differences in income between those on means-tested benefits and those with other sources of income are a major determinant of income inequality in the United Kingdom."

The report went on to contend that "without a shift of resources to the less well-off, both in and out of work, little will be accomplished in terms of a reduction of health inequalities".

The Acheson Report was commissioned by New Labour in July 1997. It sought to address what Acheson calls "fundamentally a matter of social justice, namely that although the last twenty years have brought a marked increase in prosperity and substantial reductions in mortality to the people of this country as a whole, the gap in health between those at the top and bottom of the social scale has widened". When the report was published in September 1988, New Labour calculatedly ignored it.

So how is it that Labour can commit themselves in practice to a project clearly aimed at maintaining inequality in the interests of capital, while proclaiming that "we're all middle class now"? Simply because, for the present, the only concerns which count politically are those of the anxious middle

classes. The working class, as historical subject, as a class for itself, has been driven from the arena. It was Charles Booth who observed that "our modern system of industry will not work without some unemployed margin, some reserve of labour". Social democracy exists to negotiate the extent and conditions of that reserve. Without fear of the organised strength of the working class, capitalism can dispense with the negotiations. The defeats of the '80s, the collapse of independent working class organisation, the legacy of Stalinism and Labourism have given the likes of Blair free rein. Those of us who profess to believe in Rudolf Rocker's injunction "to reconstruct the economic life of the peoples from the ground up and build it up in the spirit of Socialism", to free man "from the curse of economic exploitation and political and social enslavement", those of us who would claim to adhere to this have a clear choice. Either we exile ourselves to the margins, with empty rhetoric about 'the end of civilisation' and indulgent waffle about irrationalism, or we recommit ourselves to building an anarchist movement that creates, as Bakunin put it, "not only the ideas but the facts of the future itself".

If we choose the former we have agreed to complicity in Blair's project of capitalist restructuring, at our expense. If we choose the latter we have the task of rebuilding working class self-organisation from scratch in every workplace, on every estate, whether over youth club closures, benefits, work-for-welfare, rent increases, evictions – any and every sphere of working class life has to be contested.

Irrationalism is the easy option. If we want politics to be about more than Mo Mowlem's wigs then we have to force our way back onto the agenda. Anything less is game-playing.

Nick S.

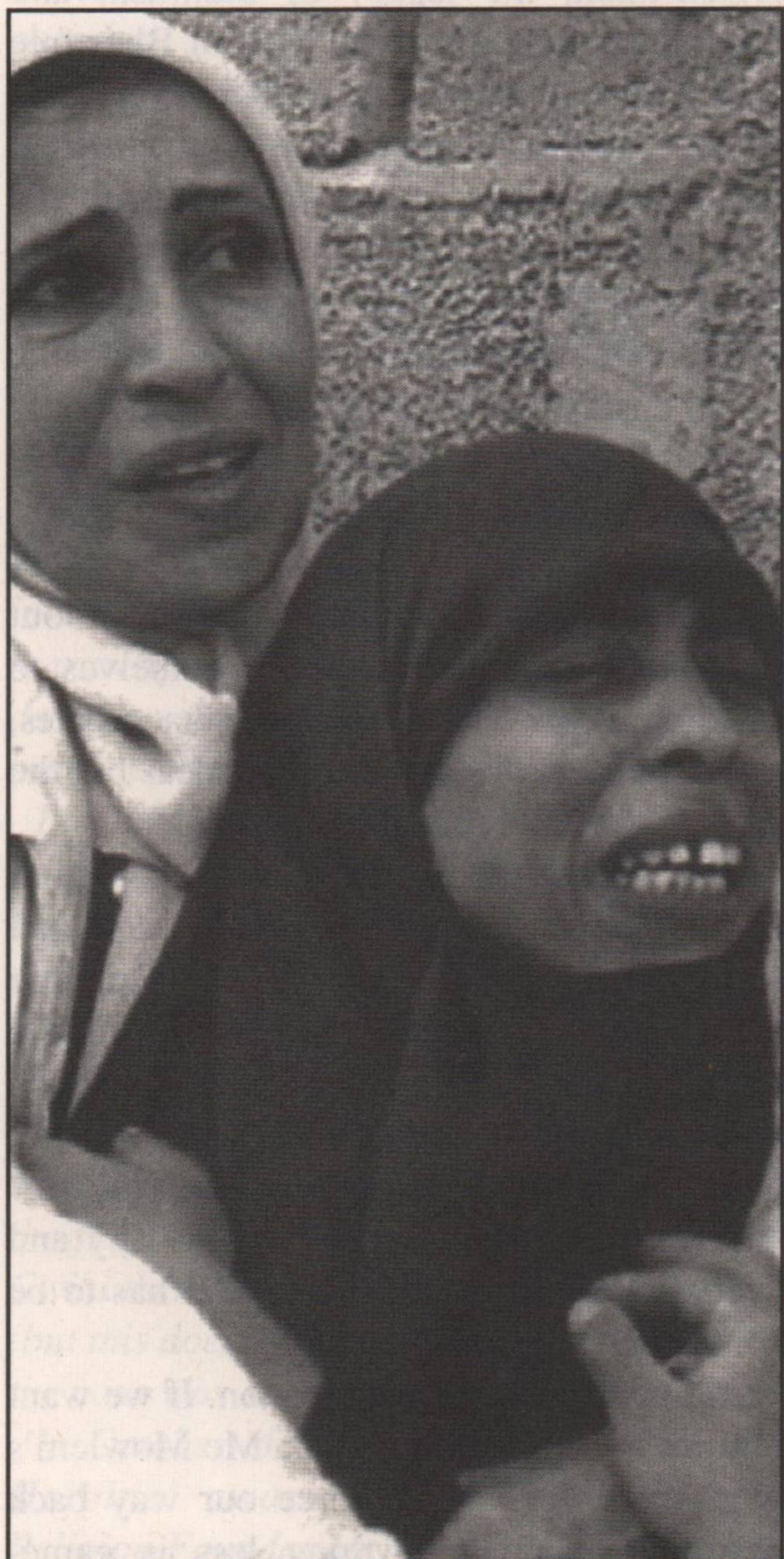
# Algeria: a society in a state of collapse

Since 1992, there has been civil war in Algeria and there are today more and more massacres. The insecurities and numerous killings have provoked population movements and thousands of impoverished families have been forced onto the roads. The state makes little effort to come to the aid of a distressed population which is growing in size. Indeed it only shows itself in the form of the forces of law and order when discontent threatens to boil over. The lid is quickly put back on the kettle by a police and military presence and a flow of promises which are rarely kept. If it is the refugees who suffer the most, the whole panoply of social gains is on the wane under the combined effect of the war and the political-financial mafia which is threatening the Algerian economy and the great majority of the people.

Education, once considered one of the basic essentials is threatened with a loss of 400,000 pupils each year and any balanced scholastic programme has broken down. It has simply become an exclusion factory to which must be added as from last July the problem of the total arabisation of the country. Many pupils who have difficulty in accepting this diet find themselves quickly ejected from the school system. This makes worse a situation which is already catastrophic. Out of every hundred children in primary education in 1996 only nine would reach the level of the Baccalaureat and only five would make it to degree level, even then not being assured of gainful employment.

Illiteracy has reached dramatic proportions with more than 7,000,000 Algerians affected. In addition to this, with living conditions getting worse at an accelerating rate, many families are no longer in a position to care for their children's education. The situation with regard to girls is particularly bad.

Since 1996 the fall in petrol prices and the liberalisation of overseas trade have given rise to budgetary restrictions which have led to lack of basic foodstuffs which has exacerbated the discontent of the majority of Algerians. The IMF and the World Bank arrived in 1987. The makers of the 'liberal revolution' were to establish economic policies and then impose a triennial adjustment programme



Mourning the victims of a massacre at Sidi Hammed, near Algiers.

starting in 1995. It is not by mere chance that the current crisis began a year later.

## A population living in poverty

In 1998 out of a population of 29,000,000 there were nearly 2,800,000 unemployed which represented nearly 30% of the working population. This rise particularly affects women.

Misery is on the increase and begging is everywhere both in the cities and in small villages – something which hasn't been seen for some thirty years. Currently those without shelter, sometimes whole families, who are affected by the crisis or are forced to leave those regions where their security cannot be guaranteed, are living on the pavements of the high streets day and night. In the construction sector those 200,000 who are employed have been without salaries for months and have now, in the main, been laid off. The spiralling devaluation of the local currency added to high inflation and the disappearance of subsidies for basic commodities have produced a wage freeze since 1990. This has resulted in a very significant drop in living standards for the great majority of the people and even the middle classes have been affected.

Access to health care has deteriorated. Vaccine programmes have regressed. The rate of infant mortality is on the increase, diarrhoea and acute respiratory illnesses are the two greatest contributors to child fatalities. The failure of the vaccination programme lies at the root of smallpox and diphtheria epidemics usually catered for by such a programme and at the same time the state was importing scanners for university hospitals! Tuberculosis is also showing worrying signs of a comeback. Public hospital regimes have been subjected to a budgetary regime and, rife with corruption, can no longer cater for the demand. Lacking the means to do anything about it the vast majority have given up any self-help care and the condition of those who are afflicted by major illnesses has become more and more critical. Hospitalisations aim to cater only for those emergency cases where treatment is not so expensive. Those children who turn up can no longer afford the medication although this has not prevented the reappearance of a mafia which has taken over the traditional state's role of importing such goods. With all these problems taken together life expectancy has fallen to 67 years if we don't take into account the deaths caused by the civil war.

On the other side of the coin those lucrative sectors of the economy where practices and tariffs are not state controlled are booming. These sectors are only accessible to the rich. These distortions in the health sector and the increasing number of lay offs has also hit hard the viability of the social security sector.

The World Bank has, since 1986, been calling for cuts in social security payments. Pensioners have been the first victims of these reforms. In July 1998 three quarters of pensioners were not receiving their pension. Financial insecurity is on the increase as was shown by the demand for food aid during the month of Ramadan.

1,000,000 unemployed, 80% of which have families to support, receive social security at a rate of 1000 dinars (£310) per month which does not allow for survival. In addition, in 1998, 40% of the population or some 10,000,000 were living below the poverty level.

With regard to housing the situation is just as dramatic. The crisis in the construction industry saw a fall in the number of dwellings built. 300,000 new homes are



A distraught woman is restrained by friends and relatives in an Algerian village after members of her family were slaughtered in an atrocity.

needed every year whilst the reality is that scarcely 80,000 are built and the number of occupants per household is 7.4 – one of the highest ratios in the world.

The environment and urbanisation are also affected. Water distribution is rationed because of a lack of hydraulic equipment and is available one day in three in the best of cases. This makes living conditions considerably more difficult especially for those with the least resources. Sanitary networks are in a state of disrepair which has produced epidemics of diseases which are transmitted by water sources such as typhoid and there is an increase of cholera.

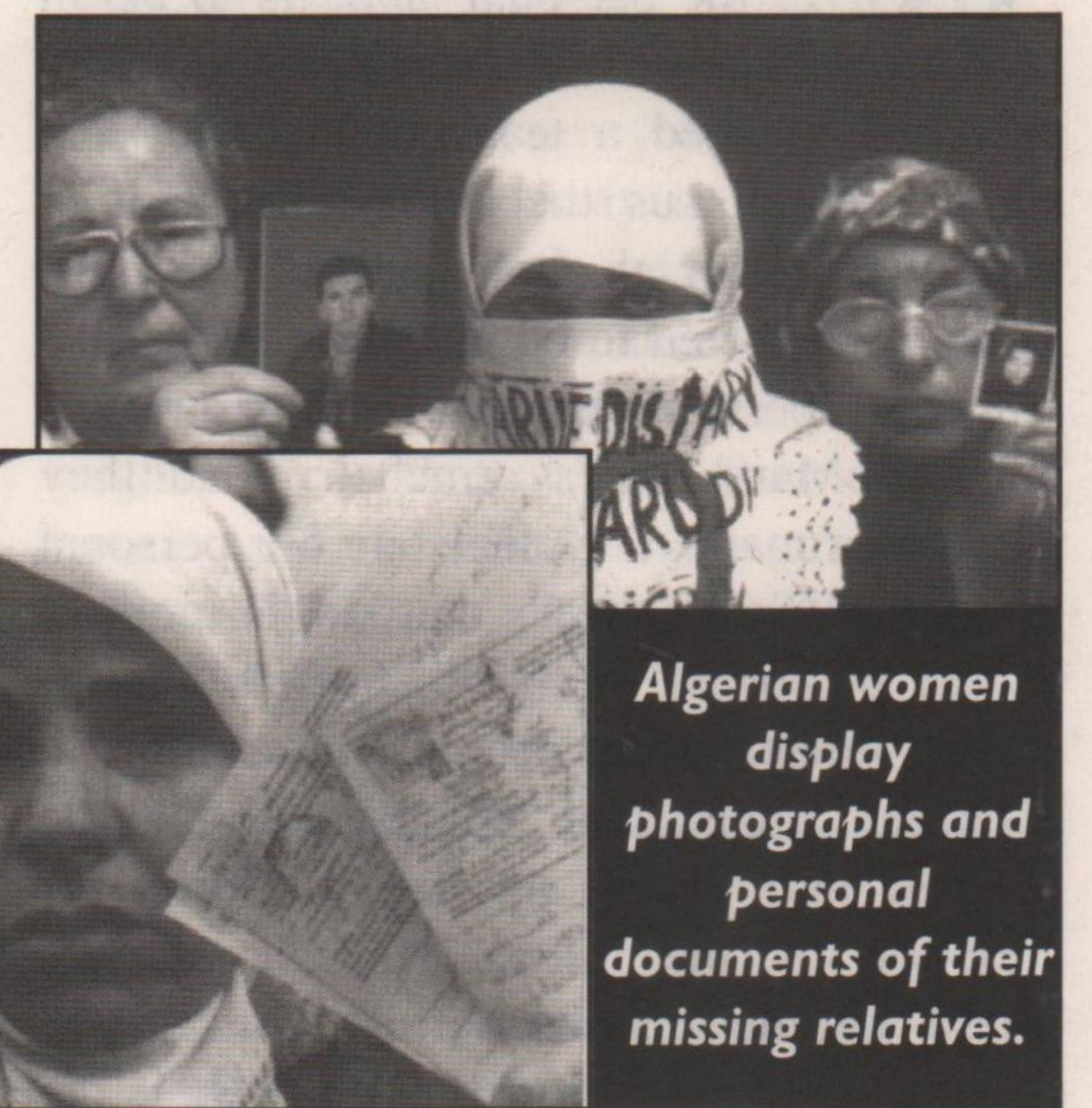
## The unions and media muzzled

In both the private and public sectors the rise in the number of job losses and the fall in the number of new jobs has weakened the union movement. Even more than the UGTA (General Union of Algerian Workers) the main union has found itself linked to the state and incorporated into 'elected' assemblies in the two parliamentary houses and local collectives. The unions have to face up to a situation where no new blood is coming in, where repression or subordination is the reality and the pluralism promised by the new constitution is still embryonic.

Media and other information outlets are under state control. The main national newspapers such as *El Watan*, *La Tribune* or *Le Soir d'Algérie* have as their headquarters the main press centre in Algiers which is under the control and management of the national security services (DGSM). The latter's role is to identify journalists who show sympathy for the legal opposition. Self censure has become the norm in particular for all those aspects regarding security. The whole situation is unstable with the government changing directives regularly, depending on the political climate. The result of this pressure is a colourless press which does not reflect the plurality of society and limits itself to reproducing official positions. Radio and television are in the same position and in order to hide the real position in the country – both its failures and its security – the government has enslaved information. Murdered or disappeared journalists, systematic censorship, police surveillance, economic pressure – all is acceptable.

## Forced Arabisation

The complete arabisation of the country has become a reality since last July. Resistance to this policy is centred on Kabyle. After a free school year was organised by the Berber Cultural Movement throughout Kabyle, the state conceded a High Commission to the Amazighite area. However, essential demands such as the teaching of the Berber language, constitutional recognition, admission into various administrations were not conceded. Since the assassination of Matoub [a Berber activist – translator] the disdain of the government is even more evident and the way it has turned its back on the region since that event has distanced it



Algerian women display photographs and personal documents of their missing relatives.

even more from the Kabyle region. As for the Berber language the question now is simply one of survival. The area in which it is spoken is receding fast with even the region of Kabyle being affected. The life expectancy for the language is put at a further fifty years. The attitude of the state is that the period of protest has blown itself out and all demands for further autonomy are to be resisted. The non-violent character of the Kabilian struggle up to now threatens to turn to a more violent phase.

The remnants of bureaucratic power and the emergence of an economic-political mafia are at the root of an economy of the Bazaar where monies released by the IMF have served to grease the wheels of corruption. What can Algeria hope to gain from a government whose rule is to enrich itself first before allowing the overall population to survive?

Michel Sahuc  
(translated from *Le Monde Libertaire*,  
27th January 1999)

## The Contradiction of Kropotkin

Dear Freedom,

Well, I have, on the advice of the editor, read Kropotkin's *Conquest of Bread*. I find that it contains one of the best cases for anarchy and freedom from the state that can be found. The chapter on 'Free Agreement' is excellent, although similar to four pages in the pamphlet *Anarchist Communism* which are better. It is obvious that here, in conquest, the trend of finding evidence for anarchy in the world around us was first taken up in a big way, as it is now expertly continued by Colin Ward. It's just a pity that Kropotkin's anarchism is cancelled out by his communism.

The part I have in mind, as an example of the contradiction, is on page 90, where Kropotkin asks: "Who, then, can appropriate for himself the tiniest plot of ground in such a city, without committing a flagrant injustice?" Compare this with the debate between the individualist and communist anarchists in Mackay's *The Anarchists*: "Would you, in this system of society which you call 'free communism', prevent individuals from exchanging their labour amongst themselves by means of their own medium of exchange? And further: Would you prevent them from occupying the land for their own personal use?" Kropotkin has already said that the land should not be occupied for personal use, because we cannot justly appropriate 'for ourselves' the tiniest plot of land - we should occupy the land for others; the farms go, not to their workers' but to the commune to be controlled by those who want to enjoy the product. In Mackay's debate the communist feels trapped: "If he answered 'Yes' he admitted that society had the right of control over the individual and overthrow the autonomy of the individual which he had always zealously defended; if, on the other hand, he answered 'No' he admitted the right of private property which he had just denied so emphatically." Kropotkin has obviously proven that society has the right to control the individual. He may be a democrat, but he is no anarchist so long as he remains a communist.

If we are in favour of workers' control, and lots of communists pretend to be, then

## Silly Anniversaries

Dear Freedom,

"If only", NW writes ruefully, "if only the English revolution could have beheaded not just one or two but all of its opponents and betrayers" (in 'Silly Anniversaries', 6th February).

"Instead of worshipping anniversaries", he goes on, "we should be working towards serious deeds in the future". The precise nature of those deeds is not revealed, but evidently they may include the execution of people we disapprove of. 'We' no doubt means NW and those who agree with him.

There is nothing unusual or strange, of course, about thinking that you have every right, if you have the power, to get rid of anybody you wish. Governments have always thought along those lines and acted accordingly.

What I can't quite understand is what NW thinks his perfectly normal and respectable views have to do with anarchism, which I always thought was something rather outlandish and subversive. Something to do with freedom.

Francis Ellingham

obviously it is up to workers to decide how to dispose of that product, and to control production. Well, obviously, then, interference in how workers produce is a violation of workers' control. Thus workers' control necessitates free enterprise. And suppose one worker decided to promise something for another worker if the other did something for him (or her) shouldn't these workers be able to form such an agreement? Wouldn't interference in their ability to do so undermine workers' control? So if I promised to supply the baker with a sack of the wheat I had grown, in exchange for some bread, any interference in this free agreement would be a violation of both workers' control and in freedom of association. In this crude barter system it might be difficult to find a baker who wants my wheat. Hence it would make more sense to exchange my wheat with anybody with a more generally wanted commodity, which I could then give to any baker I chose. Thus a medium of exchange will become necessary born from the simple act of voluntary co-operation described earlier. So, contrary to Kropotkin's claim, anybody who holds workers' control and liberty as moral ideals must recognise private property and the free market as a means of furthering these ideals.

Richard Garner

## Religious Intolerance

Dear Freedom,

There were a couple of minor historical errors in the article on Religious Intolerance (23rd January).

The last execution in this country for heresy didn't occur under the Roman Catholic Queen Mary I in 1558. In England, two unitarians - Bartholomew Legate in London and Edward Wightman in Lichfield - were burnt alive for heresy under the Protestant King James I in 1612; in Scotland, a young deist - Thomas Aikenhead in Edinburgh - was hanged for heresy under the Protestant King William III in 1697. Heresy remained a capital offence in England until 1677 and in Ireland until 1696, and blasphemy remained a capital offence in Scotland until 1813.

The imprisonment of George Jacob Holyoake in Gloucester in 1842 was not really for atheism - although his account of it was entitled *The History of the Last Trial by Jury for Atheism in England* (1850) - since he was actually prosecuted and convicted under the common law of blasphemy, not so much for his opinions as for his manner of expressing them. The last imprisonment under this law was that of J.W. Gott in London in 1921. It was a criminal offence under an Act of 1698 for people who had been brought up as Christians to deny the basic doctrines of Christianity, but this law seems never to have been used, and it was repealed in 1967.

As for the hope that the Census of 2001, by including a question about religion for the first time for 150 years, will reveal the number of atheists, agnostics and other unbelievers in the population, this will depend on how the question is phrased to allow for negative answers and on how many non-religious people answer it honestly or answer it at all. Anarchists and other conscientious objectors who refuse to complete Census forms will of course not be counted.

NW

## Remembering Mary Canipa

Dear Freedom,

I am somewhat surprised that there has not been a spate of letters regarding Mary Canipa who died fairly recently. Perhaps all the people who knew her have also died.

I first met Mary when she and her companion, Jack Robinson, were working in the Freedom Bookshop in Fulham. Some years later she and Jack moved to Boxford in Suffolk. I had moved out of London, and during this period lived in various villages near Colchester and, some time later, in Colchester itself.

It was during this period when, for some years, I helped out with *Freedom* in a small way (old style members of the SPGB said I was an anarchist, and many anarchists said I was still an SPGB!) that I got to know Mary and Jack very well. I saw her at least twice a month.

Mary would always welcome me with tea and cakes. Jack Robinson frequently looked in on me, generally on a Saturday. After Jack died, and I still had a car (I gave it up eight years ago), I would still go up to Boxford to see Mary.

Mary gave an enormous amount of her time and energy (of which she had plenty) to *Freedom* and Freedom Press. I was quite sad when, some years ago, I heard that she was ill and had returned to her birthplace, the Isle of Man.

I remember her not necessarily for her political (or should I say anti-political) views, or her activities for Amnesty International, but for her kindness.

Mary was quite tiny, but she had a 'big heart' and that was more than enough.

Peter E. Newell

[Mary Canipa died last October and our obituary appeared in our issue dated 14th November 1998. We understand an illustrated tribute is being prepared by some of her friends. She will not be forgotten - Editors.]

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The next issue of Freedom will be dated 6th March, and the last day for copy intended for this issue will be first post on Thursday 25th February.

If possible contributions should be typed using double-spacing between lines, or can be sent as text files on disc (please include a print-out too).

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Total = £130

## Riding the Wind

Dear Freedom,

In the review of my book *Riding the Wind: a new philosophy for a new era* (Cassell) by 'NW' in *Freedom* (23rd January) a serious error crept in. I am calling my philosophy liberation ecology and not 'libertarian ecology' as printed. This is to avoid any association with right-wing libertarians and to emphasise the need to liberate individuals, society and nature from their existing burdens so that they can realise together their full potential.

Peter Marshall



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Number 38

**1968**

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**The London  
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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 1999 —

**19th February** Symposium on 'The New Deal'

**26th February** Transgressing the Boundaries:  
Anarchy and the Psychology of Revolution  
(speaker Steve Ash)

**5th March** Ghetto politics (speaker John Griffin)

**12th March** Symposium on Anarchism and Spirituality

**19th March** General discussion

Anyone interested in giving a talk or leading a discussion, please contact Peter Neville at the meetings (or telephone him on 0181-847 0203) giving your subject and prospective dates and we will do our best to accommodate. **Peter Neville for London Anarchist Forum**

**Revolutionary Socialist Network  
ONE-DAY SOCIALIST CONFERENCE**

**Saturday 20th February**

**The Great Western Staff Association  
Club, Station Approach, Bristol**

*Conference programme*

- 10.30am Registration & coffee
- 11.00am Trade Unions in Europe
- 1.00pm Lunch (available from the Club)
- 2.00pm Current political activity/situation
- 3.15pm Mental health
- 4.45pm Tea
- 5.15pm Future organisations

Fee £3 (£1.50 unwaged)

Bookings to Glen Burrows, 1 Blake Place,  
Bridgwater, Somerset TA6 5AU.

If you require an accommodation list or wish for child care to be arranged, please contact Tim Price on 01392 431352.

**Red Rambles**

A programme of guided walks for Libertarians, Socialists, Greens, Anarchists and others. Bring food, drink, suitable footwear and waterproof clothing. A rota of cars will be used - full cars will travel to walks.

**Sunday 28th February**

Lost Village walk (Ingarby, Quenby, Lowesby, Cold Newton). Meet at the John Storer House car park, Wards End, Loughborough, at 10am. Walk leader Ray.

**Sunday 28th March**

Charnwood Lodge circular walk (Copt Oak, Charnwood Lodge, Mount St Bernards). Meet at the John Storer House car park, Wards End, Loughborough, at 10am. Walk leader Ray.

**Sunday 25th April**

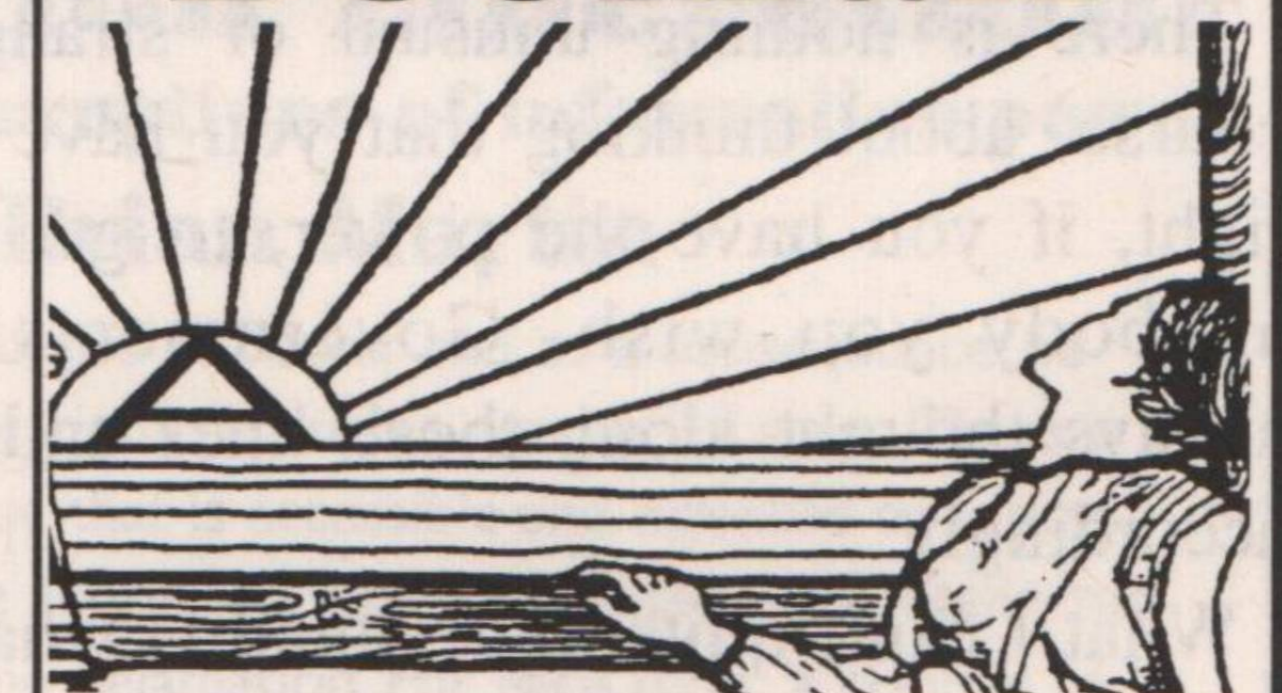
Derbyshire walk (Hartington and Upper Dove). Meet at Hartington village duck pond at 11am. Walk leader John.

**Sunday 30th May**

Mount St Bernards, Blackbrook. Meet at the John Storer House car park, Wards End, Loughborough, at 10am. Walk leader Ray.

**Telephone Vivienne for more info:  
01509 230131 or 01509 236028**

**Fourth Annual Bay Area  
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**on 27th March 1999 from  
10am to 6pm**

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