

New Union Laws: Trade Unions 0, Employers 1

During the twenty years of Tory rule many forms of industrial action were made illegal. Unions and workers who tried to take action were taken to court and fined. Unions lost most of the limited legal rights they had obtained and hundreds of thousands of workers lost any right to take their employer to an industrial tribunal because of unfair dismissal.

Since Labour was elected in May 1997 trade unions, who provide the bulk of the party's funds (and as the recent election for the Labour leader in the Welsh Assembly shows provide the means by which the leadership can ensure its views are pushed forward) have eagerly awaited the government's proposals for employment law reform which have now been published.

Union leaders, keen not to rock the boat, are trying to hide their bitter disappointment. John Monks TUC general secretary has said that the new law "does not go as far as unions would like", TGWU leader

Bill Morris says it "represents a missed opportunity" while public services union UNISON's head, Rodney Bickerstaffe, expressed "disappointment that the government leaned more towards the employers' point of view" in its new law. This is putting it mildly to say the least. Tony Blair has boasted that once the Fairness at Work Bill becomes law British workers will still have the lowest level of legal protection of any other European Community state.

Labour's new law means, for example, that thousands of workers will still be denied the right to take a claim for unfair dismissal, not because they have not been treated unfairly by their employer but just because they have been in work for less than twelve months as employment protection will only start once you have been in a job for over a year. As John Edmonds, general secretary of the GMB trade union, says "all employees should be entitled to employment rights from the

first minute of the first day". Fat chance with this government!

Even if you are able to take your employer to an Industrial Tribunal for unfair dismissal the most in compensation you will receive for losing your job is £50,000 and you have no right to get your job back if your boss is found to have unfairly dismissed you.

The law will allow unions to try to obtain recognition from employers, but only if they already have 10% of a work force in membership (not easy with hostile employers) and gain 40% of the votes of all those eligible to vote (not just a majority of those who actually vote). No government (including Blair's) would ever be elected on this basis.

Workplaces with less than twenty employees, which often have the worse industrial relations, will be exempted from the law, meaning unions will have no right to represent their employees. The Bill also allows employers to start procedures to de-recognise unions (for example if the size of a workplace falls below 21 people)! So rather than increasing union membership it could actually result in it falling.

Workers wanting to take industrial action will still face massive legal hurdles. Blair has said that "the days of strikes without ballots, mass picketing, closed shops and secondary picketing are over".

Behind the brave faces of the union bosses is the reality that this is a government that listens to business rather than trade unions. Business chiefs like Lord Sainsbury hold government posts or head task forces.

Labour's love affair with business and enterprise, though, is not shared by the

(continued on page 5)



A joint union demonstration against low pay.

anarchist fortnightly Freedom

Vol. 60 No. 5

6th March 1999

50p

Census censured



Every single person in the country has to be listed and categorised in the census.

A census can be a dangerous thing. When King David held one in Israel, three thousand years ago, the result was that God inflicted a plague on the people and threatened air-strikes against Jerusalem. When Caesar Augustus held one in Judaea, two thousand years ago, the result was that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, with everything that followed.

What happens nowadays is that every ten years thousands of civil servants and social scientists make a living from producing and circulating and collecting and analysing millions of forms, at great expense and to little effect, and a few conscientious anarchists and opportunistic tax-dodgers get fined for refusing to conform. But the census still causes problems.

In Britain there has been one every ten years since 1801 (with the exception of 1941), and the next one is due in 2001. According to the relevant law, every single person in the country has to be listed and

categorised, under penalty of criminal prosecution. Most of the information which the state extracts from its subjects in this crude and clumsy way is unobjectionable enough, though almost all of it could have been obtained more cheaply and efficiently by modern sampling methods, but some is objectionable.

Take religion. The 1851 census included a question about religious affiliation, causing great controversy, and it is proposed to include a similar question in 2001. The idea is to discover the true extent and distribution of the various denominations in our increasingly multicredal society, with a view to taking appropriate official decisions about education, welfare, culture and so on.

The problems are how the question should be phrased and how it will be answered. There is an obvious difficulty with vocabulary. If it is an open question, people with the same belief may identify themselves in half-a-dozen different ways, and if it is a

multiple-choice question, they may be faced with half-a-dozen equally appropriate boxes to tick. There is also the problem of the growing number of people who have no religion; they may call themselves any of half-a-dozen things, or they may say just 'None'.

There is a more serious difficulty with inertia. When questions about religion are asked in the armed forces, hospitals and prisons, most people answer according to family background rather than personal belief. The result is that about 60% of the population are identified as 'Church of England', although only about 6% actually belong to it. Most people who are identified as 'Roman Catholic' are lapsed; the result is that the 12% of the population who seem to belong to an organisation opposing contraception and abortion actually practise both. And most people who are identified as 'Jewish' don't observe Judaism at all.

The main pressure to repeat the religious question in 2001 comes from Islamic pressure groups. Muslims complain that they aren't officially recognised as a proper denomination and aren't protected from discrimination under the Race Relations laws. One of their arguments is that there are two or three million Muslims in the country, although public opinion surveys suggest that there are fewer than one million. It is possible to say quite safely that most of the people who will call themselves Muslim in 2001 never attend a mosque or follow any rule of Islam, and that the figures will therefore be quite misleading.

Another awkward problem is race. This isn't meant to matter any more, in an age of political correctness, but it still does. The old arguments about whether the collective characteristics which were once called 'racial' are inherited in our biological genes or inculcated by our social environment now seem irrelevant, and the very words *racial* and *race* are increasingly replaced by the more neutral terms *ethnic* and *ethnic group*, but the twin habits of solidarity within one's own human group and hostility to other human groups are as powerful as ever in social and political affairs.

The case of Stephen Lawrence, the Black victim of a White gang six years ago, is only the most salient example of the way racial issues continue to dominate not just the media but many areas of social, political, economic and cultural concern. Race, however it is defined or perceived, is still a crucial factor in the private and public life of many if not most people.

But what is meant by 'race' or 'ethnic group'? The distinguishing feature of Stephen Lawrence was not his nationality or language or religion or culture, but his skin colour. Yet the distinguishing feature of many other so-called ethnic groups is not skin colour at all, but nationality or language or religion or culture – or caste or tribe or rank. See the areas of ethnic atrocities all over the world – including Britain.

Take the treatment of race in our census. There was for a long time pressure for the inclusion of questions about 'race'. The idea is to discover the true extent and distribution of the various ethnic groups in our increasingly multiracial society, with a view to taking appropriate official decisions about education, welfare, culture and so on. They began by including a question about country of origin, but that didn't reveal much, so they decided to include a question which was more direct but more confusing.

Thus the 1991 census offered ten categories (percentages in brackets) – 'White' (94.5), 'Black-Caribbean' (0.9), 'Black-African' (0.4), 'Other Black' (0.3), 'Indian' (1.5), 'Pakistani' (0.9), 'Bangladeshi' (0.3), 'Chinese' (0.3), 'Other Asian' (0.4), and 'Other' (0.5). (It should be noted that nearly 3% of the population didn't answer this question properly or at all.) Some of these are based on skin colour, others on national or geographical origin, and others on a combination of the two.

Now it is proposed that the 2001 census should include the category of 'Irish', which raises a multitude of questions. How is this to be chosen? By nationality or descent, by religion or accent, by surname or appearance, by taste in drink or allegiance in sport, or just by self-selection? What about people who have both Irish and non-Irish ancestors? Anyway, what about 'Scottish' and 'Welsh', or indeed 'English' or 'British'?

One of the main groups who tend to oppose such questions are Jews, for obvious reasons, since they have previously ended in discrimination or extermination. Whether under the heading of religion or of race, many people of Jewish or part-Jewish descent resist being categorised as 'Jewish'. The same is true of people of Black-Caribbean descent, and is beginning to be true of people of Asian and/or Muslim descent. Anyway one of the largest groups will soon be those of mixed race. After all, if we are going to be strictly accurate, we are all of mixed race – or, if we go back far enough, we are all descended from ape-like creatures in East Africa.

What is the anarchist answer to all this? Most of the nineteen out of twenty people in Britain who are considered to be 'White' (what E.M. Forster called 'Pinko-Grey'), as well as the one in twenty who are not, know perfectly well that different skin colour may be interesting (attractive or unattractive or indifferent, according to taste), but is actually irrelevant to any important decision. The same is true of any other racial or national or religious or other characteristic.

Right-wing people have always tended to overplay racial and religious issues; left-wing people have always tended to underplay them. The only proper attitude is to accept that they exist but to insist that they are not what matter about people. Faced with questions about religion, most of us should answer None; faced with questions about race, most of us should answer Human: that is, if we answer such questions at all.

Winter Book Sale



Ethel and Lavinia were beginning to suspect that Miss Haddock's lift didn't reach the first floor...

In a follow-up to the sale announced in our 23rd January issue, and which was extremely popular, we are now offering the following titles, of which we have reasonable stocks, again at half-price or below. As before, where postage is payable please calculate this on the original price (in brackets).

Bad Girls and Dirty Pictures: the challenge to reclaim feminism* edited by Alison Assiter and Avedon Carol, Pluto Press. A stimulating anthology of anti-censorship, pro-sex writings by women from a wide range of backgrounds who are often denied the chance to air their own views on the anti-sex/anti-pornography campaigns that rumble on constantly among many women in the mainstream feminist movement. The contributors may be heterosexual or lesbian, workers in the sex industry or academics, or writers – what they all have in common is the conviction that women are entitled to their own individual sexual identity, fantasies, investigation and experimentation just as men are, and that sexual puritans, conservative moralists and the state have no business

poking their noses into people's sexuality.

This, of course, is an essential tenet of anarchism and the contention of this strongly anarchist-flavoured book is that such people don't even speak for most feminists, let alone for most women, and that the anti-porn lobby is, to quote the title of one chapter, "misguided, dangerous and wrong". In another chapter Alison King's thorough and balanced examination of the studies of the effects of pornography shows that no causal link with violence – one of their pet theories – has been shown. If anything, the levels of violence in people watching or reading pornography may actually be decreased, and more work is needed to find out just what real effects it might have.

The sexuality of children, including sexual abuse and the hypocrisy and manipulation of adults is admirably set out by Nettie Pollard in 'The Small Matter of Children' (more detail on this being available in parts of Steve Cullen's *Children in Society*,* Freedom Press, £1.20), and many feminists' fear of porn is addressed by Claudia, whose astute social observation and eloquent, incisive style will be recognised by those who have read her other anarchist/feminist writings. Tuppy Owens gives, as always, an amusing personal account of her life and activities in 'Sex on My Mind'.

Other chapters put the record straight on the so-called 'snuff' films myth, or outline the activities and experiences of Feminists Against Censorship, or explain, for those who've not yet grasped it, that feminists should not be campaigning against sex but against sexism. It may appear that these days sex information/entertainment is increasing, but so are calls for censorship of the press, television, public speech and the Internet. An engrossing and highly instructive read, well primed with a 17-page introduction and reinforced by notes and references, a reading list and an index. 186 pages, £4.00 (previously £11.99).

The Social Significance of Modern Drama by Emma Goldman, Applause Theatre Book Publishers. When I first came across this book I had never heard of it, and neither had many people I've asked about it since. And although I have heard of most of the playwrights I have only seen one or two of the plays. At first sight it seems an odd book for Goldman to have written – indeed its origin in 1914 was as a series of lectures she gave in New York, and they might never have seen the light of day had "an adoring young stenographer" not been in the audience and presented the bemused Emma with a transcript.

But in fact she was no stranger to the world of the stage. Her father was a theatre manager back in Lithuania, and almost from

the moment she arrived in the United States in 1869 she was involved with experimental and progressive theatre groups, and she soon made friends with John Reed, the radical journalist who was later the subject, along with Goldman herself, of the film *Reds*. In 1897 she was down a Welsh pit lecturing coal miners on George Bernard Shaw, and after her New York lectures she was offered a spot on a Broadway stage in a vaudeville show that included acrobats, trained dogs and high-kicking dancers! She demurred. Still, vaudeville's loss was our gain. Emma Goldman may have coined the phrase "If I can't dance I won't be part of your revolution", but one imagines that she was speaking metaphorically.

It was the turn of the century in conservative America and, as often happens at such a time, there was a great deal of expectation as well as fear in the air. While some people hoped for great changes in their lives and looked to the future, many resisted change and tried to cling on to the past at all costs. Goldman was always at the forefront of social change, and as well as modern drama she saw the importance of modern art, modern writing, modern ideas. These she sought to get across to anyone who would listen, and it was logical that she

pressed one of her main areas of interest into service for her cause. America was still young and lacked much, she felt, in the home-grown arts, and printed versions of European drama were only just beginning to appear.

To Goldman the best plays were brought to life by the vital social themes of the day, and it was on the significance of these themes more than on their artistic merit that she judged the plays and judged the writers on their relative humanity. Art for art's sake was not Emma's cup of tea.

Since art mirrors society, and Goldman wanted social change, she naturally selects, in this book, those plays she thinks most effective in that respect. The plays covered are in sections: Russian, German, Scandinavian, English, Irish (although her much-admired Shaw might have been rather miffed to find himself in the English section), etc. They include Chekov, Yeats, Ibsen, Maeterlinck, Tolstoy and many others. Extracts from the plays are used to illustrate Goldman's criticism, where she describes passionately and with deep conviction why she finds them so significant. This 1987 edition has, in addition to Goldman's own foreword, a good new introduction by Harry Carlson, and a preface. It won high praise from Judith Malina of New York's anarchist Living Theatre group. 184 pages, £2.99 (previously £5.99).

KM

The Social Gene

The Social Gene

by Richard Frost

available direct from the author, Richard Frost, Warcop, Appleby, Cumbria, 148 pages, £8.00

By Darwin's theory, life has no purpose. It just exists. Units of life – whether organisms or genes makes no difference in principle – replicate themselves. Variations occur by chance, and some variations enable some units to replicate more efficiently than others. Over time, this purposeless mechanism has produced present-day life in all its wonderful diversity, including the social instincts, and the capacity of humans to be purposeful.

Some people feel, intuitively, that if the universe is purposeless, then strive as they might, their own lives have no purpose. As Dick Frost writes: "the excavations of esoteric minds / Won't do for mundane / Beer-drinkers: / Nor will a world of / Mere accidents and contingencies."

Dick Frost sides with the 'mundane beer-drinkers'. According to his foreword: "The book suggests a basis for morality independent of god (or gods) and a purpose to the process of evolution; in contrast to the dangerous amorality of neo-Darwinism and selfish-genery".

"In the beginning was the fire. / In the cooling embers / Primeval minerals fused: / The first cooperation." For "A good two billion years" life was "stuck" at the level of

bacteria. "But cooperation smashed the bottleneck: / Two or three single-celled species / Got under one another's skins / And became the complex – eukaryotic – cell / That made everything possible, / Including us."

No advocate of 'selfish-genery' contends that genes act independently, but *The Social Gene* may provide a timely reminder of the fact that genes work together. It may be compared to Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid*, drawing attention to a factor in evolution which some Darwinists were tending to neglect.

The contention that evolution has a purpose, however, arises only from unease at the thought of a meaningless world. "We need some sort of / Long-stop explanation / In place of poor old God / Else the ordinary human questions / About morality and meaning / Fly off to infinity / And we drift aimlessly".

The claim to have dispensed with God is invalid. The poor old chap with the long white beard may be gone, but a purposeful universe is incompatible with atheism. Assigning purpose to the universe itself is pantheism, the doctrine that God and the universe are identical.

The book is not confined to exposition of the social gene concept. There is a long chapter on the anarchist vision, whose sentiments coincide exactly with mine, and a wide range of erudite social commentary. All in verse, which Dick Frost tells us "is not a poem".

Donald Rorum

Freedom Press Bookshop

(in Angel Alley)

84b Whitechapel High Street

London E1 7QX

— opening hours —

Monday to Friday 10.30am - 6pm

Saturday 11am - 5pm



Books can be ordered from the above address.

A booklist is available on request.

— ORDERING DETAILS —

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

Cheques/PO in sterling made out to 'FREEDOM PRESS'

INFORMATION
LIBERATION

Brian Martin



FREEDOM PRESS

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

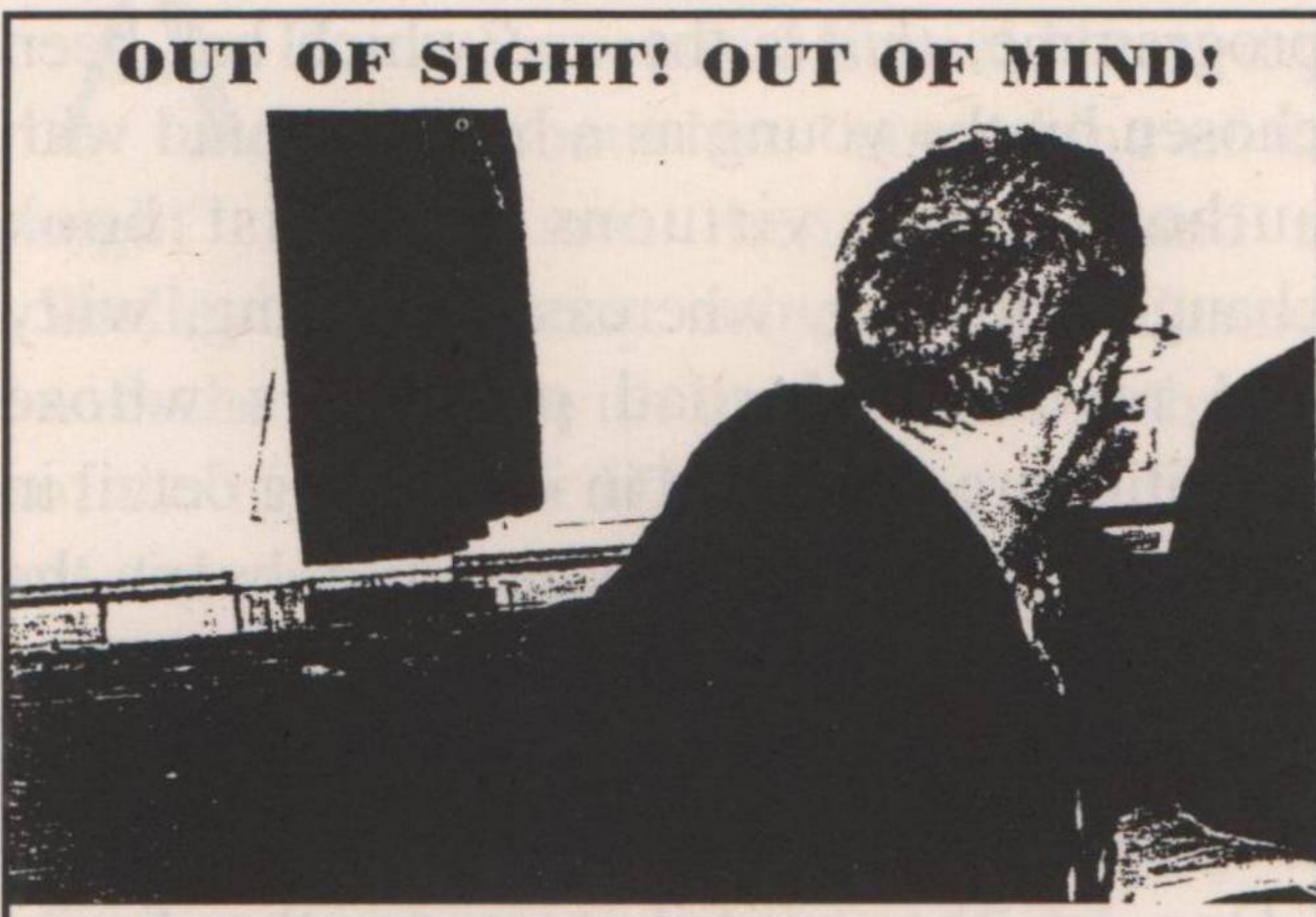
Information can be a source of power and, as a consequence, be corrupting. This has ramifications through a number of areas. These is a need for a radical critique that is accessible and oriented to action. Several topical areas are addressed, including mass media, intellectual property, surveillance 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

Council godfathers rumbled Tameside offside



OUT OF SIGHT! OUT OF MIND!

The unacceptable face of Roy Oldham!

COUNCILLOR OLDHAM TURNS HIS BACK ON SACKED CARE WORKERS AND THE OLD AND NEEDY OF TAMESIDE AT THE JULY COUNCIL MEETING IN ASHTON TOWN HALL.

OUT OF SIGHT:

- All those dirty unchanged bed-sheets in the Tameside Care Group Homes.
- The untreated bed sores.
- The ants in the tin of some old peoples biscuits.
- The sugar put into the tea of senile diabetic residents by untrained Agency staff.

OUT OF MIND:

- The property of Tameside Care Group residents going missing.
- The doctors not informed when a patient with a heart condition becomes ill.
- The drying machine in one Home which burst into flame through lack of maintenance.
- The residents losing weight and dehydrating through lack of care and attention.
- And all those endless cold dinners.

HOW LONG WILL ROY OLDHAM AND TAMESIDE COUNCIL CONTINUE TO TURN THEIR BACKS ON THE SACKED CARE WORKERS OF T.C.G. AND THE OLD PEOPLE OF TAMESIDE?

A poster distributed by the libertarian left in the North West.

For the best part of a year, since Tameside Care Group (TCG) issued their careworkers with 90-days notice of termination of their contracts, the Labour-controlled council of Tameside, Greater Manchester, have maintained the fiction that they have "only one single share" in the TCG company and could do nothing to help. Now *Tribune*, the independent Labour Party weekly, reports: "Labour-controlled Tameside Council in Greater Manchester has the power to step in and settle [the] dispute involving 214 sacked careworkers but is preferring to hide behind a 'legal technicality'."

Mike Naughton, the *Tribune* journalist originally alerted to the TCG dispute by *Freedom*, claims Charity Commission data shows "that the employer, Tameside Care Group, is effectively dominated by senior council executives who hold key posts in the not-for-profits company".

Last month, a spokeswoman of the union solicitors, Thompsons, stated: "At the preliminary tribunal hearing, TCG managing director Alan Firth issued a statement boldly stating that the council owned the company".

She commented further: "The council's so-called golden share, equal to 16.7% of the votes, is supposedly there to block unacceptable proposals. To argue that there are separate interest groups involved is a legal technicality. The remaining shares are held on behalf of the local NHS trust and if you look at the people who sit on and advise the trust it includes the most senior officers of Tameside Council."

Office holders in the Tameside Care Group's nominee company, Tameside Community Care Trust, include Tameside Council chief executive Michael Greenwood, secretary; J. Smith, director of social services, who serves as care adviser; R. Blackmore, director of finance, Trustee Director of Finance; and D. Parr, the Borough Solicitor, who is the trustees' financial adviser. Several other senior council employees are listed as advisers.

The *Tribune* report adds: "The other trustees are Labour MP Andrew Bennett plus Labour Party members, solicitor Jack Thornley, Mike Custance and Martin Sharples."

The careworker's dispute co-ordinator Pam Walker declared: "There is a clear built-in Labour Council majority within TCG and its trustees. If it wanted to, Labour could end this dispute at any time."

Putting up with bad management

The careworkers working in twelve council-owned old folks homes, in 1990, transferred to a jointly owned private/public partnership, Tameside Enterprises Ltd.

After claims of financial irregularities in 1993 and some resignations, including the current Council boss Roy Oldham who was a trustee, a new partnership called Tameside Care Group was set up. Pay cuts followed the launch of the new company. In 1997 TCG declared a pre-tax profit of £750,000. But when the careworkers asked for a rise they were told they must take a pay cut in 1998.

On New Year's Eve 1997, the TCG asked workers to sign new contracts putting senior grades cuts from £4.50 an hour to £3.60; night carers from £5.68 to £3.60 and domestics from £4.05 to £3.25. Less holidays and the termination of the company sick pay scheme was also on the cards.

Sometimes the patience and tolerance of English workers with management is almost unbelievable.

Web of control

Clearly the web of control and power of the local Labour establishment over the Tameside Care Group is there for all to see. The Labour Party Godfathers are trying to hide behind 'legal technicalities' to disclaim any social responsibility for what is now happening, but they have now been rumbled by the probings of journalists and solicitors.

For a long time, in *Freedom* and elsewhere, the President of the Tameside Trades Council Derek Pattison has complained about the obvious conflict of interest of council officers and councillors in their dealings with the carer's dispute. Local library staff have been banned from allowing posters related to the dispute on their notice boards. Town Hall porters form human barricades to prevent the careworkers - and their supporters from attending Council meetings.

It is a typical story of arrogance by a Labour Party which, locally, has been in power too long. It is, perhaps, not surprising then that when one carer, last month, announced at a UNISON meeting in Manchester that some of the careworkers intended to stand in Tameside in the local elections against Labour councillors and candidates, it was met with a standing ovation.

The local elections will be held in early May. The Industrial Tribunal in Manchester will hear the case of the careworkers for unfair dismissal between 1st and 14th June. Careworkers on Tameside have received support from the Swedish union federation - the syndicalist SAC - and from the Spanish anarcho-syndicalist General Confederation of Labour (CGT).

BB

— COPY DEADLINE —

The next issue of Freedom will be dated 20th March, and the last day for copy intended for this issue will be first post on Thursday 11th March.

♦ ♦ ♦

If possible contributions should be typed using double-spacing between lines, or can be sent as text files on disc.

'Citizen Smith'

A new Sunday afternoon vegetarian café has opened up in North West London: 'Citizen Smith' is operated by a small anarchist collective squatting in a former local authority building at 161 College Road, Kensal Green, London NW10.

To get there take the Bakerloo Line (Watford Branch) to Kensal Green. College Road is due north from the station off the Harrow Road and Citizen Smith is about ten minutes walk away at the top of the road. Food and drink is available free or by donation. The atmosphere is friendly and relaxed and an ideal way to spend a Sunday afternoon, and I am sure you will find the experience rewarding. There is a small play area for toddlers and a tarmac area for ball games.

They also have a hall available for meetings and conferences, again payment by donation. Food and drinks can be made available on these occasions. The entrance is user-friendly for disabled people. Telephone: 07931 980534 (a mobile, but they hope to have a land line installed soon). E-mail: citizensmithUK@hotmail.com. Internet: http://www.members.tripod.com/citizensmith/hello.html. The collective's "main focus is to help and

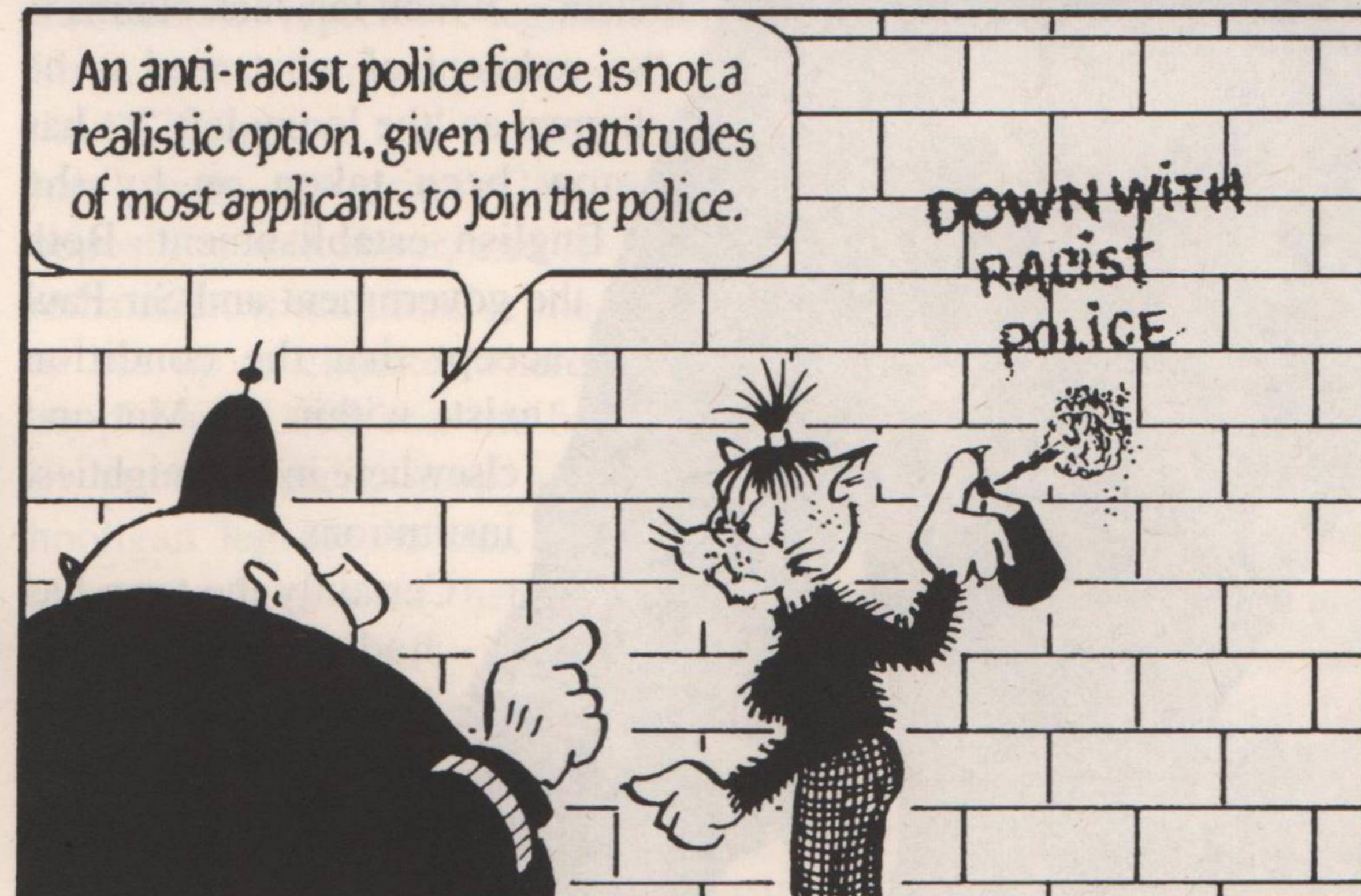
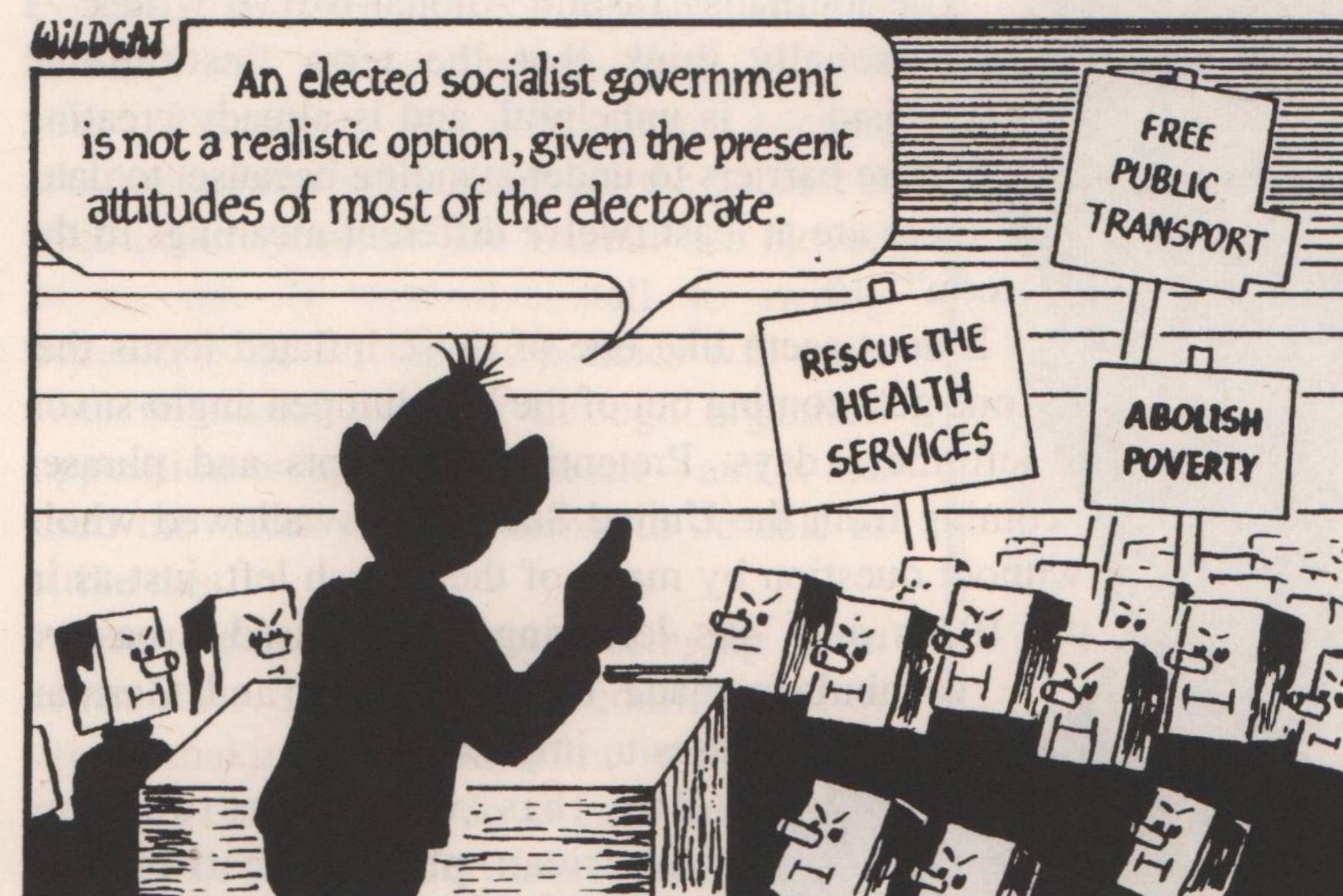


Cartoon taken from 'A Night to Remember' by Bob Cann (Box E publications, 60p)

encourage people to increase their awareness of local and environmental issues".

Try and make use of this facility as the building may have many other possibilities and its occupants are open to offers.

Peter Neville



NAN Conference on 13th March

The Northern Anarchist Network are holding a conference in Manchester on Saturday 13th March. For further details telephone Martin on 0161 707 9652.

— ANARCHIST NOTEBOOK —

Dissenters of the 1990s



Dawn, October 1997: 250 activists put a Derbyshire opencast mine out of action, causing up to £4 million worth of damage.

In my last notebook I cited the thoughts of continuity and development in anarchist propaganda perceived by Natasha Walter. Then the postman brought a new and intriguing book, illustrating new variants on traditional anarchist preoccupations. It is George McKay's *DIY Culture: Party and Protest in Nineties Britain* (Verso, 310 pages, paperback £11.00).

My name has been down at the county library for the same author's earlier book, *Senseless Acts of Beauty: Cultures of Resistance since the Sixties*, but it hasn't yet turned up, so it may be that I should have seen the new volume as a more immediate and updated telling of the same story, except that here he edits the work of a series of involved participants.

Thus Jim Carey writes about the magazine *Squall*, with its excellent coverage of squatting and land topics, as well as the culture of raves and the DIY dance culture

described by Hillegonda Rietveld. George Monbiot gives an account of the Land is Ours campaign, and several contributors report on direct action anti-roadbuilding campaigns. Thomas Harding, one of the founders of the alternative video network *Undercurrents*, describes the pros and cons of video activism.

Many of the preoccupations of traditional anarchism do not get aired in this book and, as the editor suggests, "DIY is suspicious and sometimes disdainful of -isms, viewing them variously as outdated, as the kind of things non-activists do instead of direct action, or as simply boring." He adds that: "It's true that DIY isn't alone in perhaps thinking of certain political issues as belonging to the past, even if others have voiced it more clearly."

And this comment directly reflects the questionings of Natasha Walter – in her account cited in the last issue of *Freedom* of

the book and film *Hideous Kinky*. Much of the difference is simply a matter of generations. Who could possibly expect anarchists above a certain age to understand, let alone embody into an ideology, the culture of raves, or of Ecstasy?

On the other hand there are important continuities, the most important of which is that of popular self-organisation and direct action. Some anarchists in several countries have always insisted on the significance of the squatters' movement, both for its effect as an ideological demonstration against landlordism and as an immediate practical solution to personal problems.

The campaign against road-building illustrates one of the dilemmas of anarchist approaches. I am like any traditional anarchist: I have faith in reasoned argument and the printed word. I doubt whether the anarchist propagandists of the past paid much attention to road-building. They might have seen it as an aspect of military dictatorships from the Romans to the Nazis. Or they might have cited road-building, as Kropotkin did in *Mutual Aid*, as an aspect of the collective endeavour of village communities.

I myself was asked in 1990 to write an anarchist book about transport, and this resulted in *Freedom To Go: After the Motor Age* (Freedom Press, 1991). My title was deliberately taken from the American thinker Lewis Mumford who, decades ago, described the obviously liberating effect of modern personal mobility as the freedom to go. The book attracted very little attention, but (despite its Anglocentricity) appeared in an Italian edition in 1992 and was much discussed in the Italian press. Our friends of Edizioni Elèuthera found it necessary to reprint the book in 1997, and meanwhile a French translation had appeared in 1993 and

a Spanish version in 1996.

But I've pointed out before that while the least important aspect of government and capitalism to me, is its road-building programme, *this* is the one which has been chosen by the young as a battle-ground with authority. My virtuous anarchist book changed nothing, whereas the young, witty and resourceful road protestors whose activities are described in interesting detail in the book *DIY Culture* successfully began the process of changing the nation's mind. When radical protestors become media heroes, the climate is beginning to change.

One of the contributors to the book, describing the battle over the M11 Link Road at Wanstead, writes: "The anti-roads movement served to smash what the then government boasted was 'the biggest road-building programme since the Romans'. By causing disruption and disorder, refusal and resistance, campaigns of direct action against road-building rendered roads a political and deeply controversial issue. In the face of wider economic pressures, it then became easier for the government to make cuts in this area: the legitimacy and inevitability of endless road-building was no longer assured. The national roads programme is now dead, therefore, but the future of the dole is not yet settled. While there are still people keen to fight and so much to struggle over, there remains the possibility of overcoming the present fragmentation and reclaiming our class unity in practice and hence perhaps in theory."

I doubt if many anarchists of earlier generations were brought into their particular struggle by controversy over roads, but there aren't many militant activists around in more traditional fields of anarchist activity. On the other hand I become more and more aware that the people we have to convince of the validity of an anarchist approach, are not the campaigning heroes and heroines of environmental campaigns, but our fellow-citizens, both among the depressed though sizeable minority, and among the apparently affluent and contented majority too.

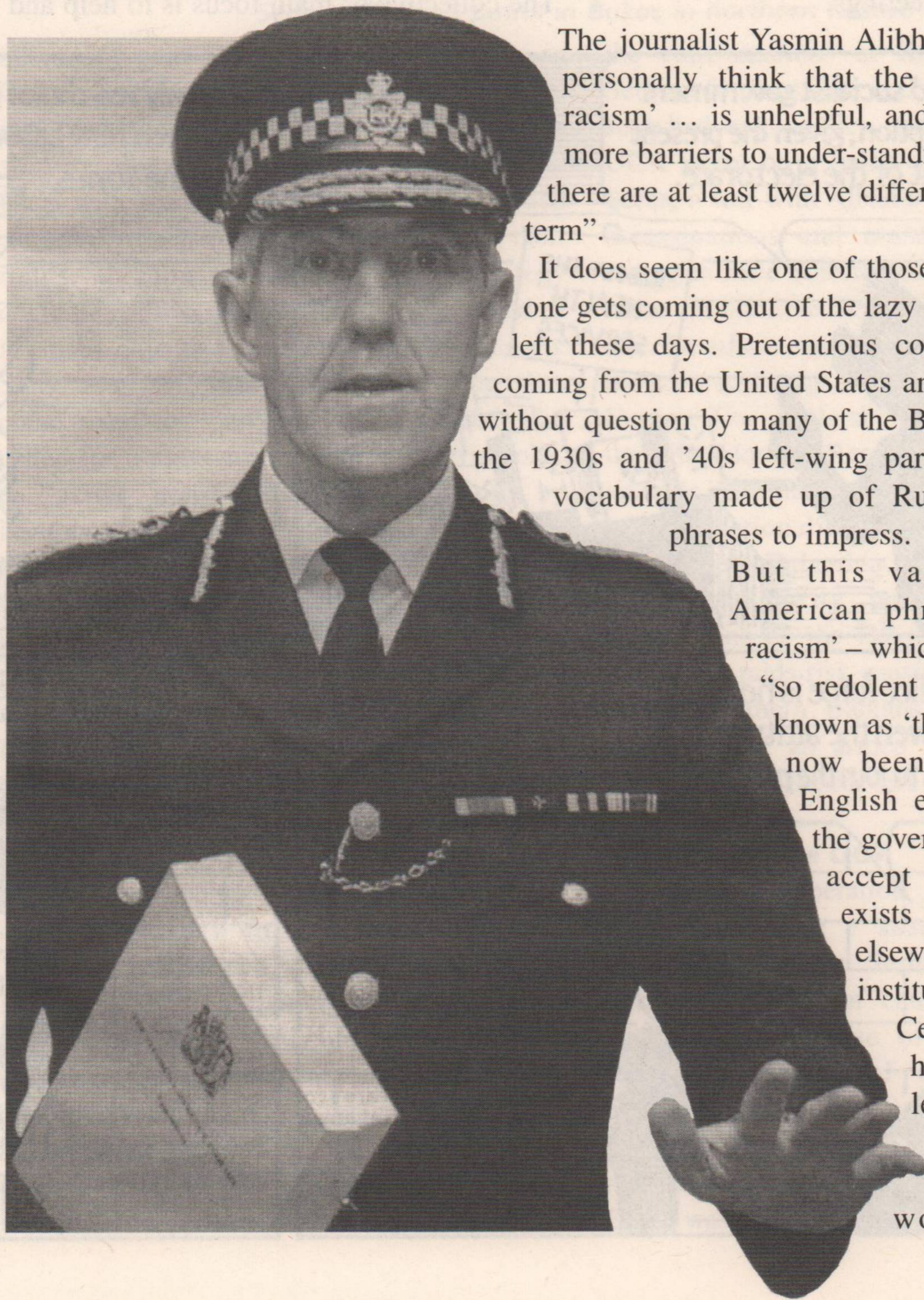
Stephen Lawrence Report

Sir Paul Condon: crucified by cliché

Will Sir Paul Condon, by the time you read this, have been assassinated by a sound-bite? As *Freedom* goes to press Sir Paul, the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, is in a tight spot over his original refusal to admit at the Lawrence Inquiry that 'institutionalised racism' exists in the Metropolitan police force.

After the publication of the Macpherson report last week into the police investigation of the murder of Stephen Lawrence, the Home Secretary Jack Straw stood by Sir Paul. At a press conference Sir Paul has now accepted the diluted definition of institutional racism given in the Macpherson report.

Sir William Macpherson of Cluny (hobbies golf and fishing), former Scots Guard captain and honorary colonel in the SAS, declares: "Institutional racism consists of the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin". In this context he found the Met guilty of 'institutional racism'. At the public inquiry Sir William had to get his head around no less than sixteen different definitions of the term submitted to him. From its roots with the rabble-rouser Stokely Carmichael in the US civil rights struggles of the 1960s to the 27th hereditary chief of the Macpherson clan, the phrase 'institutional racism' has had a colourful history.



The journalist Yasmin Alibhai-Brown writes: "I personally think that the term 'institutional racism' ... is unhelpful, and is already creating more barriers to understanding because, to date, there are at least twelve different meanings to the term".

It does seem like one of those inflated terms that one gets coming out of the lazy lumpen anglo-saxon left these days. Pretentious concepts and phrases coming from the United States and swallowed whole without question by many of the British left, just as in the 1930s and '40s left-wing parties used a bastard vocabulary made up of Russian and German phrases to impress.

But this vague pretentious American phrase 'institutional racism' – which Ian Jack claims is "so redolent of what used to be known as 'the loony left'" – has now been taken on by the English establishment. Both the government and Sir Paul accept that the condition exists within the Met and elsewhere in our mightiest institutions.

Certainly the term has had an impact on learned, intellectual and even legal minds. It has wounded, perhaps

fatally, Sir Paul Condon. But will the highfalutin' tone of the term 'institutionalised racism', which so overwhelms the bookish middle and upper classes, have the same impression on the white working class from whence the killers came, or the rank and file police who carried out the incompetent investigation after the murder?

Many, I suspect, will see the slogans spawned from Jack Straw and Sir Paul Condon as yet more bombast from on high – a gesticulating Mr Straw beseeching us to "make Britain a beacon of race equality to the world" or the grey eminence of Sir Paul Condon solemnly promising a programme of 'Protect and Respect' for all people in the city of London.

Then there is the organisational ritual and apparent shake-ups which accompany such occasions with 'new guidelines' promised, "new analysis of crime"; "more active teams"; "random testing for racism"; "proposals for a major research programme for the Met"; "the redirecting of significant resources into murder investigations".

The clamour of clichés is seemingly endless. The culture of racism goes very deep. Bernie Grant MP called for Sir Paul to go, but added that we'd been here before with all the talk of new beginnings and watersheds after the Scarman report into the riots of the early 1980s.

Arturo Ui

Labour's illiberal Home Secretary

Ann Widdecombe described former Home Secretary Michael Howard as having about him "something of the night". Jack Straw, then, need stand as Shelley's Hypocrisy reincarnate, "Clothed with the bible as with light / And the shadow of the night" (*The Mask of Anarchy*) for any useful comparison with his predecessor to be made. Living up to this, though, appears not to be causing Straw any real difficulties.

New Labour's *White Paper on Asylum Seekers* proposes that all benefits be withdrawn from anyone applying for asylum in the UK. Local authorities will administer a food voucher scheme to provide minimal subsistence for refugees while their applications are processed. Should any applicant seek to mount a legal challenge to any Home Office Immigration Department decision then all subsistence will be withdrawn. Any asylum seeker who wishes to take the government on in the courts will be starved into submission.

Straw's 'comprehensive' review of the Prevention of Terrorism Act has concluded that, faced with a ceasefire in the Six Counties, this 'temporary' legislation should be made permanent and its operation extended to cover political organisations and activities throughout the UK. Terrorism will be given legal redefinition to include acts or threats of violence against persons or property such as to encompass anti fascism, anti road protests – any effective direct action campaign. The new PTA proposal will allow the proscription of political organisation throughout the UK. As *The Observer* put it (21st February 1999); "In less than two years, 'Dirty Jack' has been responsible for some of the toughest legislation ever introduced by a Labour government; anti-terrorist legislation that allows people to be charged for conspiracy to commit offences abroad; attempts to limit defendants' rights to trial by jury; the removal of all benefits from asylum seekers; measures to seize the assets of people suspected (but not convicted) of profiting from crime; the ability to imprison football hooligans who police believe are about

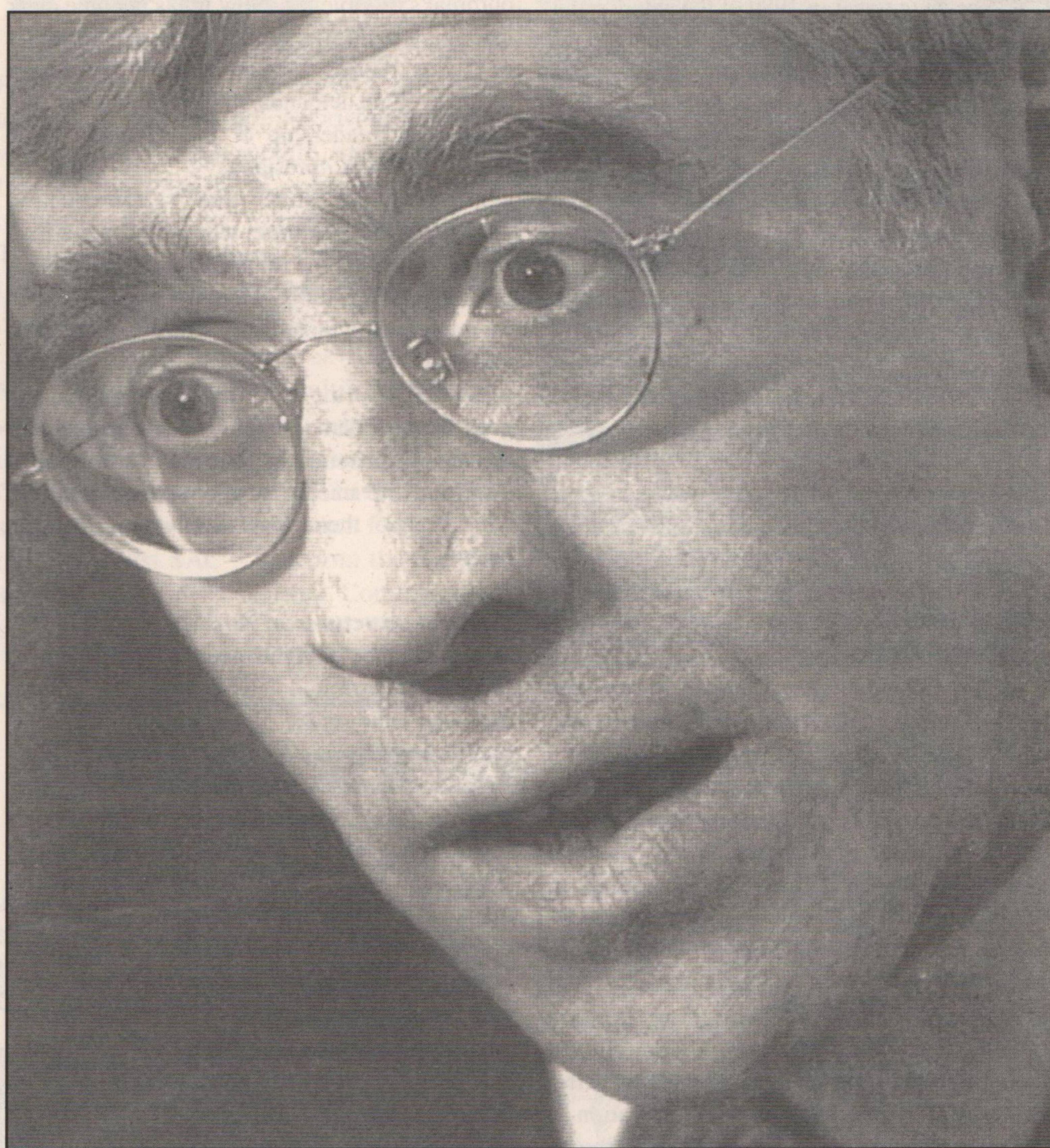
to commit an offence – for his detractors all these measures point to a Home Secretary at least as illiberal as his Tory predecessor."

All of this was flagged up well in advance of Labour's election victory. In their book *Safety First*, Labour left supporters Paul Anderson and Nyta Mann quote a Shadow Cabinet member predicting that Straw would be "the most illiberal Labour home secretary in history." On 4th September 1995, Straw made a speech in Lewisham where he stated his intention to "reclaim the street for the law abiding citizen" from "the aggressive begging of winos and addicts and squeegee merchants". In August 1995, Straw had visited New York to meet Mayor Rudy Guilliani and check on the implementation of Guilliani's 'zero tolerance' policing strategy. Straw's plan to confine civil liberties to the propertied middle classes was spelled out long before Labour took office on 1st May 1997. Given all this, the left's open call for a Labour victory, and failure to prepare effective opposition to Straw's plans amounts to a by default complicity with Labour's agenda. Worse still is the declared intent of organisations like Liberty, the Refugee Council and the Prison Reform Trust (whose Stephen Shaw describes Straw as a 'radical') to continue to work with the Home Office (the Refugee Council helped draw up the white paper on asylum seekers) despite Labour's consistent victimisation of their client groups.

Labour's goals are clear enough. Capital cannot afford the cost of the welfare state. As the *Financial Times* noted, in calling for a Labour vote, the party best placed to dismantle the welfare state is the party that engineered its introduction. Capital also requires a low wage economy. The UK has a three-million-strong reserve army of Labour. The unemployed, though, are only useful as a drag anchor on wages if they are taking up low paid work. Hence the coercive 'New Deal' strategies employed by Labour to get the unemployed into work. Industry Secretary Stephen Byers has declared that the days of 'redistribution' are over. Labour, then, is a party committed to the maintenance of inequality, designedly, in the interests of the rich. In a society where, according to the Child Poverty Action Group, 23% live in poverty, the deliberate maintenance of that poverty will not go unchallenged. Straw's 'Zero Tolerance' therefore serves a clear ideological end – the choice for the poorest is Welfare to Work, or jail. Labour has moved to set out its repressive stall so swiftly because it knows that its policies will meet with resistance – either through organised opposition or individual dissent – and it has used the 'Honeymoon Period' to be able to strike first.

Zero tolerance is not about bringing down crime rates. It is about the confinement of crime, making sure that crime is something working class people do to each other, with the middle classes safely asleep in their beds. The mass of repressive legislation pushed by Straw serves two purposes – in the case of the PTA changes and the proposed limits on jury trials, to criminalise any effective opposition to Labour, and in relation to the remainder, to criminalise the poor as poor – to set up a climate where working class people, who will bear the brunt of increases in surveillance, stop and search, anti hooligan legislation etc., come to accept a climate where their behaviour is policed, where their failure to match the achievements of the middle classes is seen as abhorrent in and of itself.

In August 1996, Bruce Anderson wrote in *The Spectator*: "We have expressly constructed

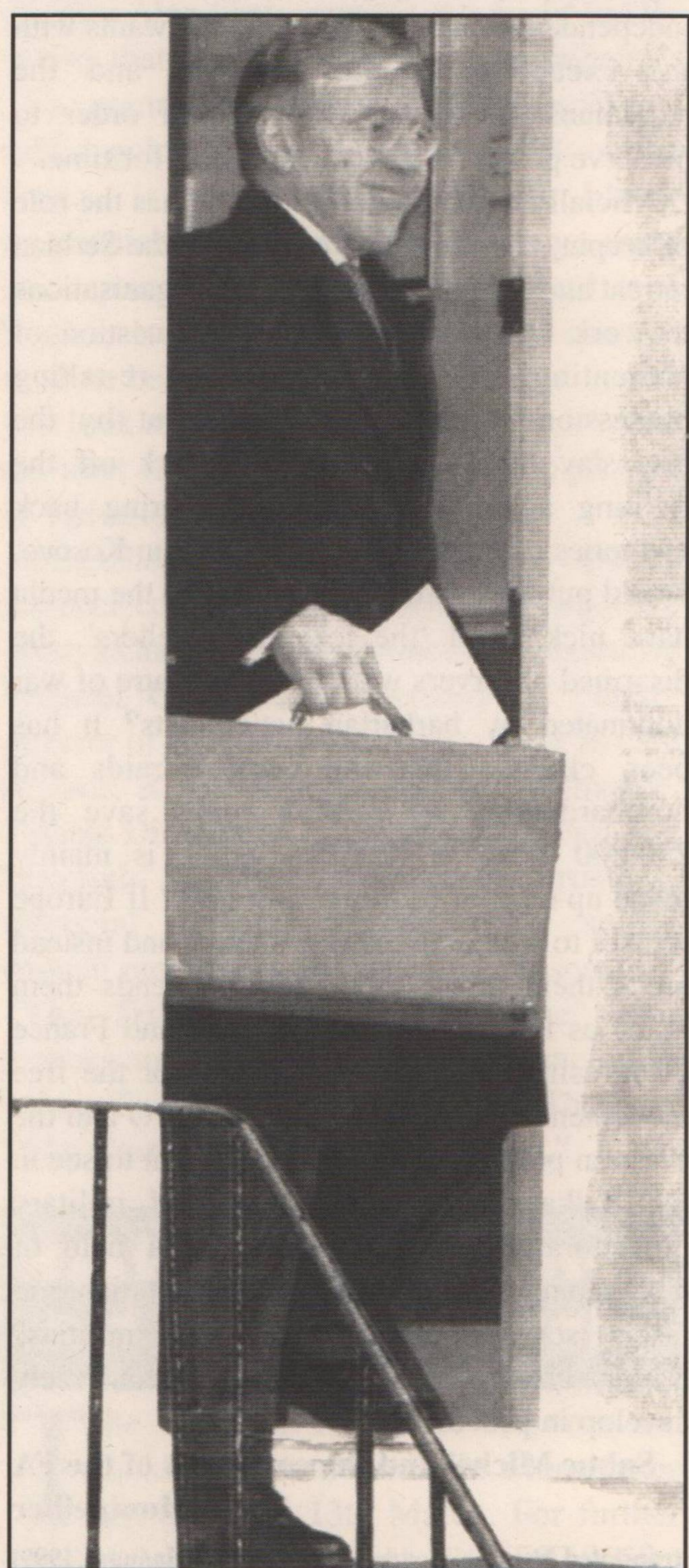



slums full of layabouts and sluts whose progeny are two legged beasts. We cannot cure this by family, religion and self help. So we will have to rely on repression." In 1996, in a speech in South Africa, Tony Blair committed Labour to a 'Decent Society' through "a new social morality". A recent editorial in the *Daily Telegraph* responding to an ICM poll wherein over half the respondents identified themselves as "traditional working class" asked "Can't everybody see that there is nothing in the least bit admirable about idle remnants of the proletariat, that dwindling few with their

hideous clothes, revolting food, trashy newspapers, filthy children, disgusting manners, vile wallpaper and violent and dishonest dispositions."

What's clear is that Blair's 'Decent Society' will be forged through the repression *The Spectator* hails. If we want to resist its imposition, we should align ourselves with those "idle remnants of the proletariat" in the knowledge that the "dwindling few" remain, and identify themselves as, (as the ICM poll shows) the majority. All middle class now? Not likely!

Nick S.





The Raven

Number 38 on
1968

A special edition of *The Raven* on the remarkable events of the year 1968, including articles by Daniel Cohn-Bendit, Fredy Perlman, Karl Young, Sebastian Hayes, Philip Sansom, Nicolas Walter, and many more.

96 pages Freedom Press £3.00

(continued from page 8)

British public. Last week *The Financial Times* reported the results of a MORI poll on attitudes to business under the headline 'Mori Poll Indicates Growing Unpopularity of Profit Motive'. Approval of big business in Britain is at its lowest since the poll first started thirty years ago. Asked whether they thought that the profits of large British companies help make things better for everybody who buys their goods and services, a mere 25% agreed! In 1980, 56% agreed. *The Financial Times* reports that "there appears to have been no improvement [in business popularity] in the 21 months since Tony Blair led the Labour Party back to office".

The British public understand that business

is not concerned with social or environmental welfare but just with profit. Labour's trade union 'reforms' will help companies' bottom lines by continuing to deny workers basic rights and protection.

Of course none of this comes as a surprise to anarchists. That the state supports the interest of business rather than workers and their representatives is to be expected. It does not matter that unions put millions into Labour's election campaign or that Labour promised real reform, not a re-jigging of Thatcher's reforms which is what the unions have ended up with. Anarchists know that you cannot rely on laws, the state, political parties or reformist unions to improve things. Real change lies elsewhere.

Richard Griffin

Putting Kosovo into perspective

The taking over in 1989 of the autonomous province of Kosovo by Belgrade was the first act which called into question the constitutional balance which was bequeathed by Tito. It saw the beginning of the break up of the ex-Yugoslavia.

From integration ...

This province was integrated into Serbia in 1913 following the Balkan wars and was part of the new Yugoslavian state set up in 1918. During Tito's reign the communist party lacked coherence in its economic policies and enabled the proliferation of a decentralised bureaucracy which managed in a fashion the investment funds destined for Kosovo to its own advantage. The repression of social tensions and the economic crisis which began in the 1960s was to feed the growth in nationalism especially among the Albanians in Kosovo. At the time there was considerable repression emanating from Belgrade and they rejected the Balkan Confederation plan. Towards the mid-sixties, showing themselves to be in favour of a decentralising reform programme, the Albanians demanded a status of 'national community' (narodnost) rather than the proposed 'national minority' which was perceived as degrading. In 1974, the new Yugoslav constitution, allowed it to have the status of regional autonomy within the Serbian republic with its own Assembly and government. It was given the right to veto at a federal level and had its own cultural institutions and an Albanian university. After the death of Tito in 1989, the demonstration in Serbia in the previous summer with the theme 'Kosovo belongs to us' and the General Strike of February 1989, Slobodan Milosevic called into question the very status of this province by rescinding many of the area's prerogatives and going so far as to abolish Albanian political institutions in July 1990. In the early years of the 1990s he was to exploit the programme and the theme of Serbian nationalism in order to consolidate his position as leader of his party to which he had given the name 'socialist'. This policy led to the collapse of the Yugoslav Federation with the declarations of Independence by Slovenia and Croatia on the 25th June 1991 followed by the start of the war against Croatia in July. On 15th September it was Macedonia's turn to declare independence and this was followed by Bosnia-Herzegovina after the victory of their nationalist parties in their parliament. From the 6th April 1992 up until the Dayton negotiations in November 1995 the war in Bosnia continued with its atrocities and barbarities. An analysis of this conflict points to the importance of the re-emergence of fascist and nationalist ideologies.

... to the armed struggle

Within this context the Kosovo crisis played itself out in several stages. The result of a clandestine referendum was declared in September 1991 and the 'Republic' of Kosovo was born and recognised by Albania. On 24th May 1992, Ibrahim Rugova from the Kosovo Democratic League (LDK) was elected 'president' after a poll which was declared illegal by Belgrade. In February 1996 a clandestine organisation declared its existence openly – the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA or in Albanian UCK), after claiming a series of bomb attacks. In July 1997 there was a noticeable increase in police violence and the Serbian forces of law and order focused at first on a certain number of family clans and this continued to grow until the offensive of February 1998 and the massacres at Drenica which provoked an exodus of at least 15,000 poor peasants. For the Serbian media these confrontations were caused by the provocative activities of the UCK. With the poll that saw Ibrahim Rugova become president the crisis escalated. His victory after elections which saw a high degree of participation despite Belgrade's declaring them illegal was to lead to new

outbreaks of violence. Now it has become clear that Slobodan Milosevic carries the responsibility of having replied with more repression to the machaevellian demands of the 'democratic' and non-violent leadership of the Albanian LDK under Rugova's 'presidency'. In so doing he aggravated the crisis and reinforced the position of the extremists who advocated armed struggle. At the time the UCK could only count on some 200 to 400 fighters but was supported by numerous sympathisers who were ready to join them.

The origin of the crisis remains complex and goes back to demographic aspects which sees the region inhabited by Albanians at a level of 90% and the unease of the Serbian minority who declare themselves to live on 'historic lands'

Political structures in Kosovo

Today, the lack of rights given to the provinces favours underground activity under the control of clans who make up a society which is predominantly rural and conservative. The structures which include the LDK can only control this underground by a process of mediation. The 'Kosovo Republic' has significant funds at its disposal. It survives thanks to a 'voluntary tax' which according to a communiqué from the UCK at the end of November 1997 was to help in 'the struggle for national liberation' and this was complemented



Serb soldiers on patrol in Bukos in northern Kosovo

by money sent by the Albanian diaspora in Germany and Switzerland. After Belgrade had instituted an apartheid policy in 1989/90 the strategy of the LDK was aimed at replacing itself with the Yugoslav confederation which excluded Albanians and deprived them of their rights. Ibrahim Rugova's political strategy combined action, non-violent resistance and as its main objective independence for Kosovo. Since 1997, the main oppositional thrust has come from the party of Adem Damaš who called for a move from 'passive non-violence' to 'active non-violence' for example by bringing back from exile the parliamentary ministers who were in Geneva and Bonn and who could not return for obvious security reasons. He is the only Albanian leader to proclaim political solidarity with the UCK. But since the massacres of Drenica, he has moved into the background somewhat and did not participate in the elections in March 1998. He is currently waiting on the sidelines.

Mrs Luljeta Pula-Bequiri was the only candidate to oppose Ibrahim Rugova but she chose to withdraw from the elections on the 18th March 1998 and to not allow the Social Democratic Party to participate in the elections of the 22nd March, 'it is indecent to hold the elections now after the massacre at Drenica'. She denounced the power system of the LDK, its complete control of the media and its obscure practices. The call for a boycott by the Demasi, Pula-Bequiri and the students union

clearly fell on deaf ears as was proven by the massive participation in the poll on 22nd March 1998. After the congress of 1998 the crisis at the heart of the LDK has become apparent. 'President' Rugova had secured his power by means of a compromise with the former political detainees who were brought up in the Stalinist school of Enver Hodja and the 'realists' aligned with Mr Agani. The congress provoked a complete purge of the leadership of the LDK in favour of those who were new to the most radical policies. Currently the LDK is not satisfied with independence for Kosovo, that is to say the type of independence which was envisaged by the agreement between Holbrooke and Milosevic in October 1998. Now the goal is a 'Greater Albania' founded on an ethnic basis. Suddenly the hope for a political negotiation has become difficult if not impossible. A split has appeared at the heart of the self-proclaimed 'Autonomous Republic of Kosovo' between Ibrahim Rugova and his 'prime minister' Bujar Bukishi. The latter, in exile in Germany, has recently cut off the funds which were destined for Pristina and sent instead to Tirana. Albania's re-entry on the scene risks making an already complex situation even more venomous. Since the popular revolt in Albania in 1997 Sali Berisha with the support of the armed militia and a heightened sense of nationalism has been preparing for his revenge. At the same time as

enthusiasm of the Albanian student movement by the coming together of four small nationalist groups of the extreme left and it put its structure together the following year in Germany. If the forty or so communiqués to be released to the public are to be believed hundreds of military activities have been organised in Kosovo. On 18th March the UCK called for the elections to be put off accusing Ibrahim Rugova of sowing discord. Then it called on the population to boycott the vote and to enlist in its ranks.

According to an underground publication of the UCK which was reported on in November 1994 in the Serbian newspaper *Vecerni Novosti* the organisation claimed responsibility for the attempted assassination of a Serbian police officer on 9th November 1993 along with other actions such as the murder of two Serbian police officers in Glogovc. The creation of the UCK in fact it was claimed goes back only to 1992. Whatever the facts this new army, at the time still underground, represented a new element in the Kosovan political landscape. From the beginning the organisation made clear that it "doesn't act against innocent populations, but against Belgrade terrorism and ethnic cleansing in Kosovo". It proclaimed itself 'non-terrorist' and up until 1993 no Albanian movement attacked any civilian Serbians in Kosovo. After the massacres of Drenica and the radicalisation of the policies of 'President' Ibrahim Rugova who allowed himself to be taken over by a wave of nationalism favouring a Greater Albania the UCK took on new military perspectives and began to engage in a barbaric violence based on a theory of ethnic cleansing directed at the Serbian population in Kosovo.

What do the West and NATO want?

The Kosovo conflict has already claimed hundreds of deaths in a few months. During the negotiations in October 1998 the American representative Richard Holbrooke managed to make the threat of a NATO intervention credible. On his side Milosevic who has always had Russian support, which plays the card of a spectre of the cold war to turn attention away from the financial mess at home, is no idiot but would prefer to have an agreement. In effect the master of Belgrade finds himself facing attacks from the new regime in Montenegro which is hostile to him. Finally, and this is the most important for him, he knows that with regard to the Kosovo question the West are his allies objectively speaking given their refusal of an independent republic which nobody wants with the exception of the Kosovars and the Albanians. Slobodan Milosevic in order to preserve power as always is playing for time.

Officially the armed NATO force has the role of keeping the cease-fire, overseeing the Serbian retreat and allowing humanitarian organisations to work freely. But also it is a question of preventing the UCK militias of re-taking possession of territories left vacant by the Yugoslav forces which would spark off the fighting again. These positions bring back memories of Bosnia somewhat: who, in Kosovo, would put their money on those who the media have nicknamed 'the ice cream sellers', the disarmed observers who are in a theatre of war dominated by barbarian nationalists? It has been claimed that the coming raids and bombardments by NATO could save the 250,000 Kosovan refugees which is mainly made up of poor peasants. But how? If Europe refuses to welcome the war victims and instead hunts them down as in Italy or sends them home as in Germany, Switzerland and France by refusing them political asylum and the free movement of individuals? Does NATO and the Western powers know what they want to see in the Balkans? A jig-saw puzzle of military protectorates destined to become a field of manoeuvres? A multitude of authoritarian and fascist states – a paradise for the militias? Simply chaos? Or federations who can freely develop in peace?

Sahuc Michel and the comrades of the FA in Montpellier
(translated from *Le Monde Libertaire*, 20th January 1999)

The faces of the UCV

The Kosovo Liberation Army (in Albanian *ushtia çlirimtare e kosovës* – UCK) was nicknamed by the Serbian security forces during its period of clandestinity 'the FAX organisation' because of its propensity for using this means of communication. Its platform was made known internationally in April 1997 by German radio and the Serbian newspaper *Pristina*. In the official version the UCK was set up in Pristina in 1981 in the

Higher education for hire?

Dear *Freedom*,

There is a lot wrong with higher education in this country, but the summary of Brian Martin's criticisms (*Freedom*, 20th February) looks more like abuse than analysis. Let me give three suggestions about how to identify the problem, rather than feebly complaining that "competition prevails over cooperation", a grievance you could indulge by looking out of any window at any scene at the end of the twentieth century

The first and biggest problem, as ever, is where the money comes from. In Britain, about two-thirds of universities' income is from the state, and in such circumstances, the risk of interference in the curriculum is great. In fact, universities here are more independent than schools, where the rigidities of the national curriculum have done irreversible damage to the morale and status of school-teachers. University lecturers, while they have not had to endure such direct interference in what and how they teach, have seen their pay and conditions collapse since the 1960s. In some other countries, such as Spain, Greece and France, governments play a much bigger part in dictating what is taught and how it is delivered. University teachers there enjoy a high status, and in those places, the foolish premise that "learning results only from being taught by experts" is far more prevalent. A dog's obeyed in office, and I would prefer poor but independent teachers to hired hacks peddling state diktats.

But we can't have it both ways. As more 'private' money goes into higher education, universities echo to the sounds of the drums that business beats. Some university departments are already dustbins for the conscience money of multinational drug corporations, while others, with their business schools and centres for entrepreneurial excellence, are recruiting grounds for spivs rather than

scholars. So if a university needs a certain amount of money to survive, is it better that it comes from that cold monster the state, or from the spare cash of entrepreneurs? Perish the thought, maybe the students themselves should pay for an increasing amount of it, as Mr Blair has now decreed? The funding problem is a big one, and anarchists who might like the idea of a 'free' university have to recognise that the institution is going to end up tainted, whatever the source of its money. If students and their families end up paying for the 'real' cost of universities, they will become customers rather than students, buying in the market where league tables have already turned universities into commodities. So perhaps we should consider the idea that less money might be helpful.

The second point is about methods and furniture. While people don't have to be taught by experts to learn things, nonetheless, experts are handy for deciding what is to be learnt and how to go about it. But if three hundred students sit in a lecture hall to hear one tired expert explain some tricky concepts, is that really a good way to learn the tricky bits? And what if they have to wait six weeks for a book to be returned to the library? Most British universities are big places, employing many people, with expensive buildings and lecture theatres. In the age of the Internet, can anyone seriously defend the idea that a lecture is a good way of disseminating knowledge or helping people to learn? Most academic staff are still called 'lecturers', so there is a problem here. Since we have to admit that a university depends upon some people knowing more than others, let's keep the people but recognise that lecture theatres, like Methodist chapels, are outdated. Students and teachers must find their own forms and methods of collective endeavour, and it is only when they realise that a good learning

community is one where ideas are properly shared, rather than bought and sold, that they can make their university a place which operates in a different way from Barclays Bank training division

Thirdly, the university in the West is an institution far older than the nation state, and only the remnants of monarchy and the Church have longer traditions. At its best, the university can still be a useful and idealistic community where disinterested learning can and does take place. But increasingly they are sausage machines for turning out people with qualifications that will attract capitalists shopping for human resources. They have become extremely vulnerable to commercial pressure, and my guess is that soon they will all have been branded, sponsored from top to bottom, and marketed so as to become indistinguishable from the entertainment or retail industry. It may seem odd that the process has not been quicker (prisons, schools and hospitals have all gone 'private' more quickly), but the reason lies in their independence of structure: British universities award their own qualifications and maintain academic 'standards' by peer review rather than government inspection. Their glory is also that they still have a bigger share of eccentric and awkward people than other institutions, some still prepared to resist the siege of the accountants.

But for some years the so-called 'quality auditors' have been at work, and these represent a more pernicious influence than the multinationals. All the auditors will say they are for is to make sure that government (or 'public') money is well spent. But they can only make their judgements on outcomes, just like the schools' inspectors: How many first class degrees have been produced, how many research papers has each member of staff scribbled, and how much private money has been attracted to the research budget?

People learn by trying and failing, by dropping out, by overcoming difficulties, and

by finding out as much about themselves as about a 'subject'. And those who value higher education recognise that a learning community is one where intellectual property is theft, where teachers are challenged – and where teachers learn by continually being challenged. Some bits of universities still have these characteristics, but neither the state nor big business have much interest in sustaining or nurturing them. When students become interested in power once more, universities have a chance of regaining some freedoms. Paradoxically, it is when they realise that the value of degrees is not as bread tickets, but as symbols of membership of an academic community that students will be able to exercise power. Until then, universities will merely be producers of a better class of wage slave, but more timorous ones than the less 'educated', because they have more to lose.

Peter Regan

'Vote out caring council!'

Dear *Freedom*,

Tameside Council claims to be a 'caring council'. Others disagree (*Freedom*, 20th February). Now there are rumours that some of the Tameside careworkers intend to stand in the coming local elections against councillors put up by the Labour council implicated in sacking them. If they stood it would be on a 'clean-up the town hall' ticket, and against a regime run by Roy Oldham, the council leader, which doesn't keep its promises.

Though no definite decision has been taken yet, it is understood that locally the anarchists will back any decision the careworkers take. Normally, of course, anarchists would not get involved in elections of this kind. Last year in the May council elections, posters supporting the careworkers were put up calling on people not to vote. Then the turn-out was small.

The 'on the spot' anarchist view is that people must be put before politics. Hence the local anarchists will willingly go against one of their most cherished beliefs, of not having anything to do with elections, in order to put the careworkers first. We would call upon the regional Northern Anarchist Network to take a similar stand should the careworkers choose to stand in the elections.

Some northern workers

Anarchism & Communism

Dear *Freedom*,

Richard Garner made a valid point in showing that an anarchist society that attempts to impose communism on all its members is no longer anarchist (*Freedom*, 20th February). However, I am not convinced that this is the whole story.

An anarchist can also be a communist providing that they recognise that communism will have to be introduced through persuasion and example rather than force. As Richard Garner points out, "interference in how workers produce is a violation of workers' control".

It follows from this that should workers voluntarily decide to distribute their produce on a communist basis, such a decision will not be in violation of anarchist principles.

In a truly anarchist society there are going to be a variety of ways of organising production and distribution, some of which will follow a more capitalist tradition, others a more communist one. Such a society will

recognise and accept a plurality of approaches to resolving economic questions, as well as the right of any individual or group of individuals to promote a communist (or capitalist for that matter) way of doing things.

Kropotkin's view that it would be a flagrant injustice for anyone to appropriate any land to themselves does not automatically mean that he was not an Anarchist. In my edition of *The Conquest of Bread* (Black Rose Books, 1990), on page 82 he expressed his desire that "communistic principles should inspire all and sundry", and he went on to state that "whether the revolution would everywhere exhibit the same characteristics is doubtful". This last comment suggests that he recognised that after a revolution a number of approaches would be followed, which to my mind makes him an anarchist advocate of communism.

I cannot see a contradiction here, though perhaps someone more familiar with Kropotkin's views would be able to clarify this point further.

Bill Runacre



Dear *Freedom*,

Richard Garner (20th February) advocates private property, as opposed to free communism, as the road to freedom.

Most anarchists have always taken the opposite view for the simple reason that power and property are totally inseparable: you can't have one without the other.

This sounds like a very dogmatic, simplistic assertion, so what's the evidence for it? Only, I suggest, the whole of human history. The origins of power and property are lost in the mists of time, but the fact that the earliest 'civilisations' (societies with some sort of recorded history) were based on slavery, plus the fact that many 'primitive' tribes did (and do) practise it, is a strong indication of the true relationship between property and freedom.

In support of his position Mr Garner offers us fairytales about 'free contracts' between wheat growers and bakers. Far more representative of the true nature of property society are the recent activities of the psychopathic killers Clinton and Blair. They (or the 'free enterprise' corporations that pull their strings) are determined that the oil resources of the Middle East shall remain under their control (i.e. their *property*). If a few hundred thousand Iraqi children have to die, too bad.

The term 'property' is in fact a euphemism for armed robbery, whether the arms in question be spears, whips, guns or cruise missiles. These are the real 'media of exchange' essential to any property-based society. If Mr Garner disputes this, can he provide a single historical example (any time, anywhere) of a property-based society that managed to function without force and coercion?

Advocates of free communism are at least able to cite historical examples of such societies working in practice, even if these were limited in scale and duration – usually due to armed suppression by the 'freedom-loving' fans of property.

John Wood

Raven on Biotechnology

Dear Comrades,


I am compiling a future issue of *The Raven* on genetic modification and biotechnology. This is a call for contributions.

Of course we cannot guarantee to publish everything submitted, but articles by anarchists will not be rejected on grounds of bias, or disagreement with the editor's opinions.

I think there may be readers of *Freedom* with points to make about Monsanto, the government's false assurances over BSE, the environmental dangers, the untrustworthiness of scientists, the 'Rainbow Alliance' against GM crops, the 'gardeners' who sabotage experiments, or ... er ... what else is there? Please send suggestions.

Most articles in *The Raven* are of 1,500 to 3,500 words, but this is not an inviolable rule.

Donald Room

Please keep sending in your letters and donations ... 

FREEDOM fortnightly
ISSN 0016 0504

Published by Freedom Press
84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX
Printed in Great Britain by Aldgate Press,
London E1 7RQ

**Freedom on the
World Wide Web**

http://www.tao.ca/~freedom
e-mail Freedom Press at
freedom@tao.ca

a-infos

daily multi-lingual international
anarchist news service

To: majordomo@tao.ca
Subject:

.....
subscribe a-infos

Freedom and The Raven
**SUBSCRIPTION
RATES 1999**

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

The Raven (4 issues)

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

Join sub (24 x Freedom plus 4 x The Raven)

Claimants	18.00	-	-	-
Regular	24.00	34.00	50.00	36.00

Bundle subs for Freedom (12 issues)

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

Other bundle sizes on application

Giro account number 58 294 6905

All prices are in £ sterling

The Raven
anarchist quarterly

Number 38

1968

Back issues still available:

- 37 - Anarchism in the Americas and China
- 36 - Class Struggle and Social Protest
- 35 - Urban Environment / Psychoanalysis
- 34 - Communication (3) : Language
- 33 - The Arts
- 32 - Communication (2) : 'The Net'
- 31 - Economics and Federalism
- 30 - New Life to the Land?
- 29 - World War Two
- 28 - Noam Chomsky on Haiti
- 27 - Fundamentalism
- 26 - Science (2)
- 25 - Religion
- 24 - Science (1)
- 23 - Spain / Emma Goldman
- 22 - Crime
- 21 - Feminism
- 20 - Kropotkin's 150th Anniversary
- 19 - Sociology
- 18 - Anthropology
- 17 - Use of Land
- 16 - Education (2)
- 15 - Health
- 14 - Voting
- 13 - Anarchism in Eastern Europe
- 12 - Communication (1)
- 11 - Class
- 10 - Libertarian Education
- 9 - Bakunin and Nationalism
- 8 - Revolution
- 7 - Emma Goldman
- 6 - Tradition and Revolution
- 5 - Spies for Peace
- 4 - Computers and Anarchism
- 3 - Surrealism (part 2)
- 2 - Surrealism (part 1)
- 1 - The History of Freedom Press

£3.00 each (post free worldwide)

FREEDOM PRESS
84b Whitechapel High Street
London E1 7QX

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 1999 —

5th March Ghetto politics (speaker John
Griffin)

12th March Symposium on Anarchism and
Spirituality

19th March General discussion

26th March The *New Working Class*
(speaker Peter Neville)

2nd April 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

Anarchist Communist Federation

**NO WARS! NO
FRONTIERS!**

"Military intelligence is a contradiction in terms" -
Groucho Marx

Against the warmongering of Clinton and
Blair and the immigration controls of
Fortress Europe, only revolutionary
anarchism offers a world without wars,
militarism, the state and racism.

This public meeting is organised by the
Anarchist Communist Federation (London).

Wednesday 17th March at 7.30pm
at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square
London WC1
(nearest tube Holborn)

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 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

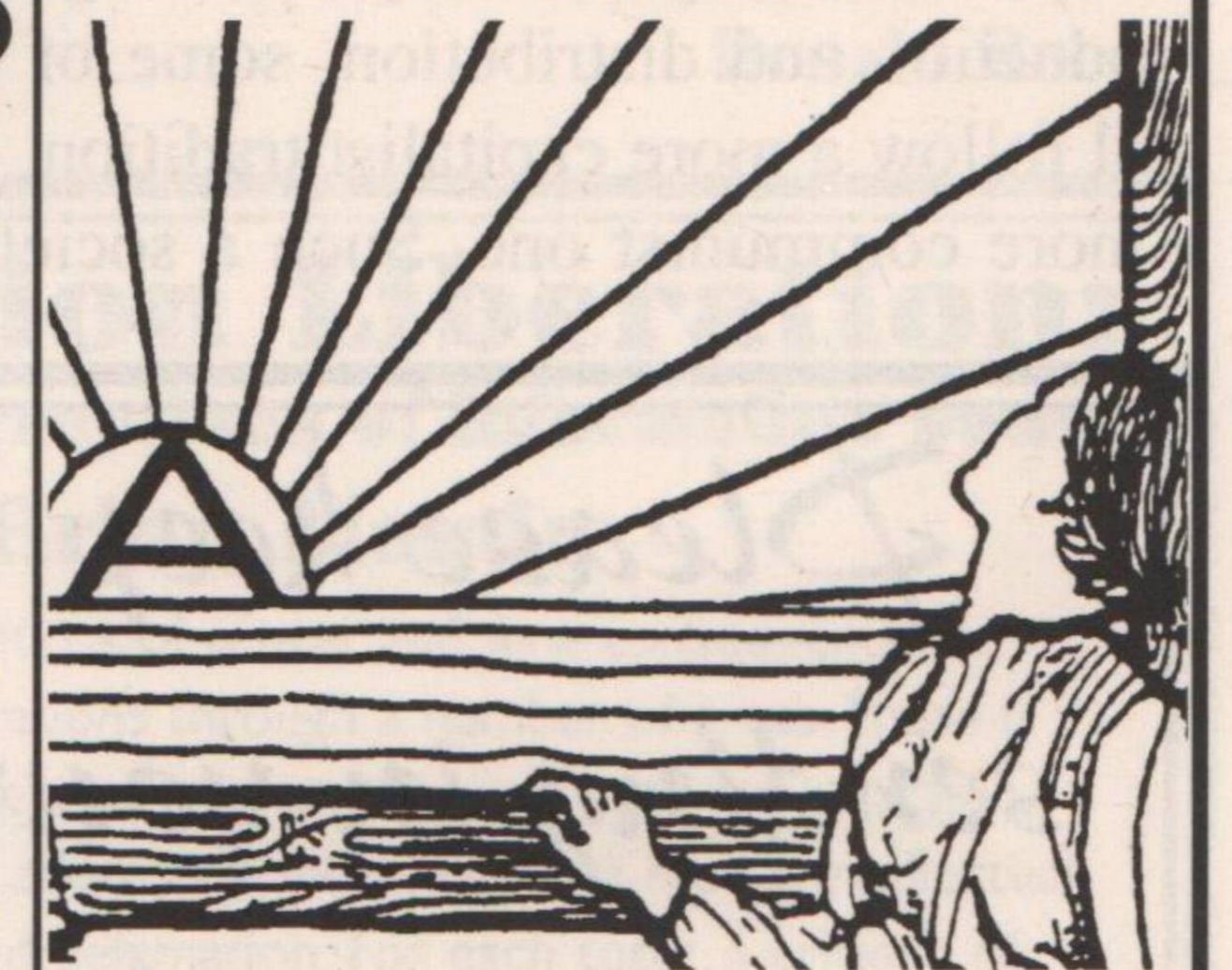
Derbyshire walk (Hartington and Upper
Dove). Meet at Hartington village duck pond
at 11am. Walk leader John.

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
Anarchist
Bookfair**



on 27th March 1999 from
10am to 6pm
San Francisco County Fair Building,
Ninth Avenue and Lincoln Way in
Golden Gate Park

SUBSCRIPTION FORM

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

- I am a subscriber, please renew my sub to *Freedom* for issues
- Please renew my joint subscription to *Freedom* and *The Raven*
- Make my sub to *Freedom* into a joint sub starting with number 38 of *The Raven*
- I am not yet a subscriber, please enter my sub to *Freedom* for issues ..
and *The Raven* for issues starting with number 38
- I would like the following back numbers of *The Raven* at £3 per copy post free
..... (numbers 1 to 37 are available)
- I enclose a donation to the Freedom Fortnightly Fighting Fund / Freedom Press
Overheads Fund / Raven Deficit Fund (delete as applicable)

I enclose £ payment

Name

Address

..... Postcode