

Kosovo: facts and figures

“Stability, prosperity and democracy” – these were the stated aims of the Regional Stability Pact launched in Sarajevo this week. Serbia is excluded; that is to say, any foreign economic assistance to Serbia is “conditional on a change of government”, meaning the overthrow of the Milosevic regime only to be replaced by a government sympathetic to the aims of Western Europe. The K-for, as it has been named, was set up to oversee the demilitarising and disarming of the KLA (Kosovo Liberation Army) and at the same time, ensure that there will be no other power in the region but NATO.

The UN has barred all Albanians and Kosovo Serbs from power in the so-called ‘autonomous province’. Ethnic Albanians have no more power than they had under Serb rule. Kosovo is now in fact ruled by US and European administrators, all unelected, who control the legislature, executive and judiciary; and Kosovans are represented on a Transitional Committee headed by UN Special Representative Bernard Kuchner, but no votes are ever taken at the Committee!

As David Chandler, East European expert of the University of Northumbria, put it: “After the international community fought a destructive war for Kosovan rights and enhanced autonomy, it seems peculiar to assert that the people cannot be trusted to elect a government or police themselves”.

Kosovo is not a democracy. A Serb police force used to supervise the oppression of the Kosovar Albanians has been replaced by thirty thousand foreign troops. Veta Surra, publisher of

the newspaper *Koha Ditore*, says he fears that the aim of the UN is to create another ‘donor dependent’ society after the manner of Bosnia, and not to restore civil society at all (in *The Guardian*, 23rd July 1999).

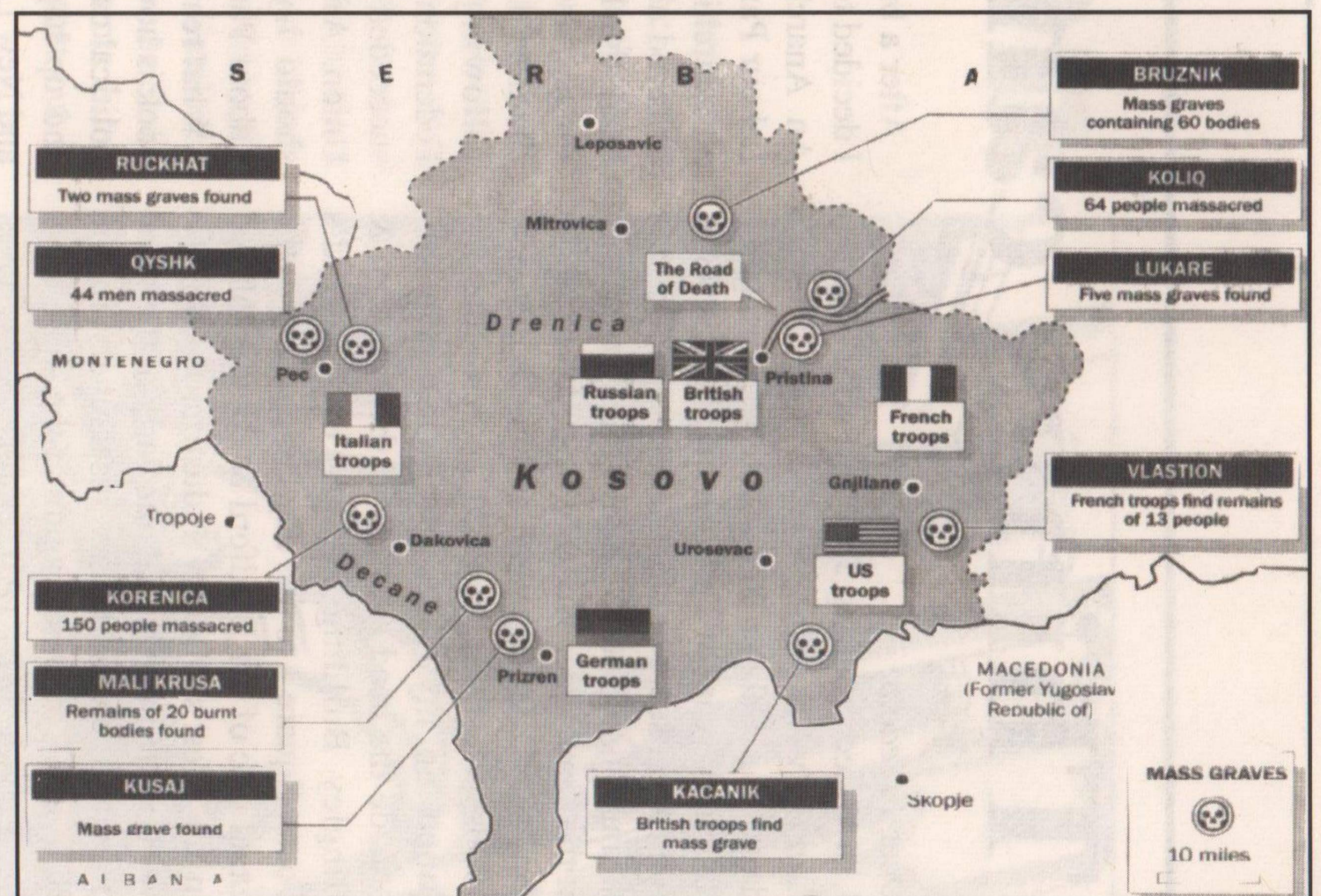
As in Bosnia, as in Greece in 1945, the intention of NATO was not to restore democracy but simply to ensure stability to allow inroads for US and European capital.

The claims of NATO have been shown up by the way the area has been governed since the bombings. If one judges the rightness of actions in terms of ends and means, the situation of the Kosovans is less democratic than before the war.

No one would defend the actions of the Yugoslav regime to which NATO was opposed, but the end result is that the wealthy areas of Kosovo, with mining

interests and mineral deposits, have been put under NATO control in order to be made part of the modern world economy. Represented by Tony Blair as the defence of the weak against the strong, the British Labour government is bidding quite heavily for a stake in reconstruction, and had as much reason to be in favour of intervention as did the United States.

While we do not doubt the sincerity of all who deplore the sufferings of those unfortunate people who have been caught in the horrors of war, it is only anarchists who point out that power politics and economic struggles are the root causes of war, and that tragedies such as Kosovo cannot be avoided as long as nation states exist and the capitalist system of production and distribution persists. If people want peace and freedom they must destroy the present power structure of society.



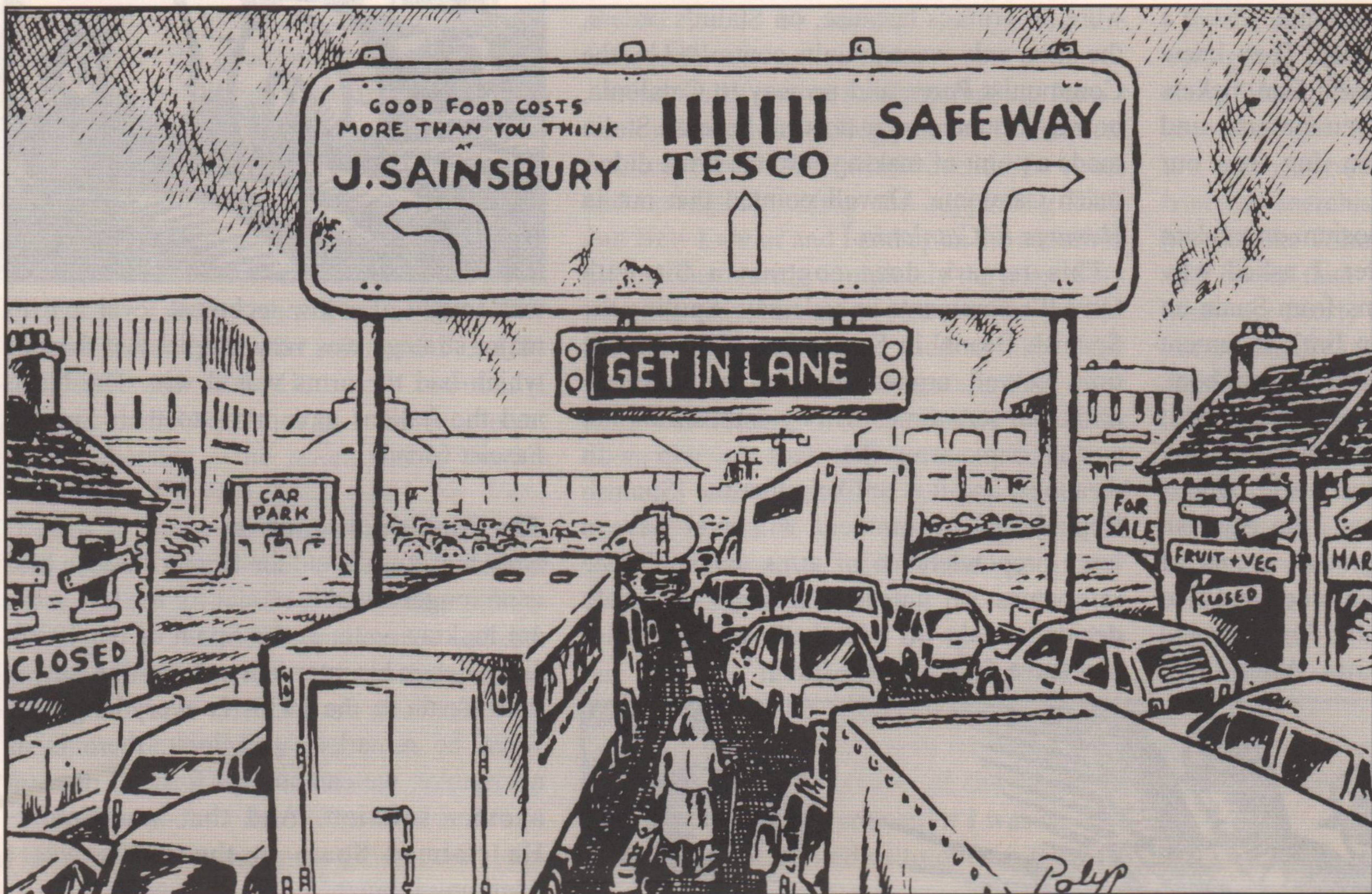
anarchist fortnightly Freedom

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Lost in the Supermarket?



On Monday 26th July 1999, the government published its 1998/99 annual report. Shoppers anticipating a reduced price loaf or some cheap Adidas T-shirts could, however, buy a copy of the report on Sunday 25th, as New Labour had done a deal with Tesco's to distribute the report, and the supermarket had thoughtfully released it on to its shelves a day early, although sadly still at a cost of £2.99!

The absurdity of 'representative' democracy in Blair's Britain has never been more flagrant. Politics is reduced to a set of New Labour promises, glossed over once a year, and political activity is reduced to the purchase of the company report from the local store. Unlike most annual reports, you don't get the chance to vote on its contents or replace the board either. Fredy Perlman once noted that "the worker ... does not exist in the world as an active agent who transforms it, but as a helpless, impotent spectator" (*The Reproduction of Daily Life* contained in *Anything Can Happen*, Phoenix Press, 1992). Exploiters of the tragedy of this, Blair's spin Mafia, their strings pulled by Lord Sainsbury, their hands in Tesco's tills, yet manage to turn spectacle into farce. If Alastair Campbell was a teacher, they'd demand he be sacked!

Tempting as it is to go through all the report's promises and pick them apart, there are 177 of them, and only eight pages per issue of *Freedom*, so we'll tether our enthusiasm as best we can. A promise to "reform the Bank of England" is described as 'done' - on the basis that handing the power to set interest rates to the unelected Bank of England Monetary Policy Committee constitutes a 'reform'. An "efficient and fair student maintenance grant scheme" is also 'done' - a triumph claimed, coincidentally, on the same day that ministers were forced to admit that a new software package sold to local education authorities by the Student Loans Company had a number of 'glitches' sufficient

to lead to the likely delay in payment of hundreds of thousands of grants and loans.

Easy as it is to carp, the real issue is not whether New Labour has kept its promises or not, but what the real nature of those promises were, and to whom they were really made. That among the promises 'kept' were pledges to "keep key elements of trade union reforms" and "introduce a national minimum wage" should give us some clues.

New Labour is, as ought by now to be clear, a party with an anti-working class agenda. Blair refers to "New Labour's partnership with business" as "critical to national prosperity". We live, purportedly, in an age of 'globalisation', where, in Blair's words, "not only does money cross frontiers within the western economies faster than ever before, but competition exists on an international scale that has never been known. Products are increasingly made by extended networks threaded across the globe rather than within single organisations". Working people, then, should no longer look to the state for support. As the US economist Doug Henwood sarcastically puts it "self-reliance and inter-connectivity together make the future and a libertarian spirit pervades all. Education and spirit are the keys to the new world, not ownership or connection" (*Talking About Work* in *Rising From the Ashes*, edited by Meiksins-Wood, Meiksins, Yates, Monthly Review Press, 1999). The ideology of New Labour mirrors that of its predecessors. As Will Hutton parodies (*Observer*, 3rd August 1997): "Poverty is the down payment a society makes for its success; to attempt any systematic programme of poverty alleviation is by definition self-defeating. It creates dependency, undermines the work ethic, and places an insupportable and unfair tax burden on the better off. In any case, the notion of a poverty trap is illusory because those in poverty do not stay there long. Those who do are the feckless who refuse to help themselves". The

irony in all this, as Hutton notes, is that while we live in a society where the top 10% enjoy an income equal to the bottom 50%, with, as recent research from the Social Policy Research Unit shows, 32% of British children living in poverty (the highest in Europe), the financial background against which Blair's 'hard choices' are being played out could not be more favourable. "The OECD projects that Britain will repay its national debt by 2025, alone in Europe. British taxation is among the lowest in Europe as a proportion of GDP. Social security spending is the lowest of all. The country, bluntly, is rich" (*Observer*, 5th October 1997). New Labour's promise to the poor, then, is only the promise of necessary hardship, as a stimulus to 'initiative'. After all, according to Anthony Giddens (in *The Third Way*, Polity Press, 1998), "globalisation is transforming the institutions of the societies in which we live" to such an extent that the old social democratic certainties are no more, and the state's role can only be to provide "a meritocracy of opportunity - to work, learn and train" (Hutton, 3rd August 1997).

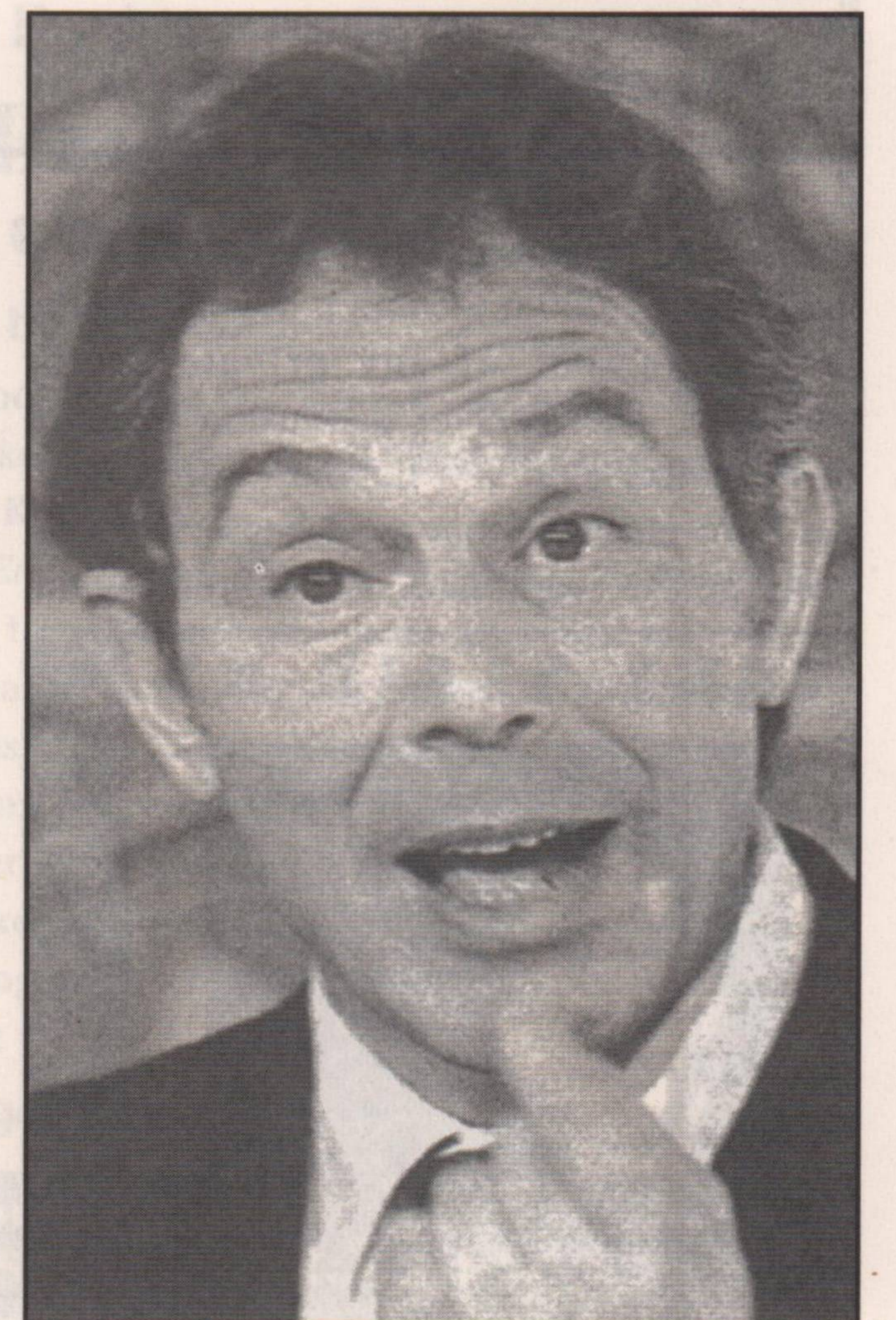
Strangely, though, Blair's 'dynamic' friends in big business require 'active government' with a duty, as Blair acknowledges, to provide "a highly adaptable workforce, good education, high levels of technology, decent infrastructure and the right conditions for high investment and sustainable non-inflationary growth". At a time when every third rate futurist trickster from Thomas Friedmann to Charlie Leadbetter is telling us that 'globalisation' and the 'knowledge economy' are leading to a shift of the focus of capitalism power away from the nation-state, the reality, as the left historian Ellen Meiksins-Wood notes, is that "Capital needs the state to maintain the conditions of accumulation and competitiveness in various ways, including direct subsidies and rescue operations at taxpayers' expense [Mexico, the Asian Tigers]. It needs the state to preserve labour discipline and social order in the face of austerity and 'flexibility' and to enhance the mobility of capital while blocking the mobility of labour" (*Labour, Class and State*, in *Global Capitalism: Rising From the Ashes*, *ibid*). New Labour's promise to capital then, is a promise it intends to keep. It is a promise manifest in the introduction of the New Deal to compel young people into low paid work, the introduction of the minimum wage (to serve as a maximum for the New Deal programme and hence as a drag anchor on wages in general), and the

focus on training as a means of maintaining capitalist hegemony in the workplace. US management consultant Peter Cappelli, writing in the *California Management Review* (issue 37, 1995) concedes that the notion of the 'skills gap' is really about attitudes, about developing a workforce that is steadfast, punctual, compliant, and 'pro-social' - willing to do more. 'Skills' training he candidly admits, is about cultivating "responsibility, self-discipline and adherence to rules", and about using fear of "losing face" to set up "conformity pressures to produce positive results".

Simply then, under New Labour, the state is not seen as a means of redistribution, but solely as a means of worker coercion. The bullshit which normally accompanies social democracy has been shelved. There is after all, no need to promise anything to the working class if it is not organised to force itself onto the agenda. Strike figures for the last year were the lowest since recording began. As to whether New Labour's promises to capital are paying off; unemployment fell in July by five thousand to a nineteen year low of 1.28 million, while employment has risen again to a record 27.4 million. Pay settlements have consistently been below inflation rates. As the Bank of England monetary policy committee noted, "the increasing importance of the services sector, falling union membership and labour market reforms, might have reduced the rate of unemployment at which wage inflation would tend to increase". In other words, the MPC would have expected inflation to rise under pressure from wages as the threat of a reserve army of labour diminished and unemployment fell. It didn't, because the plebs are too afraid/disorganised to demand their due. New Labour, then, has perhaps performed a miracle - and solved the ongoing crisis of capital.

Except that it hasn't. This year will be the first year since 1979 that trade union membership has increased. Tesco's (yes - them again) now

(continued on page 2)



Some afterthoughts on Jim Allen and Spain

I first met Jim Allen in January 1996 at his home in Middleton, Greater Manchester. When his and Ken Loach's film *Land and Freedom* came out he had given a talk at the Cornerhouse in Manchester. I'd followed this up and he had agreed to do an interview for *The Raven* with me.



He welcomed me saying "Are you the anarchist?" The house itself – a red-brick semi – had a reassuring man's touch about it. His wife had died some years before and I think he had a teenage son living at home with him.

The front room had lincrusta wallcoverings and was dominated by a word processor. He had been up working on a script all night, and it was now 9.00am. In the end we got an interview lasting three-quarters of an hour. Later on he rang me to say he was happy with the coverage he got in *The Raven* (no. 33 on 'Anarchism and the Arts'), though he hastily added that he disagreed with our politics.

When I did the interview he was anxious to point out that the film *Land and Freedom* tackled hard facts. He insisted "what we show in the film happened". He added that "in the countryside what we showed happened. The Stalinists did smash up the collectives. They did murder individuals: anarchists and POUM members and so forth". Perhaps for the same reason he took on the controversial play *Perdition* about the Nazi holocaust, Jim accepted the play (according to his mate Bert Carr in Middleton) after "another writer from the South ... chose no longer to complete it due to some harassing threats".

Mr Carr said that "for Jim it was only the ordinary man in the street he identified with – and the truth mattered". He added that despite all the good films and plays Jim Allen has been responsible for, like *Land and Freedom*, *Raining Stones*, *Hidden Agenda*, *Spongers* and *Days of Hope*, etc. "Unfortunately, it is a damn shame people here in Britain do not appreciate his work like they do in Europe". He continued to say

that Jim "appears to be well known more there [Europe] than here, especially in Spain."

Land and Freedom

When in 1996 I asked Jim about his Spanish Civil War film *Land and Freedom* he said: "The heartening thing is that in Spain it has set off a huge discussion among Spanish workers. The crew, the Spanish crew, were only young people; they didn't have a clue that this was their history. They knew nothing about it. Some Spanish film-makers said that it is now the benchmark, and that now it's time that we dug into our own history".

Earlier this year, at a symposium on modern Spanish film in Manchester, I asked why there hadn't been more films from Spain on the Spanish Civil War, given Jim's statement in 1996. Mr Jordan, who has written a book on contemporary Spanish cinema, claimed it was still too sensitive a subject in Spain. But, I argued, Noam Chomsky the world famous intellectual had written that "the Spanish Civil War is one of the crucial events of modern history". I could have added that Ken Loach, the director of *Land and Freedom* and long-time colleague of Jim Allen, had



claimed: "I don't think you can understand twentieth century history unless you can understand what happened in Spain in 1936."

The chairwoman then told me that "the Spanish Civil War is box office poison" and that the Allen and Loach film had to get funding from twelve different sources to do the film and still ended up under-funded. She said that the young people of Spain wouldn't be interested in the war and that it would only appeal to old members of the Communist Party, though she admitted *Land and Freedom* had been a success in Spain.

contends "Labour market flexibility worked as a way of empowering management when unemployment was high; when unemployment falls, rules change – and workers will see no more reason to give any quarter than their bosses once did. Management may soon become as anxious for partnerships at work as unions used to be" (*Observer*, 18th July 1999).

Illusions in Labour fostered by a pro-state left have paralysed working class militancy for years. Now that Labour itself is attacking working class living standards and democratic freedoms after eighteen years out of office, we have to re-forge an anarchist movement committed to working class self determination if we are to have any chance of ensuring that New Labour's partnership with big business is met with effective and determined resistance.

Nick S.

This was disputed by some film experts in the audience who pointed to the interest among the young for war films like *Sergeant Ryan* and *Land Girls*.

In the interview with Jim Allen he gave his view of why Franco won the war. He said: "Of course enthusiasm will never win anything. It's got to be there, but you need the arms. And of course the reason why there were no arms is because, on Stalin's orders, the arms only went to units controlled by the Communist Party, and no way to Catalonia, no way. So there were no arms because Stalin made a point of making sure the arms didn't reach Catalonia. Orwell pointed that out in *Homage to Catalonia*."

This remark does contrast a bit with Orwell's comments in his essay 'Spilling the Spanish Beans' in September 1937. At that time Orwell argued that "a revolutionary army can sometimes win by enthusiasm, but a conscript army has got to win with weapons, and it is unlikely that the [Spanish Republican] government will ever have a large preponderance of arms unless France intervenes or unless Germany and Italy decide to make off with the Spanish colonies and leave Franco in the lurch."

By 1942 in his article 'Looking Back on the Spanish Civil War', Orwell had adopted a view closed to that of Jim Allen. Orwell wrote: "The Trotskyist thesis that the war could have been won if the revolution had not been sabotaged was probably false. To nationalise factories, demolish churches and issue revolutionary manifestos would not have made armies more efficient. The fascists won because they were stronger; they had modern arms and the others hadn't. No political strategy could offset that." He adds that "the war was actually won for Franco by the Germans and Italians, whose motives were obvious enough".

Speaking of the CNT (anarcho-syndicalist) and the POUM militias Jim Allen said that "they were getting pounded to pieces. You were getting Italian planes, German planes, you had all the modern warfare, and at the same time you had Stalin refusing them arms" (*The Raven*, no. 33).

But Orwell, in 'Looking Back on the Spanish War', wrote of the Russian Communist tactics that "their actions are most easily explained if one assumes that they were acting on several contradictory motives. I believe that in future we shall come to feel Stalin's foreign policy, instead of being so diabolically clever as it is claimed to be, it has been merely opportunistic and stupid. But at any rate, the Spanish Civil War demonstrated that the Nazis knew what they were doing and their opponents did not". He adds that "the war



drawings by Clifford Harper

was fought at a low technical level and its major strategy was very simple: that the side which had the arms would win. The Nazis and the Italians gave arms to their Spanish Fascist friends ..."

The Spanish alternative

Now that Russia and the former Eastern bloc is no longer a viable model for the left, some are looking again at the Spain of the 1930s. Jim Allen in his interview echoed this, saying that "Spain in the 1930s is everything" and when he remarks "well look, there is an alternative, we can still go forward, there is another solution. And that was Spain". He claimed Spain in the 1930s was a "defining moment".

Jim Allen didn't seem too put out by the fall of Soviet Communism. He told me that "the truth is that there never had been socialism in the Soviet Union".

Jim Allen is not the only intellectual inspired by the civil war in Catalonia. Noam Chomsky links Cartesian ideals to anarchism, insisting that "if you take their principles and you apply them to the modern period, I think you'd come pretty close to the revolutionary principles that animated Barcelona in the 1930s. And I think that is about as high a level as human beings have achieved in trying to achieve these principles, and I think they are the right ones. Not to say that everything was done right, but ... the idea of developing the kind of society that Orwell saw and described ... with popular control over all institutions, economic, political, and so on ... is the right direction to move. This is not a new idea; in fact, its roots are as old as classical liberalism" ('Creation').

When Orwell landed in Barcelona in 1936 he claimed: "It was the first time I had ever been in a town where the working class was in the saddle" and though some things about it he didn't like, he saw it as something worth fighting for.

More recently the English historian Raymond Carr wrote in his book *The Spanish Tragedy* that "no conclusions on the viability of libertarian communism can be drawn from the troubled life of the [Spanish libertarian] collectives; they lasted long enough to leave in the minds of the idealistic anti-communist left the tantalising remembrance of the ideal society that, for a few brief months, seemed on the way to becoming a reality".

Mr Carr writes that "the collectives were ... starved into surrender by the political enemies of the CNT" (the anarcho-syndicalist trade union federation).

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has over 100,000 trade union members – the largest number of any private sector employer. The level of disillusion revealed by the collapse of New Labour's core vote in the Euro elections may well begin to reveal itself in the workplace. As Hutton, again,

TONY BLAIR MP



I'M TORY PLAN 'B'

ANAGRAM

Union report backs-up Freedom's claims

Another Tameside Scandal

A long-awaited report on the Tameside Care Group, sponsored by UNISON, and published last week confirmed allegations which first appeared in *Tribune* and *Freedom* about the mismanagement of the company and Tameside Council's responsibilities in it. Tameside Council have always insisted that having only 'one single share' in the Tameside Care Group, they could not avert the disaster there which resulted last year in an enforced pay cut, a strike and finally the sacking of more than two hundred careworkers.

On 6th March 1999 *Freedom* followed *Tribune* (the independent weekly Labour paper with whom we had been cooperating in investigating the Tameside Care Group and Tameside Council) in declaring: "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'."

At that time Mike Naughton, the *Tribune* journalist who *Freedom* originally alerted about the careworkers' dispute, argued that 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".

Investigation demanded

Now the union UNISON is demanding an investigation into Tameside Care Group. It wants a check by the Audit Commission on the financial affairs and management of the company.

When the firm was last looked into by the district auditor in 1993 it was called Tameside Enterprises Ltd (TEL). Then the auditor advised Tameside Council, which set up the firm as the first council to privatise care homes, to distance itself from the management of the company.

Last week the *Manchester Evening News* journalist Mikaela Sitford wrote that "the report by UNISON's north west regional office says the council has not distanced itself". On the contrary, she reports, it is claimed the Council "has 'created the worst of both worlds' by setting up Tameside Care Trust to run it".

The Council has one of the six shares in Tameside Care Trust - it is described as a 'golden share'. Ms Sitford claims that the Council "appointed the five other trustees and its officers are advisers to the trust". All these trustees are linked to the Labour Party. UNISON claims: "It [the Council] then mismanaged this structure through political appointments, poor management, weak financial control and lack of transparency".

Which reaffirms the earlier allegations made by *Tribune*'s Mike Naughton and by *Freedom* on 6th March in the report 'Council Godfathers Rumbled - Tameside Offside'.

The *Manchester Evening News* says: "When the Council reduced its fees to the TCG in 1998, the firm brought in new contracts cutting the pay and conditions of the seven hundred workers. As it followed a five-year pay freeze, two hundred workers went on strike and were later sacked."

The Council's claim that it could not step in and settle the dispute because "it had no control over the firm" now looks weak. The UNISON report bluntly rejects this, arguing for not just an investigation by the Audit Commission, but a 'best value organisational review' to expose the Council's hand behind the management of the company.

Noel Pine, the local branch secretary of UNISON, claims the report "clearly reveals that the Council, while denying this to the people of Tameside, was inextricably linked to the company through the Trust". He added that "nothing has been learned since the TEL scandal".

More sell-offs to come

TEL (Tameside Enterprises Ltd) went belly-up earlier in the decade, and this was reported fully in *Freedom* at the time.

None of scandals seem to be deterring Tameside Council from further adventures and sell-offs. The UNISON report observes that in spite of all the problems the gods have thrown at the Council's attempts to 'hive off' the care homes, it still hasn't stopped them from experimenting with ideas to set up a

trust to run leisure services and to auction off all its council houses to another 'not-for-profit' company.

Last week Tameside Council's chief executive, Michael Greenwood, claimed he had not read the report, but claimed that "the future for the company [TCG] is going to be very different and an announcement will be made shortly".

More misery for the people of Tameside, no doubt!



Freedom Press Bookshop Readers' Round-Up

After three abortive attempts by the publishers to get our copies of the latest *Anarchist Studies* (no. 7/3, £6.95) delivered, they have finally arrived despite, rather than because of, the Post Office. The main articles address how far Emma Goldman supported individual violence in the pursuit of social change; claims that John Locke's philosophy can be interpreted as a doctrine of radical resistance to the state and be of use to anarchists; and the role of the magazine *Green Anarchist* in the radical media. And speaking of that magazine, a recommended, painstaking repetition of its 'primitivism' can be found in *Black Flag* (no. 2/7, £1.50), alongside other lengthy pieces on the origins of welfare as a means of social control; Turkey, Öcalan and the Kurds; the Balkans war from various perspectives; and Italian syndicalism and fascism, plus a good crop of news items.

The Labour government's latest spitting wheeze on the 'education' front, the Literacy

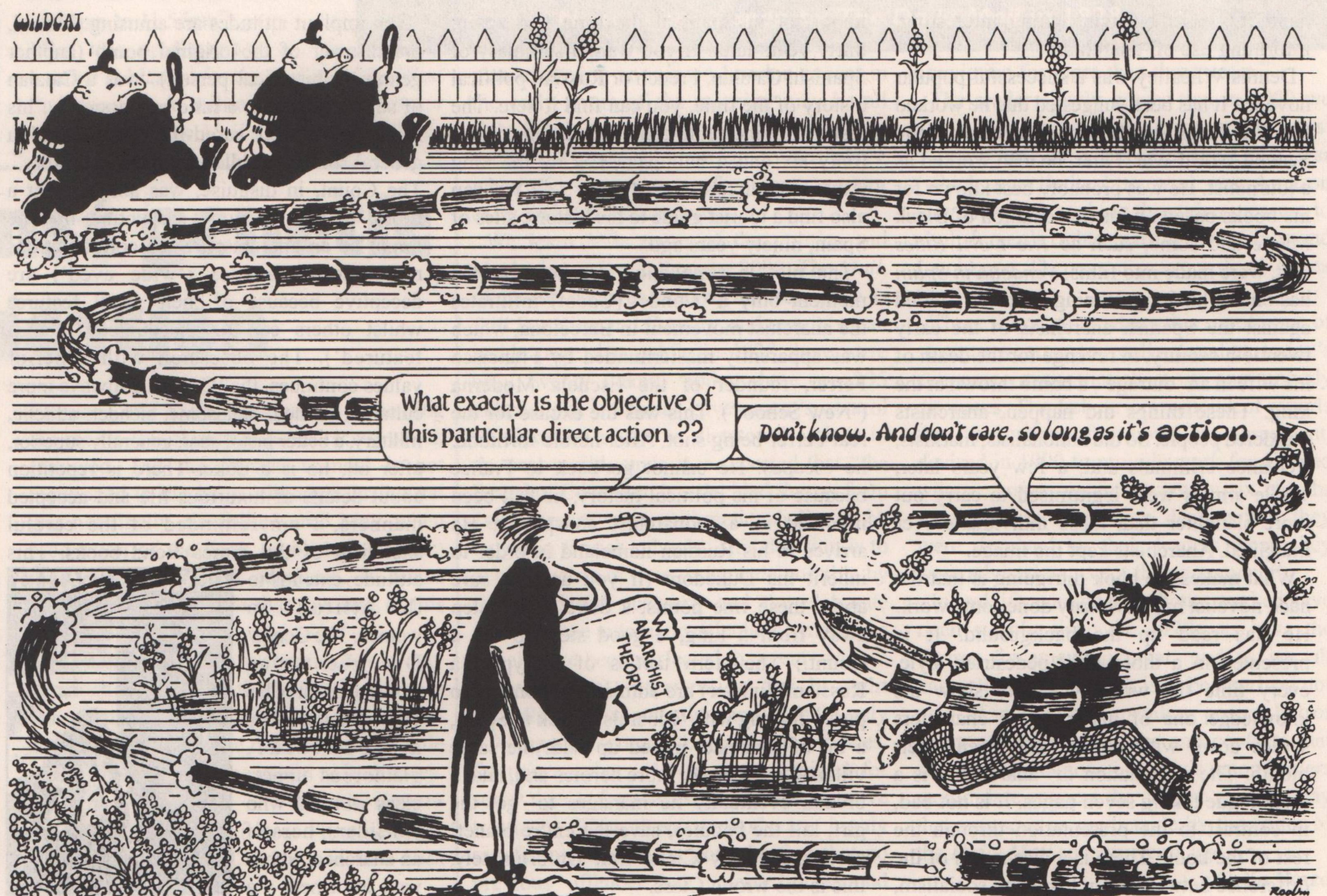
Hour that it is coercing primary schools to adopt, draws the ire of *Lib Ed* (no. 30, £1.50). It lines up no fewer than three articles against this policy, including one actually written by a primary school pupil. Another student, at a progressive school in Devon, gives us the inside story of what it's like and how it operates, and there is a heartwarming account of a non-formal education project that has been set up in north western India and nicknamed the 'Barefoot College'. Copies of the previous issue are also available.

'Them and Us' is the theme of *Direct Action* (no. 11, £1.50) which selects discrimination - by boss and state - ageism, racism, language and the worsening treatment meted out to the world's children as its targets. GM food actions and Kosovo rank among the news items. These are also major topics in *Organise!* (no. 51, £1), together with the Northern Ireland Good Friday Agreement, and part 2 of a series on land ownership and struggles.

Situationist devotees may be interested to

know that a critical biography entitled *Guy Debord: revolutionary* has appeared from the pen of Len Bracken, published by Feral House. At £12.95 for 268 pages, plus an introduction, it is in three sections: 'The Formative years, 1931-57', 'The Situationist years, 1958-72' and 'The Clandestine Years, 1973-94', and has illustrations and photographs throughout. An added and unexpected feature in the appendix is Debord's 'The Game of War', a board game designed by him based on the theories of Clausewitz, the German militarist and writer, using the methods of classical eighteenth century warfare. There follow pages of complex, not to mention baffling, rules plus instructions on how to photocopy and enlarge the board diagram and where to find assorted pieces and dice. Intriguing. We would be interested to know whether anyone succeeds in actually understanding and playing it. A bibliography and index are included.

Four Eyes



The real people's revolution



Arms for the Spanish workers

The Anarchists in the Spanish Civil War
by Robert Alexander
published by Janus Publishing Co., in two volumes at £16.95 per volume

For this writer it is quite incredible that a commercial publisher should speculate on publishing this two-volume, 1468-page history of the Spanish anarchists' role in the civil war which ended just sixty years ago. For this writer (who was publishing a fortnightly anarchist journal *Spain and the World* not mentioned in the 150-page list of 'Index of People and Organisations', nor any mention of Freedom Press titles in print on the Spanish revolution, which is a little disappointing) these two volumes are so rich with material that one wonders how Professor Alexander had the time and energy to put

them together, especially when one gathers from the blurb that he is in his late seventies and has published 35 books!

What is important from the anarchist point of view is that he not only maintains that the "Spanish Civil War has been one of the major events of the twentieth century" but also confirms the reactionary role played by the communists who, in the May days of 1937, assassinated anarchist comrades like Camillo Berneri who, with so many anarchist refugees in France, went and created the militias in Aragon.

It's obviously such a long time ago, but General Franco was in charge of the army in North Africa and after the elections of February 1936 the Azaña government was quite prepared to work with Franco. Had it not been for the anarcho-syndicalist union, the CNT (National Confederation of Labour), which was much stronger than the socialist union (UGT), Franco would have just taken over.

The fact is that the struggle in Spain from 1936 to 1939, as the author of this book confirms, was a *people's* revolution. In the end the military won but, as he also points

out, "what was little recognised in the reporting on the Civil War at the time, and has gone almost unnoticed in what has been written since, is the social revolution that occurred behind the Republican lines with the onset of the war".

Again one of the unique features of the Spanish Civil War were the agricultural and industrial collectives created by the people and not by the government. Gaston Leval in his *Collectives in the Spanish Revolution*



Some recommended books on the Spanish Civil War published by Freedom Press:

Lessons of the Spanish Revolution (1936-1939)

by Vernon Richards

260 pages

£4.00

Spain 1936-1939: Social Revolution and Counter-Revolution

selections from the anarchist fortnightly

Spain and the World

edited by Vernon Richards

270 pages

£5.00

The May Days: Barcelona 1937

including essays by Augustin Souchy, Burnett

Bolloten, José Peirats and Emma Goldman

edited by Vernon Richards

120 pages

£5.95

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(Freedom Press) has gone into detail as to the success of this "people's revolution".

That in the end Franco's military forces won the day will never cancel out the achievements of the people in arms who were seeking to produce a better society, of equals. Yes, CNT-FAI leaders became politicians (at Freedom Press I had to cope with Spanish refugees in 1939, including Juan Lopez who, in 1931, was a Treintista from the CNT and became a minister in 1937) but nevertheless the CNT-FAI was a unique phenomenon in the world of those fantastic years of 1936 to 1939. And this book tells you all about it more than one can in a book review.

Vernon Richards

Here is a linguistic oddity, aren't vendettas supposed to be Italian? It is a book, found by chance, second hand. It is based on an intriguing, interesting, informing use of 'anarchist'.

Dennis Wheatley was a successful popular novelist. It has been suggested that he worked for the Intelligence services during the Second World War. Later, he also worked as a journalist. He was probably best known for his books based on his presentation of Black Magic and some, such as *The Devil Rides Out*, were made into films. *Vendetta in Spain* has one of his long-running characters pitted against the Spanish anarchists of the early twentieth century, in revenge for the death of his wife in an 'outrage', a bomb thrown at the king. These things did happen, anarchists murdered people. So did nationalists, marxists, freelance criminals and, a few years later, whole armies were legitimised to carry out more slaughter than these individuals ever imagined. Anarchists kept the image.

What makes the book intriguing is that the hack novelist has obviously done some work. He has read up the background. It is presented in a thoroughly pedestrian style, every time the writer wants to show his knowledge one of his irritating characters settles down with a drink and opens their mouth. The explanation of 'anarchism' is a monologue taking seven pages. It is not bad, in contrast to the presentation through the rest of the book. There is a discussion of the difference between anarchism and socialism,

Vendetta in Spain

important in Spain at the time and again, thirty years later. If you want a summary of Spanish, Catalan, French or Russian political history of the time, you can find it here. The history of nineteenth century Spanish politics (only six and a half pages) is by the king ("this long dissertation of mine...") You can also find a tourist guide to the historic sites of Spain, ninety years ago.

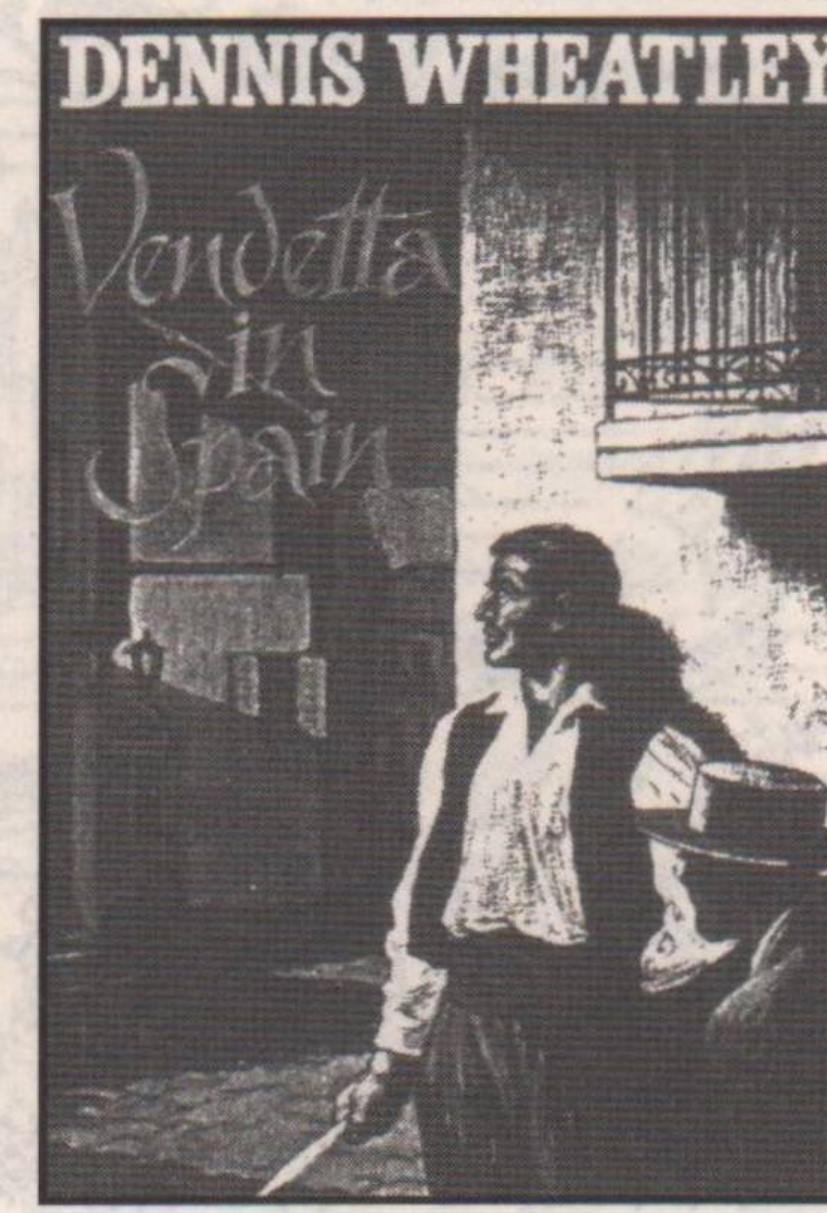
The plot is simplistic. The hero, at the moment only a 'Conde' (Count) infiltrates the anarchist movement in Barcelona, which was apparently masterminded by Francisco Ferrer, founder of the Escuela Moderna ('New School'). This was the excuse for the real Ferrer being shot. After heroic fortitude, he escapes. He cannot go back to France because of his political history, he had been involved in a monarchist conspiracy. He arrives in his Russian homeland in order to inherit his Dukedom (if you are not sure about these fine points, a duke is one step away from a king, a good step up for a Count.) The stern tactics of Stolypin (a Russian Minister) are admired, in contrast to pussy-footing with 'Liberals'. Back to Spain, a bit of romance, mixed up with the same villains, recognised, more heroics and, take a breath, eventually he manages to 'get the girl, kill the baddies, save the entire planet' as suggested by Class War. Unfortunately, this is the wrong Class.

The implicit attitudes are amusing. Morral, the thrower of the original bomb (another genuinely historical person) "was a Catalan of superior type... a mild expression... his hands were well cared-for and he had a general air of middle class respectability". The Count, in disguise, was able to rent a room "without anyone suspecting that he might be an anarchist". Such contradictions recur, some fanatics ('wide eyed') are deceptive because of their small features whilst others can be discounted ('coarse featured'). The obsession with superior values continues, the 'Conde' is always more cultured, refined, handsome, slender, athletic, military, a better pistol shot, generally superior, after all, he is a duke. There is repetition about details of luxurious life and accepted manners, I am reminded of the careful snobbism of the James Bond books. This attitude extends to the attitude to women. The Conde/Duc, recovering from the death of his wife, is seduced by a beautiful, glamorous upper-class woman, who considers herself an anarchist. She is well informed, via

the pen of the narrator. This is allowed. There is a wild, passionate gypsy woman. This is allowed, because she is a primitive. Women around the anarchist movement receive less sympathy. They believe in 'free love', which means they 'let him have his way'. One, who, to be fair, has been a nuisance, abetting our hero being beaten up and nearly murdered, is given a head-butt, smashing her "fleshy, Semitic nose". A valuable lead in tracing the core of the vicious anarchist conspiracy is through a gullible female, "one expects a certain frailty in women".

There is some irony - a modernly debased word - about our hero's trial as an anarchist conspirator. He is in a military court martial, with no real defence, only an uninterested army officer. Nearly straight out to the firing squad. This is just the sort of justice for anarchists of which he approves. In theory. There is a mention of Kropotkin, that research again, "educated men who become mentally deranged". Then *with one bound* our hero is free. There is some coincidence about evidence and a pair of embroidered slippers. All wrapped up in a few pages, congratulated by various aristocrats, kings and such and surviving to defeat real devils in later books. Knockabout fun. Similar books are still being produced but the devils change. Anarchists, Yellow Perils, Fundamentalists, Environmentalists. Take your pick

David Peers



— ANARCHIST NOTEBOOK —

Millennium as Foreseen

Moving house dislodges piles of trivia that might come in useful some day. That day is nearly here for my copy of the *Daily Mail* for Saturday 1st January 2000. It was a 24-page tabloid produced by that paper's staff in February 1920 for the Daily Mail Ideal Home Exhibition. It was already forty years old when I bought it at the primary school jumble sale and put it aside to read next January, but promptly forgot about for another thirty years.

Its pages are yellow, not through age but because "sunlight yellow stimulates without tiring the retina", while the deep violet ink is said to give off a heavy percentage of ultra-violet rays. "Too long a scrutiny at short range may give rise to slight sunburn. In no case, however, will blistering result."

Huxley's *Brave New World* was published four years later, and as with the weightier forecasts and utopias, the fun is in predictions that came true and those that didn't. Television is given much attention. Although in 1928 Baird had given a demonstration in colour, regular black-and-white BBC transmissions did not begin until eight years later. The paper provides both High Wave and Low Wave programmes for 1st January, and its critic, discussing Medium Wave, remarks that "the policy of restricting programmes from this station to operas, lectures, speeches and talks has proved a dismal failure."

Plenty of inventions are described that have not yet happened: sleep-learning, for example. A photograph shows High-Speed College pupils sleeping while the memory-impressors inject a term's work in one night. The family 'Hydraerocar' travels on land, sea or air. But an editorial describes how "With the growing exhaustion of the oil and coal on which mankind once depended for the generation of mechanical power, the present age has been driven back on recourse to the internal heat of the earth, and thus a marked advantage has been given to those countries which possess volcanoes and volcanic centres of force. The renaissance of Iceland is one of the great events of the later twentieth century ..."

Medical news is surprising. The President of the Royal Academy sends in two photographs of women to warn us about the vanishing chin. The normal kind is achieved by either three meals a day or by jaw exercises, while

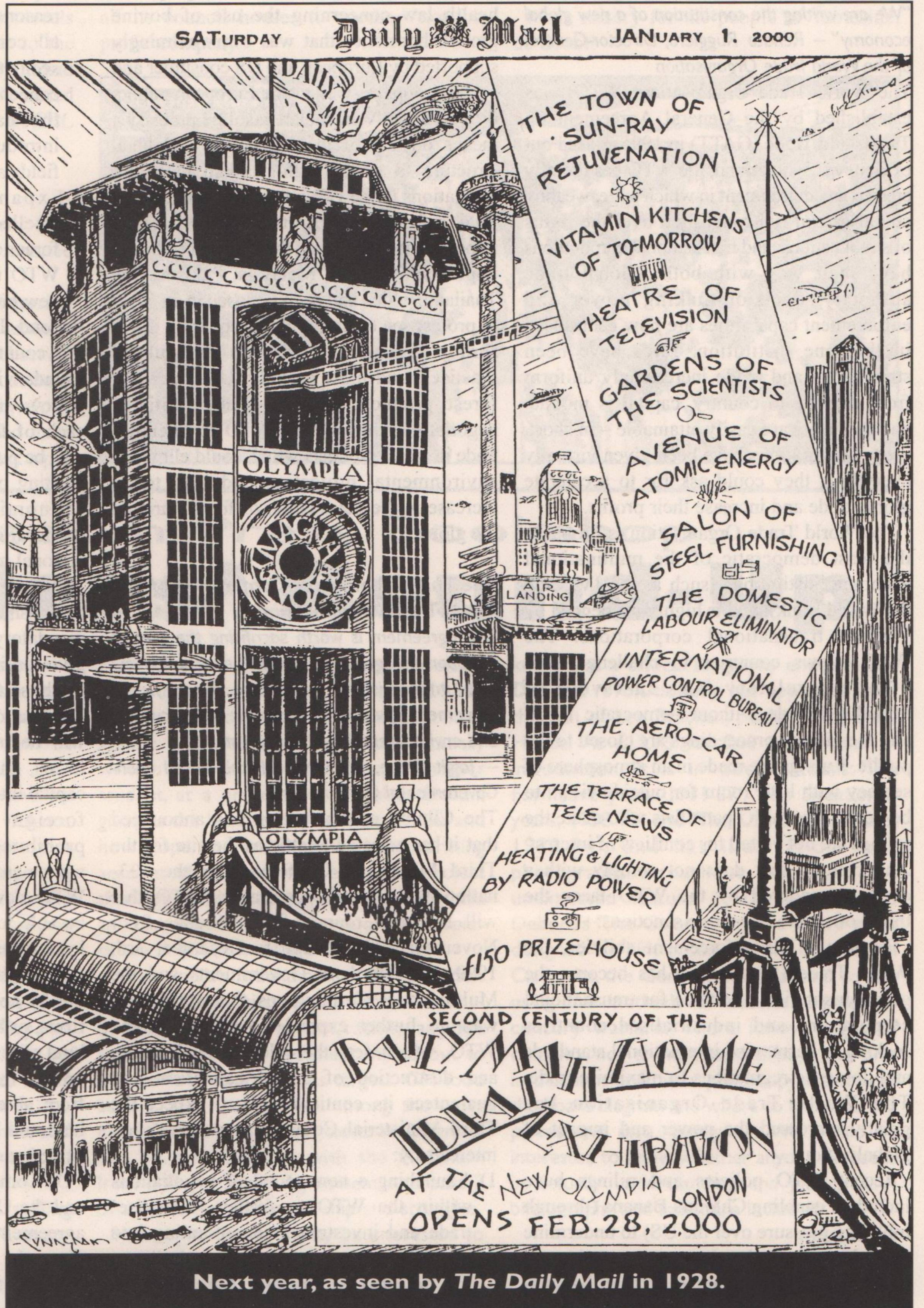
the ideal advocated by the Chelsea Women's Club has a receding chin resulting from a third generation of tablet diet and no mastication. However, "the Ministry of Health assures us that our daily allowance of three ultra-compressed food tablets is quite enough to keep us at full efficiency".

Meanwhile another news item reports that, "In a Devonshire farmhouse a Government Health Inspector has discovered a couple who (influenced by a grandmother) insisted on rearing their child under their own roof instead of at a public institution. At the age of five the child still retains both tonsils and its appendix, which should, of course have been removed when it was vaccinated. The child seemed to be in the best of health, and this fact has had the most unsettling effect upon the rural population."

Agriculture has been rationalised. At Yarmouth, "herrings are being herded to swim direct from the North Sea into the bloater factories", while a Cheddar farmer has patented a method of making cheese from grass, "thus eliminating the cow". The Minister of Agriculture deals with a glut of eggs by issuing an order that no hen must lay more than two eggs for the next three weeks.

A fundamental change has been governmental control of the weather. The forecast from the Weather Ministry explains that "rain has been ordered until noon today over Norfolk and Suffolk and Essex by request of farmers. Elsewhere in Great Britain rain will not be permitted except for the customary cleansing showers from 4am to 5am and from 11.45pm to 11.55pm".

But this predictability of the weather is blamed for the decline of the West End theatre. A millionaire theatre owner complained to the *Mail's* reporter that: "This



Next year, as seen by The Daily Mail in 1928.

Facts against genetic modification

Genetic engineering, food, and our environment

by Luke Anderson

published by Green Books, 160 pages, £3.95

Some opponents of genetic modification have difficulty arguing the case, because their opposition is based on 'gut feeling' and they do not have much actual information. This is the book for them, stuffed with facts, uncompromisingly hostile to GM and inexpensive. There is an accurate, condensed account of the basic science and technology in the first chapter.

The author, a prime mover of the Totnes Genetics Group, organised the conference of scientists in support of Dr Arpad Pusztai in

February, and had a large part in fomenting the media 'Frankenstein foods' scare which followed. But the Pusztai scandal is not mentioned in the book, although Dr Pusztai was not finally discredited until May, when production of the book (published in June) must have been well advanced. It seems reasonable to conclude that the data in this book are incontestable.

Of course the data are presented in a way which shows them in the best light for only one side of the GM controversy. But it is not difficult to separate the data from the hostile gloss. This book will be useful to both sides.

Donald Room

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plan of having no rain on London except in the early hours of the morning may be all right for pleasure-seekers, but it is killing the theatres. People will not go to see plays, when they can go to roof gardens, outdoor cafes and river restaurants."

We learn little more of the politics and ideologies active in the year 2000. The *Mail*, of course, declares itself on the front page as Still For King and Country, and reports on an inside page that, while in 1928 there were only twenty dukes, "today there are 235 dukes alone". Central government's control of education seems as dictatorial as it is in the real world, since it is reported that "the Board of Education has decided that as from 1st February next arithmetic shall not be taught in British schools. This decision is to avoid a waste of time. It is made possible by the wonderful accuracy and the elaborate nature of the automatic calculating machines which have been perfected in recent years."

Government intervention has brought dwindling crime statistics, and in 1999 only 1,984 people committed criminal offences. Of this number, "1,708 were detained for some weeks for the usual medical curative treatment. That these methods are highly satisfactory is evident from the fact that no previous offender has received a second

conviction for more than three years."

The reader slowly grasps that in 2000 we are ruled by women. A protester says: "Today, only 82 years after the Great War (which men helped to win) our Amazon Government is rushing through a measure to abolish men's rights, starting with Clubs and Latchkeys. There is a grave risk of a Sex Civil War."

There is one point where this spoof issue of seventy years ago really touches today's concerns, even though it is one nobody discusses. The Labour correspondent reports that "the national four-hours day agreement, devised in 1990 to provide work for all who want it, comes up for review in six months time. The workers now declare that they were deceived by their leaders when they were advised to accept the agreement."

In real life average daily hours worked have risen steeply since the 1970s, as have the figures for unemployment, and as we all know, to be out of work is to be deprived not only of income and spending power, but of many of the relationships and contacts that sustain life. Yet none of today's union leaders would dare suggest the shorter working day that was seen as predictable by the editor of the *Daily Mail* seventy years ago.

Colin Ward

Global Threat of the WTO

What is the World Trade Organisation?

"We are writing the constitution of a new global economy" – Renato Ruggiero, Director-General of the World Trade Organisation

The World Trade Organisation (WTO) was established by the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) in 1995. Based out of Geneva, Switzerland, the WTO has literally created an environment in which large, wealthy countries can run roughshod over the rights of small nations, and transnational corporations have their way with both. Global trade authority, decision-making power and enforcement capabilities are now centralised in this one institution, rules have been streamlined and made increasingly uniform from country to country, capital is mobile, and resources are easily attainable – in short, mega-corporations have been given virtually everything they could ask for to accelerate global trade and increase their profits.

The World Trade Organisation is probably the least democratic of the multinational economic institutions (such as the IMF and the World Bank), and is highly influenced by Western transnational corporations. The WTO allows countries to challenge each other's regulatory laws in favour of liberalised trade without democratic input, and the dispute proceedings are closed to the public. Rulings are made in an atmosphere of secrecy with little room for outside views to be heard. The WTO panellists who make the rulings are not vetted for conflicts of interest. Any country that does not comply with a decision rendered by the WTO faces the threat of severe economic sanctions.

Because of its enforcement abilities, the World Trade Organisation has become the global institution of choice for transnational corporations and industrialised countries seeking to harmonise international standards and domestic regulations to maximise trade. The World Trade Organisation has greatly increased the power and impact of globalisation.

Recent WTO policies and rulings have included: enabling Chiquita Banana (through lobbying pressure over the US) to undermine crucial economic development strategies and thus the entire economies of tiny, banana-producing nations in the Caribbean in order to increase its already dominant share of the European banana market; assisting the US

Cattlemen's Association in defeating a public health law concerning the use of bovine growth hormones that was overwhelmingly supported by European and US consumer and health groups, as well as the European public; providing the Venezuelan gasoline industry a means outside of the US policy and legal structure to evade high-standard clean air regulations in the US; a formal ruling against Thai government efforts to ban cigarette imports; a ruling against the US ban on shrimp imports from India, Malaysia, Pakistan and Thailand, which had been imposed in an effort to protect sea turtles, which frequently die in shrimp fishing nets through unregulated practices; and most recently, US paper and forest products industries have initiated negotiations through the WTO to liberalise trade in wood products which could eliminate environmental protection and lead to an increase in the devastation of forests around the globe.

The Third Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organisation

"No agreement is worth sacrificing the lives of the poor. No agreement is worth enriching a few and impoverishing an entire country. No agreement is worth the economic, social, cultural and environmental death of a nation."

– Jagjit Plahe, Econews (Nairobi-based Non-Governmental Organisation)

The Clinton administration has announced that it has selected Seattle as the site for the Third Ministerial Conference of the 133-nation World Trade Organisation (WTO) that will launch a round of global talks from November 29th through to December 3rd, 1999. The Northern Governments and the Multinational Corporations the world over want to further expand the regime of the WTO, which sets the rules of exploitation and destruction of global capitalism and guarantees its continuity. They expect the Third Ministerial Conference to serve their interests by:

- 1) Launching a new round of negotiations within the WTO to further 'liberalise' trade and investment, incorporating into the WTO regime an agreement similar to the defeated Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) that was negotiated in the OECD (among others);
- 2) Expanding the Agreement on Agriculture

of the WTO, which is one of the main reasons for the misery of small farmers in all continents, the elimination of food security measures, the increasing the concentration of productive resources in the hands of agribusiness and the introduction of genetic engineering in fields and kitchens all over the world;

3. Expanding the Trade Rights on Intellectual Property (TRIPs), which forces countries which are members of the WTO to give private property rights on new bio-engineered organisms.

Beyond this, other important issues that the rich countries are planning to include on the agenda will be investment rules, competition policy, and government procurement. On each of these topics, developing countries will be pushed to give up more and more of existing policies that protect their domestic economies, and allow multinational corporations the right to take over their national markets.

On the Investment Issue, the rich countries are pushing to introduce rules that make it mandatory for all WTO-member countries to give foreign investors the right to enter and establish themselves, with 100% ownership. Transnational corporations and foreign firms will be treated as well as (or better than) locals, and restrictions on the free flow of capital into and out of the country (and on the foreign firm's operations) would be prohibited. Needless to say, if such an agreement were to be passed within the WTO, developing countries would no longer be able to give preferences or protection to local investors, firms or farmers. They would face the threat of having their products wiped out by competition from the bigger foreign firms, or being taken over by them. Also, the kind of restrictions that some countries place on the inflow and outflow of loan capital from abroad, and on foreign ownership of land and houses, may come under question or be banned altogether.

On Competition Policy, the European Union and the United States are advocating a new agreement that would look unfavourably on domestic laws or practices in developing countries that favour local firms. For example, if there are policies that give importing rights to local firms, or if there are practices among local firms that give them superior marketing channels, these are likely to be called into question. The rich countries would argue that such policies or practices create a barrier to foreign products or corporations, which should be allowed to compete on 'equal' terms as locals. Developing countries may argue that only if local agencies or firms are given certain advantages, or if they have built up distribution systems over the years, they should be allowed to keep these advantages. Providing the giant international firms equal rights would overwhelm the local enterprises which are small and medium-sized in global terms. However, such arguments will not be accepted by the rich countries, which will insist that their giant firms be provided a 'level playing field' to compete 'equally' with the smaller local firms.

On Government Procurement, the rich countries are actually casting their eyes on the lucrative business of providing supplies to and winning contracts of the public sector in the developing countries. At present, government expenditure is outside of the scope of the WTO, unless a member country voluntarily joins the 'plurilateral' agreement on government procurement. The aim of the rich countries is to bring government spending

policies, decisions and procedures of all member countries under the umbrella of the WTO, where the principle of 'national treatment' will apply. Under this principle, governments in their procurement and contracts for projects (and probably also for privatisation deals) would no longer be able to give preferences or advantages to citizens or local firms. The bids for supplies, contracts and projects would have to be opened up to foreign firms and multinational corporations, who would be given the same (or better) chances than locals. It is proposed that foreign firms and multinationals that are unhappy with a specific government's decisions can bring the matter to court in the WTO. Since government expenditure in some countries is bigger in value than imports, such an agreement to procurement under the WTO rules would tremendously enlarge the scope of the WTO.

Confront your global capitalist oppressors!

"Only a massive worldwide outcry against these policies can stop this onslaught on the lives of millions of people and on the future of the planet." – People's Global Action (international network of workers, small farmers and indigenous groups)

Due to the destructive economic, environmental and social impact of the World Trade Organisation's global trade authority, activists from around the globe are mobilising a massive opposition to the Third Ministerial Conference to be held in Seattle at the end of this year. When the World Trade Organisation met in Geneva, in May 1998, they were met by an unexpected opposition of over 10,000 people. In what was described as "a state of siege," activists from all over the world, under the banner of the 'People's Global Action' organised a series of protests, marches, and direct actions that brought Geneva to a standstill. The militant opposition to the WTO climaxed as "the city erupted into the worst rioting since 1932".

Not to be outdone by our European counterparts, North American activists have been busy organising and making preparations for this year's WTO Ministerial Conference. In Seattle, over 80 community activists have already formed an ad hoc steering committee to organise the logistics of a regional 'Mobilisation Against Globalisation'. In Washington DC, the Citizen's Trade Campaign (CTC) formed a WTO Working Group. The International Forum on Globalisation (IFG) is planning an ambitious Seattle Globalisation Teach-In for the weekend prior to the Ministerial. Art & Revolution has announced that they will participate in street demonstrations with some lively giant puppets and other props. A Second 'Inter-Continental Caravan' (based after this year's Caravan through Europe by hundreds of activists) has been organised by representatives of Latin American movements, which will travel through Latin America and the US, finishing off in Seattle. And the People's Global Action will co-ordinate actions all over the world to coincide with this Conference.

E-mail lists have been set up to organise against the Third Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organisation.

To subscribe, send a message to: <PGA_Seattle99-subscribe@listbot.com>

For more information, please write to: <PGA_Seattle99-owner@listbot.com>

or go to:

<http://members.aol.com/mwmorrill/pga.html>

A separate list for the International Action Against Capitalism – No To World Trade Organisation, Seattle (and International) has also been set up at: <http://no2wto.listbot.com>

Mark

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No. 39

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Things can only get better

Dear *Freedom*,
I have been reading John O'Farral's *Things Can Only Get Better*. It is the story of John's days as a Labour Party activist during the long dark years of Thatcher during the 1980s. John and I seem to have had a lot in common during this period. We both went to university at the same time. We were involved in all the same CND marches and actions in the early 1980s. We both attended endless 'die-ins' (once, in my case, somewhat bizarrely outside the head quarters of the Bradford & Bingley Building Society in Bradford's Foster Square – to this day I am unsure of the exact role of the Bradford & Bingley played in the West's Military Industrial Complex!) We both joined the Labour Party at the same time and ended up as researchers in the House of Commons, again at the same time, for Labour MPs (Alf Dubbs in his case, Oonage McDonald in mine). Both MPs lost their seats (and us our jobs) in the 1987 general election. Maybe John and I met by the photocopier in the House of Commons (I do not remember, although I did once meet Roy Hattersley – he asked me to do his copying!) We also both stood for local council at the same time. Standing in the Tory Poll Tax flag ship of Battersea he did not get elected. I stood in the more solidly working class area of Sittingbourne and did. We even seemed to have got married and had kids at the same time. We are also both from Berkshire for goodness sake! When we left at the start of the 1980s the Labour Party in the county lost about a third of its total activists! Of course there are some differences. John is one of the country's leading comedy writers. I am not. He supports Fulham. I have stayed loyal to Berkshire's finest (and to be fair only) football team Reading FC. He is still a member of the Labour Party, whoops sorry, New Labour. Two years after being elected a councillor I resigned my membership – sick of Labour's support for the Gulf War, sick of expulsions, sick of other Labour councillors not standing up for those who could not afford to pay the Poll Tax, sick of Labour's lurch to the right etc., etc.,

After a brief flirtation with the Green Party I decided to abandon all reason and 'Become An Anarchist'. To be honest in my pre-Labour Party days I had described myself as an anarchist, although at the time I largely believed all this meant was knowing off by heart the lyrics of Crass and Poison Girl's songs. Also at university I did belong to the Bradford Libertarian Socialist Group which, following an unholy alliance with the Federation of Conservative Students nearly succeeded in voting away the local Students Union. After this, though, I decided that I should try to be serious and joined the Labour Party.

What really got me thinking reading John's book is how, after having practically identical political careers for a whole decade, he could end up happily voting and supporting Blair and New Labour and I end up in the anarchist milieu. Dismissing completely the possibility that this may be due to some rather serious flaw in my personality, I tried to think back over the last seven or so years and to what made a difference to me. A number of things occurred to me. My experience of actual political power working in the House of Commons for a year and being a local authority councillor really cured me of any illusion that people who seek power do it for noble reasons (there are exceptions to this but they are few and far between in my experience). It is an anarchist cliché but you really should not give power to people who want it. I was also aware of the limits of political power. As a councillor I was elected by people who wanted us to oppose the Poll Tax. One of the first votes on Council (which every Labour councillor but me supported) I was involved in was to employ an extra firm of bailiffs to seize goods off of non-payers! This is not what people locally wanted or had voted for but that is what the Council did.

The biggest thing for me was realising that voting is part of the problem not the solution. Like John, and he writes at length about this in his book, I used to get angry when people did not vote. I used to rant on about the suffragettes and people dying for the right to vote. But, of course, the suffragettes did not

lobby their MPs nor did they wait for people to vote for change. They took serious direct action. Activism and campaigning changes things not voting. Today I do not vote. Not voting is, in fact, the fastest growing political movement in Britain. More people voted in the final of ITV's *Stars In Their Eyes* than the last Euro Election. John is still wedded to the idea that voting and governments can work. This creates limits. It prevents the visualisation of something better. Realising that voting is near pointless is a real liberation.

By the end of John's book (which is in fact very good) I confess I was feeling somewhat smug. Unlike him I had not sold out. I had seen the light. But ... the problem is, if we are really serious about creating a society based on anarchist ideals we need to convince people like John that anarchism is feasible and better than what we have now. It has taken me nearly two decades to get where I am politically. A journey that has taken me from the SWP (three weeks), to the Labour Party (twelve years), to the Green Party (two years) and 'I Cannot Be Bothered I Want A Break' (one year) to anarchism.

Anarchism is growing in this country. What we really need to think about, if we want to bring about real and lasting change, is how we can reach out to more people, challenge the media stereotypes of anarchism and anarchists and convince people like John that there is a better alternative. If we manage this then things really could get better.

Richard Griffin

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Dutch Bookfair to be held in Utrecht

Hi there,
On the 23rd of October an Anarchist Bookfair will be held in political-cultural centre ACU (a former squat) in Utrecht, Holland – and undoubtedly inspired by the annual Anarchist Bookfair at the Conway Hall in London.

Coincidentally this day will also be the birthday of Arthur Lehning, a Dutch anarchist and essayist, who won last years PC-Hooftprize, a prestigious literary prize in Holland. He will be 100 years old, if he is still alive then.

We would like to invite Freedom Press to come and join the bookfair, although we do not have as much space as in the Conway Hall – it's a week after London's Anarchist Bookfair. Do you know other organisations in the UK who might be interested in our bookfair?

Peetje Lanser
Anarchistiese Boekenmarkt
p/a Simon Bolivarstraat 91
3573 ZK Utrecht, Netherlands
tel: 030 - 2 721 351
e-mail: atalanta@knware.nl

What is anarchism?

Dear *Freedom*,
It seems the pages of *Freedom* are becoming cluttered by the musings of utopians and individualists (see letters by Colin Johnson and Steve Ash in *Freedom*, 24th July). Of course, in trying to respond to both I will probably not answer either, but you probably know by now that utopians and individualists are, in my opinion, intellectually sterile. Why? Colin Johnson reiterated 'the message' of a letter by Donald Room

(*Freedom*, 26th June) which suggested that anarchists should "aim for perfection". Call me cynical, but 'perfection' doesn't exist. Logically, then, it is impossible to aim for. As such, the position of the utopian anarchist – no matter how convivial – is utterly useless for the development of tactics and practices that may further the emergence of social relationships based in mutuality and egalitarianism.

As for individualists ... well, "the absolute freedom of the individual", Steve – which seems to have more resonance with bourgeois notions of hedonism than anarchism – is a somewhat blunt response to authority and power. After the state and capital we will not be in the Garden of Eden – we will have a world to build and it will be built not on the absolute freedom of individuals but on hard work, discipline and the creative application of new ideas to new situations. Anarchism, then, is a concrete project for the transformation of the present. Thought of in any other way, it is merely a quaint and implausible – though occasionally offensive – political idea. Which do you want it to be?

Paul Tremlett

— COPY DEADLINE —
The next issue of Freedom will be dated 21st August, and the last day for copy intended for this issue will be first post on Thursday 12th August.
♦ ♦ ♦
If possible contributions should be typed using double-spacing between lines, or can be sent as text files on disc (with a print-out please).

Fermin Rocker

The East End Years

A Stepney Childhood

with drawings by the author

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

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

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anarchist quarterly

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Culture and Ideology

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- 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

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Meetings & Events

The London Anarchist Forum

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

— PROGRAMME 1999 —

- 6th August General discussion
 - 13th August The Anarchist Study Project
meets The London Anarchist Forum
 - 20th August General discussion
 - 27th August Anarchism and Ethics
(symposium)
 - 3rd September General discussion
 - 10th September The Nihilist Origins of
Anarchism: a suppressed history (speaker
Steve Ash)
 - 17th September General discussion
 - 24th September Class and Class Struggle:
A Critical Analysis (speaker Peter Neville)
 - 1st October General discussion
 - 8th October Getting Anarchist Ideas Over
(symposium)
 - 15th October Open meeting for any
comrades coming to the Anarchist Bookfair
on Saturday 16th October.
 - 22nd October General discussion
- Anyone interested in giving a talk or
leading a discussion, please contact Peter
Neville at the meetings giving your subject
and prospective dates and we will do our
best to accommodate.

Peter Neville
for London Anarchist Forum

Hackney Solidarity Group

A public meeting on the incompetence of
Housing and Council Tax benefits offices run
by the useless ITNET will take place on
Tuesday 3rd of August at 6.30pm
The Old fire Station, Leswin Road, N16
and there will also be a demonstration
12 noon on Friday 13th August
at the ITNET offices
Dorothy Hodgkin House, Reading Lane, E8

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 22nd August

Industrial West Leicestershire: Whitwick,
Thringston, Swannington. Meet at the John
Storer House car park, Wards End,
Loughborough, at 10am. Walk leader Ray.

Sunday 26th September

Rutland water. Meet at the John Storer House
car park, Wards End, Loughborough, at 10am.
Walk leader Ray.

Sunday 3 1st October

Vale of Belvoir. Meet at the John Storer House
car park, Wards End, Loughborough, at 10am.
Walk leader Ray.

Sunday 28th November

Derbyshire walk to Alport Heights. Meet at
Wirksworth Market Place at 11am. Walk
leader John.

Telephone Vivienne for more info:
01509 230131 or 01509 236028

**I understand that the Cambridge
Anarchist Group is no longer
active. If anybody in the area
wishes to make a connection,
please contact me (A. Stone) on
Cambridge 328906.**

What on earth is humanism?



For a free information pack and book list
about humanism, or non-religious funerals,
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