

FREEDOM

anarchist fortnightly

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2nd October 1999

50p

Strategies of inequality

In 1996, Tony Blair declared that "I believe in greater equality. If the next Labour government has not raised the living standards of the poorest by the end of its time in office it will have failed" (*Independent on Sunday*, 26th July 1996). This week, according, at least to the Department of Social Security Press Office, New Labour began to make good its promise, by "standing up to be counted – setting specific standards against which we'll be judged, tackling poverty and its causes". The publication

of its annual report, *Opportunity For All – Tackling Poverty and Social Exclusion*, is, according to Social Security Secretary Alistair Darling, "a land-mark". New Labour, Darling told a hand-picked audience at the Bromley-by-Bow Centre in Tower Hamlets, are about to commence "the most radical and far-reaching campaign to combat poverty since Beveridge".

The European Union defines poverty as affecting "people below half average income". The proportion below half

average income in the UK has grown in the last 35 years, from 10% in 1961 to 17% in 1995. In the report *Monitoring Poverty and Social Exclusion*, produced for the Joseph Rowntree Trust in 1998, the researchers Catherine Howarth, Peter Kenway, Guy Palmer and Cathy Street note that "no single indicator could possibly capture the complexity of poverty and social exclusion ... income, though, is unique in determining a wider range of choices than any other asset". They go on to observe that "the majority of individuals who experience persistent low income are dependent in part on at least one of the principal state benefits. In 1997, the average weekly payment made to claimants of either Income Support or Job Seekers Allowance was around £58. People spending two years or more on weekly incomes of this size suffer considerable deprivation. Furthermore, the weekly payment does not rise with time, so that as households' goods and clothing wear out, money to pay for replacements must be found from within the same, limited, weekly budget which has to cover all the essential costs of food, heat, power and travel."

The Acheson Report on *Inequalities in Health*, commissioned by the Department of Health, and reporting in 1998, was equally explicit: "The differences in incomes between those on means-tested benefits and those with other sources of income are a major determinant of income inequality in the UK. Among the poorest fifth of the population, the majority have incomes set by the level of means-tested benefit. People on low income ... are more likely to be

(continued on page 5)

You can always rely on the Anarchist Bookfair



THE EIGHTEENTH ANNUAL

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Freedom

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Agents of engineered cuisine and their enemies

Are the North Americans mere innocent agents of social change and genetic modification? Ought we to see them as New England characters in a Henry James novel set amongst tricky and sophisticated Europeans?

There are the English with their trenchant table manners, often more important than the dinner itself; the French, with their subtleties of ingredients and presentation, who often transform food, as Turgenev says, into the opposite of what it tastes like naturally. How can such complicated cultures be expected to swallow the new scientific concoctions coming out of scientific America?

In late August *International Herald Tribune* reported: "Fist raised, moustache bristling, Jose Bove looked defiant as he handed himself in to the French police in the southern town of Montpellier ... 'My struggle remains the same' this farmer declared to an appreciative crowd, 'the battle against globalisation and for the right of people to feed themselves as they choose'."

The *Herald Tribune* described M. Bove as "a sort of Subcommandante Marcos of the French countryside" and "the leader of a self-styled anti-imperialist revolt over food". On 12th August M. Bove led the "ransacking and demolition of a McDonald's restaurant" nearing completion in the southwestern town of Millau. This was the latest in a spate of recent demos against McDonalds.

M. Bove claims that he did it because he is against "the multinational's foul food". It seems that ecologists, farmers, French labour unions and gastronomes have got together to demand M. Bove's release, burying their differences in what the New York journalist Roger Cohen calls "a shared politico-gastronomic outcry".

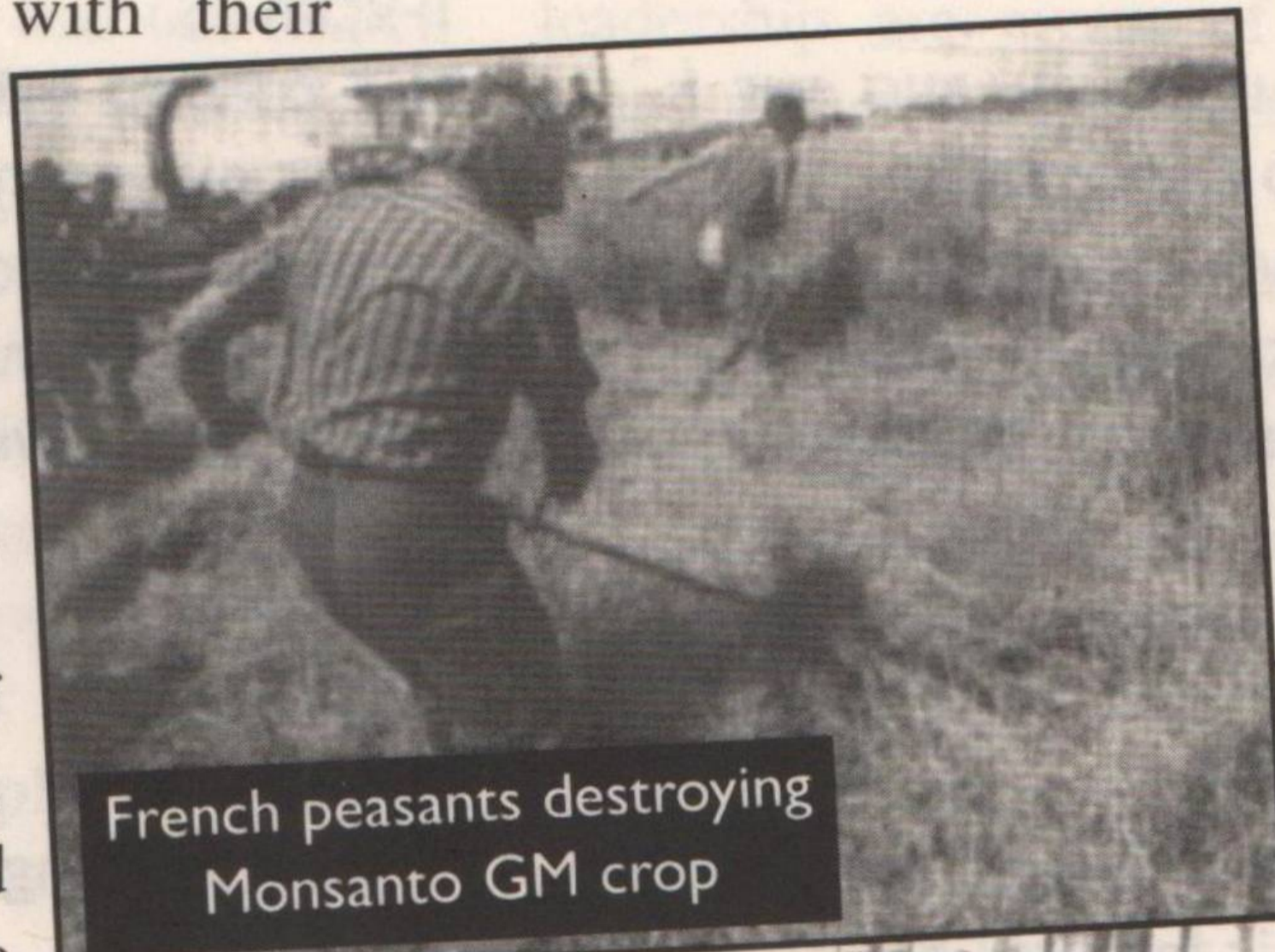
Resistance to US culture and cuisine

This pin-pointing of food is causing some concern in the States, it seems. The McDonald's libel case in this country against two unemployed anarchists and vegetarians had a note of faddiness about it. It had a puritan streak about it and probably involved people who don't enjoy eating anything very much.

In England McDonalds has become the prime target of the left, animal rights petitioners, anorexics and other Jack Spratt type dietetic brigades which thrive here. In France they seem to see their culinary sovereignty threatened by scientific America. "Behind all this lies a rejection of cultural and culinary dispossession" claimed Alain Duhamel, a French political analyst. He

continued: "There is a certain allergy in Europe to the extent of American power accumulated since the Cold War's end, and the most virulent expression of that allergy today seems to be food".

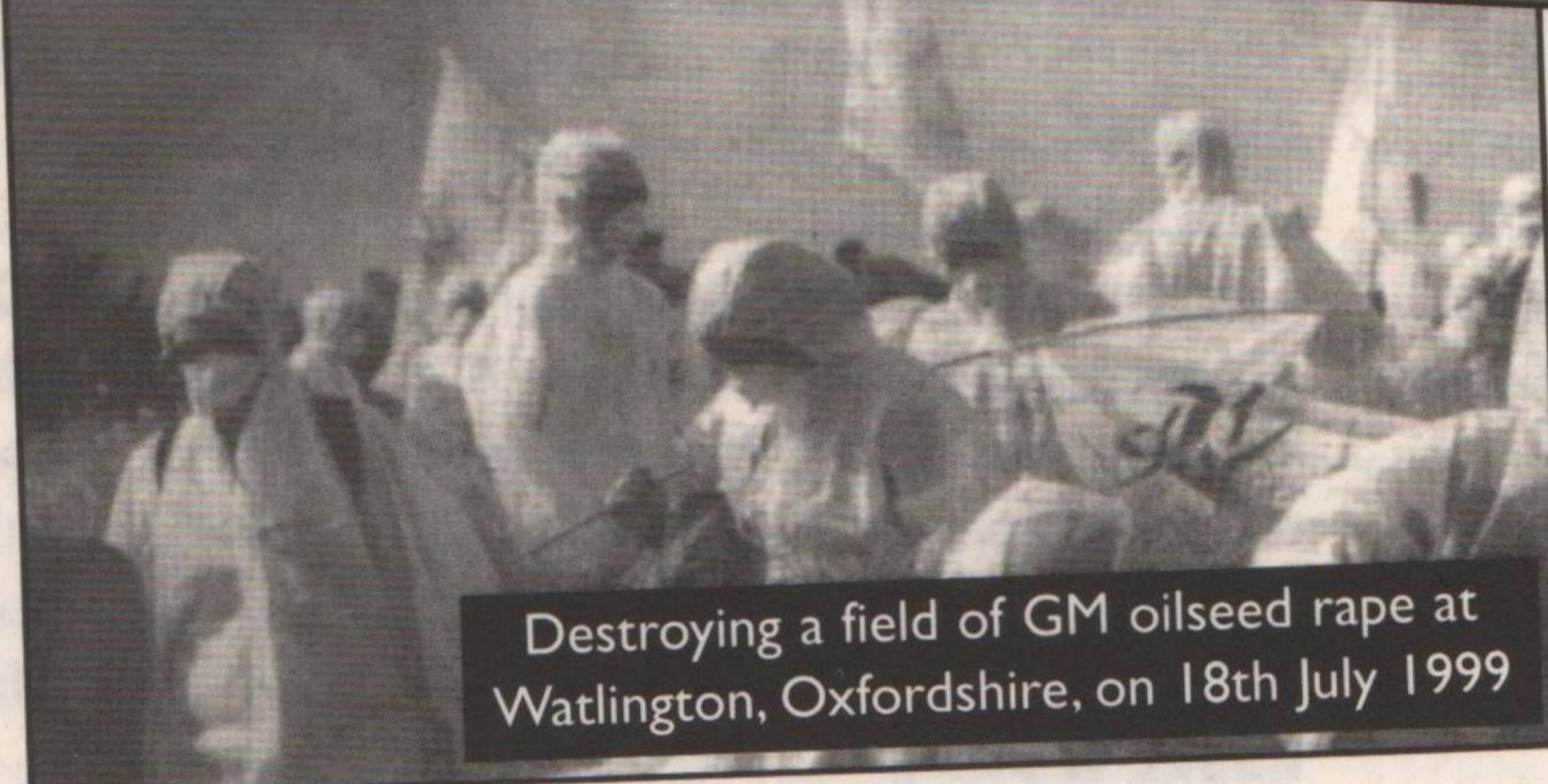
This reaction to US culture and the products it puts out – like Coca Cola, McDonald burgers, genetically modified American corn and beef fattened with growth hormones – seems



French peasants destroying Monsanto GM crop



Demonstrating against GM products



Destroying a field of GM oilseed rape at Watlington, Oxfordshire, on 18th July 1999

to have replaced the deployment of US missiles as a cause of alarm among Europeans. Perhaps it's a feature of what Chomsky said about the centralisation of power. When asked "Are governments inherently bad?" Chomsky replied in 1988, "No, concentration of power is".

The Americans like to go in for things in a big way. They are wilful and often naive, like Henry James's *Daisy Miller* who went to the Roman Colosseum at night only to get bitten by malaria-carrying mosquitoes. This kind of brashness puts off the more sophisticated and devious-minded Europeans.

Trade threat

The *Herald Tribune* (30th August) speaks of "a rapidly spreading distaste for the American culinary way". But it is not just the kitchen and culture which is at issue. In Washington Melody Peterson writes: "US farmers paid premium prices this spring to sow many of their fields with genetically engineered corn and soybean seed but now, as the fall harvest nears, more of the international buyers they depend upon are saying they do not want those crops". The *Herald Tribune* claims that consumers and food companies all over the world are

"shunning the new crops created by genetic engineers at such companies as Monsanto Co., DuPont Co. and Novartis AG".

Share prices in these companies have also been hit by all these doubts. Even in the US, baby food companies like Gerber Products and H.J. Heinz have announced that they will not use genetically altered corn or soya ingredients. Troubled US farmers now point to this year's crop prices – the lowest for more than a decade.

Senator Richard Lugar, head of the Senate Agriculture Committee, declared in the summer that "Europe seems to be gripped right now by a kind of collective madness, and we don't want it to spread to the rest of the world". Already two companies in Japan – Kirin Brewery and Sapporo Breweries Ltd. – have announced that they will revert to traditional corn, which is an ingredient for some kinds of beer.

Japan, which is the largest importer of US crops, wants compulsory labelling of gene-altered products. Mexico, the second largest importer of US corn, had its top producer of tortillas avoiding gene-altered grain.

This year American farmers planted sixty million acres (the size of Britain) with genetically engineered corn and soybean seeds – about half of all the soybeans in the United States and about a third of all corn.

Now Peter Scher, who directs the agricultural negotiations for the United States Trade Office, claims that there "is a very significant trade threat". He says that "the only thing I can tell the farmers is that we are doing everything we can to sell their products overseas".

Consumer concerns are spreading like "an infectious disease", according to the US agricultural secretary, Dan Glickman.

Culinary sovereignty

I think Orwell once said that the USA, being a big country, likes to deal with other likewise big units. It initially opposed the break up of Yugoslavia; it backed the formation of the then European Common Market; it gets on with China; it had a working relationship with the former Soviet Union. It doesn't really have much patience for our European culture of national and ethnic identities.

Hence the *Herald Tribune* journalist Roger Cohen writes on the growing European reaction to the American agents of engineered cuisine: "Behind the 'madness' several factors appear to lurk. The spectre of nature being rendered more uniform by scientists in America has

meshed with a wider fear of an increasingly undifferentiated planet where national distinctions fade. Europeans see on the horizon a uniform, global culinary culture dominated by multinationals – a *Hollywood of the kitchen* drowning any European distinctiveness with sheer marketing muscle".

Patrice Vidieu, secretary general of the *Confederation Paysanne* (the French confederation of peasants), has said: "Culinary sovereignty is imperative!" He went on: "What we reject is the idea that the power of the marketplace becomes the dominant force in all societies, and that multinationals like McDonalds or Monsanto come to impose the food we eat and the seeds we plant".

It seems even in the USA the smaller, family farmers have been lobbying senators over their fears about GM crops. There, according to last month's *Farmers Guardian*, the concern is about farmers "being almost wholly dependent on the big agri-chemical and seed companies".

While the editor of the current *Farmers Guardian* calls for the government to protect the GM trials, it looks like the protests against the culinary engineers will continue. In France the love of food leads to the knife and fork chasing everything that moves. In England the love of table manners and fondness for animals surpasses even our contempt for matters of cuisine. Perhaps in Germany and Austria, with their health conscious organic obsessions ...

According to Mr Cohen, "the merging of militants against global finance and global food" in France has been stirred up by a book by Viviane Forrester, *The Economic Horror*, which has had huge sales there, and the editors of the prestigious *Le Monde Diplomatique*. Over here we've probably all fallen under the spell of Tommy Archer (son of organic farmers Tony and Pat) on the Radio 4 soap opera *The Archers* – Tommy is about to stand trial for trashing GM crops.

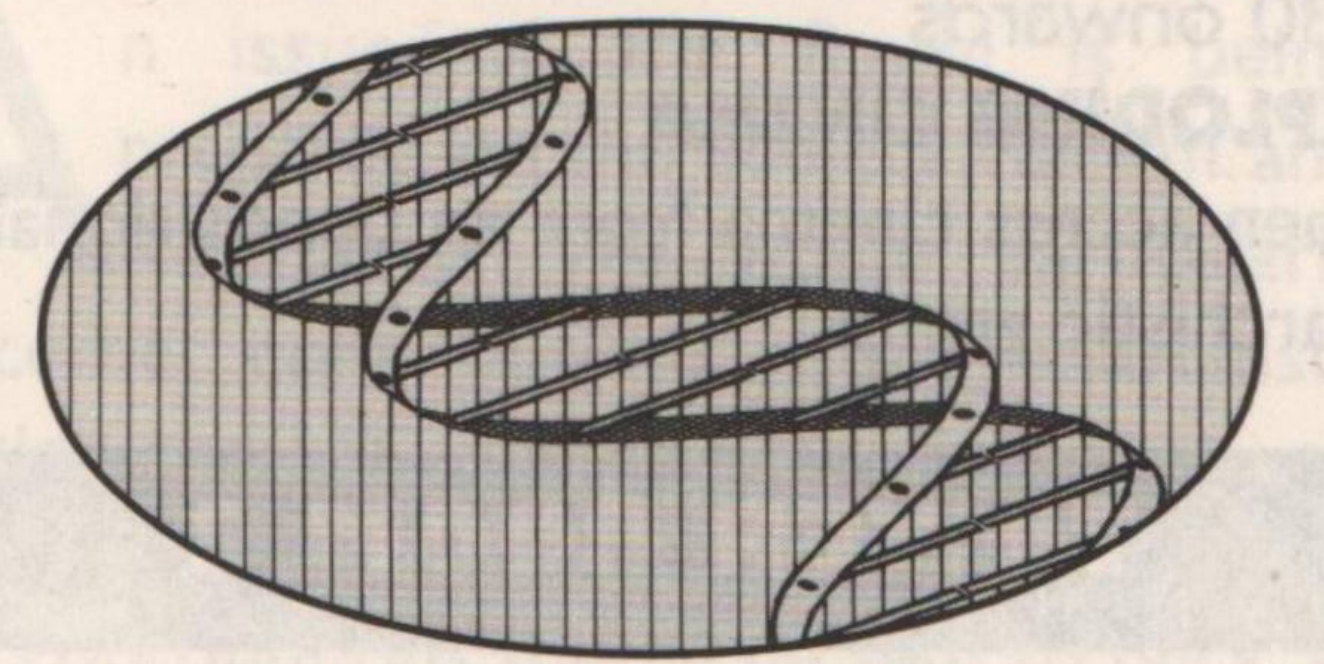
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Number 40 of the anarchist quarterly

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PROGRAMME FOR THE EIGHTEENTH ANNUAL ANARCHIST BOOKFAIR

The Eighteenth Anarchist Bookfair – expect a capacity crowd and human traffic jams! In the main hall and the hallways you'll find anarchist groups and publishers selling (and maybe giving away) everything from new and second-hand books to pamphlets, mags, tracts and rants, to t-shirts, videos, tapes, CDs, comic books and postcards.

But that's not all. In the rooms around the Conway Hall complex, you'll find this is also a day of events and meetings. From activism to academic research, education to sex, alternative comedy to art, the 1999 Anarchist Bookfair shows the astonishing variety of anarchists and anarchism.

ARTISTS' ROOM

12-1pm

ANARCHISTS & SOCIALLY-ENGAGED RELIGIOUS PEOPLE

Can religious and non-religious anarchists and radicals work together? Should they?

1-2pm

MUMIA MUST LIVE

Radical black journalist and activist, Mumia Abu-Jamal has been on Death Row since 1982 on totally fabricated charges. A new execution date is near.

4-5pm

ANARCHIST BOOKFAIR MEETING

Tell us what you think of the bookfair, and how you'd like to see it develop.

5-6pm

ZAPATISTA CHALLENGE NETWORK

The Zapatista revolt has inspired resistance against neoliberal globalisation throughout the world.

TOWER ROOM 1

VIDEO X-TRAVAGANZA!

- 12 noon: **J18** the story the media ignored.
 12.30pm: **Reclaim the Streets** The Movie.
 1.50pm: **Exodus: Movement of Jah People** about the urban squatting collective.
 2.20pm: **The truth lies in Rostock** 3,000 clap as fascists bomb Vietnamese guestworkers in Germany.
 3.40pm: **Counterblast** Against the Monarchy.
 4.20pm: **J18** repeat showing.
 4.50pm: **Movement Against the Monarchy** documentary on Ma'am.
 5.30pm: **Poof** dark comedy.
 6pm: **Two worlds collide** the story of the McLibel two.
 7pm: **Fat Man on a Beach** a surrealist take on life, death and the meaning of nothing.
 7.30pm: **J18** final showing.

TOWER ROOM 2

12-1.30pm

SEMI-DETACHED VIDEO

CRASS in performance. An opportunity to experience the aural and visual assault for which CRASS were rightly famed.

1.30 onwards

EXPLODING CINEMA

Open access cinema from an oppositional anarchistic group.

TOWER ROOM 3

Free all day, for meeting over-runs. Ask at the Bookfair Information Point.

BROCKWAY ROOM

12-1pm

MAYDAY 2000

A FESTIVAL OF ANARCHIST IDEAS & ACTION Building on the successful Bradford '98 conference and the unity in action shown on J18, Mayday 2000 promises to be the event of the year!

A three-day festival of revolutionary ideas and action is to be held at a large, London venue with top-line speakers, loads of meetings, stalls, two big gigs and a mass action on Monday.

This will be a great opportunity to get together large numbers of people who are interested in revolutionary change. Come along to put forward your ideas, find out how you can get involved and discuss it all.

1-2.30pm

RECLAIM THE STREETS: J18!

After June 18th, where now? Two speakers from London Reclaim the Streets debate what should be happening after the enormous success of the June 18th demonstration which rocked the City, with its Carnival Against Capitalism. The meeting will be open for contributions and ideas on future directions.

2.30-3.30pm

THE LANGUAGE OF ANARCHISM

NICOLAS WALTER & THE ANARCHIST RESEARCH GROUP

Most left-wing history concentrates on individuals and organisations considered in hindsight to be socialist or communist or anarchist, whatever they did or didn't call themselves at the time. Little has been said about the words they used, and most sources either ignore the subject or get it wrong. Following work by scholars on the vocabulary of anarchism (mainly in French, English and German), Nicolas Walter will report on the progress on the history of the words 'anarchist' and 'anarchism', together with some allied words and phrases, up to the emergence of the movement calling itself anarchist in the late nineteenth century.

3.30-4.30pm

SUMMERHILL FREE SCHOOL

ATTACK BY THE STATE

Summerhill, perhaps the world's best-known free school and, set up in 1924,

certainly the oldest, is under a real threat of closure from the Labour government.

Michael Newman, who has been teaching at Summerhill for several years, will explain just what the hell is going on, why it's important for anarchists and others to defend this educational experiment and what we can all do to help save Summerhill.

4.30-5.30pm

A FORUM ON THE LIBERATION OF LEARNING

A 'question-time' session (but no experts allowed!) to discuss the ideas behind the slogan and how these ideas are put into practice. A variety of panellists will be involved, including home-schoolers and representatives of both state and free schools. Questions from the audience – and space on the panel too!

5.30-6.30pm

TONY ALLEN THE MILLENNIUM BUG, THE BUTTERFLY EFFECT AND DIRECT ACTION

The question is: when the bug kicks in and the bizarre, high-tech infrastructure of capitalist society starts to malfunction – how do we join in?

6.30-7.30pm

TART WITH A HEART

The Sexual Freedom Coalition contribution to the 1999 Bookfair features British sex star, Mouse, who will perform and discuss the merits of her career as a stag show-girl, messy cake wrestler, nude model, 'erotic' television and hard-core porn star and foot Goddess.

BERTRAND RUSSELL ROOM

10am-1pm / 2-4pm / 6-8pm

GEE VAUCHER CRASS ART & OTHER PRE-POST-MODERNIST MONSTERS

Gee Vaucher, painter, illustrator & member of the anarcho-punk band CRASS, exhibits her paintings and collages to coincide with the publication of her book.

1-2pm

REBEL WORDS JOHN MOORE

Anarchist storyteller John Moore will read from his short fiction. Surrealism, science fiction, Kafka, Blake, radical primitivism are mixed in a dark, brooding, explosive poetic prose.

4-5pm (to be confirmed)

ART IS A WEAPON MARTYN EVERETT

Culture – is it all bourgeois crap? Martyn Everett takes a hard look at some of the artists and poets of anarchism and assesses their street-fighting credibility. With slides.

5-6pm

ANARCHISM, ART & CULTURAL PROJECTS JOHN MOORE

British anarchism scandalously lacks art and cultural projects – crucial elements in the struggle for anarchy. John Moore proposes two potential projects: a cultural anarchist initiative and an activist-oriented guerrilla theatre group.

CLUB ROOM

12-1PM

IAN BONE & MARTIN WRIGHT

The dynamic duo take on the audience with the help of their recent outpourings:

Anarchist, Ian's semi-autobiographical rant and *Camden Parasites* – Martin's words, his brother's life.

1-2pm

THE DREDD PHENOMENON

COMICS AND CONTEMPORARY CULTURE

Launch of Lib Ed's latest book, with author John Newsinger. Are comics just kids' stuff, or are they a window onto our troubled times?

2-3pm

MA'AM

Update meeting for the Movement Against the Monarchy.

3-4pm

THE 21ST CENTURY CLASS WAR

Class War launch their new manifesto, discuss the Countryside Alliance and look at the new book by Dave Douglas, *Class War into the New Millennium*.

4-5pm

LONDON ANIMAL ACTION

5.30-6.30pm

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE LIB ED

Lib Ed have now launched a website, begun contributing to a-infos, and are building links with the straight press. They publish books, but a regular mag is now a struggle. They'd value your ideas.

6.30-7.30pm

ANARCHIST INFORMATION NETWORK

Meeting for anyone interested in working with other non-aligned anarchists.

FOOD AND DRINK

The Anarchist Bookfair has a bar near the Foyer for beer, tea, coffee and soft drinks. Vegetarian and vegan food will be provided by the **Veggies Co-op** in the hallway from lunchtime.

FREE CRECHE

The free crèche facilities will be provided by **I-SIS Crèche** in the room back stage.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

The Anarchist Bookfair

84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1

Tel/fax: 0181 533 6936

email: m.peacock@unl.ac.uk

http://freespace.virgin.net/anarchist bookfair

Look out for the Anarchist Bookfair Information point in the main foyer on the day.



Tameside Labour leader lashes liberals and libertarians

Roy Oldham, Labour leader of Tameside Council, swam like a fish last August as local politics fell into the gutter. Bitterness boiled over at the last full council meeting when the planned council sell-off of all 17,000 council houses was discussed. Even the careworkers' dispute didn't rattle the ruling Labour group this much.

Mr Oldham was so stung by the self-righteousness of the two Liberal members of the council, who are against the sell-off, that he called upon them to "get modern" and come with him and New Labour into the 21st century. Under the new regime of privatised housing, tenants would not have to wait for the council to tell them what colour to paint their window frames. Indeed not, all houses are to be fitted with pastiche window frames to last, like the Third Reich, for a thousand years.

As for the morality preached by the Liberals, Councillor Oldham said: "When the fox starts preaching, keep an eye on the chickens!" Referring to the group calling itself Tamesiders Against the Sell Off, which includes, says the council, "the usual suspects ... extremists and other fringe groups", he said these are "really the outer fringes of society". Of the former careworkers also involved in the campaign, he said some of them stood in the local election in May but none of them got elected.

Carron Wright (Liberal Democrat) tried to point out that Tameside Council, *Tameside Labour Council*, had a bad track record when it came to setting up arms-length trusts. But as she drew attention to the chaotic experiences of the consequences of the sell-off of the old folk's homes with Tameside Enterprises Ltd., which went bang in 1993, and now the Tameside Care Group and the sacked careworkers, she was shouted down and told to keep to the item on the agenda.

In what is effectively a virtual Labour one-party state (the Tameside Tories being in bed with Labour on the council) the two Liberal Democrats (Mr and Mrs Wright) are the only opposition. One leading Labour councillor from Droylsden made this point. Triumphant he said "I nearly called you the Liberal group, but you're only a couple" and then he scolded the Liberals, saying "You always oppose and you always lose!"

Voice from the gutter

Since former Rochdale Labour Councillor Richard Farnell was appointed as Tameside chief press officer, following the departure of his predecessor under a cloud last year, there had been a change in the Labour council's

tack in dealing with opponents. Their approach now would do credit to Dr Goebbels. The tactic is to create a Jew or scapegoat in our midst. In this case the scapegoat for the Labour council's troubles is, they say, 'the political extremist'. Every time there is bother for the Labour Council, their press office puts it out that their detractors are being misled by 'extremists'.

Last October, when there were scuffles outside Ashton Town Hall as sacked careworkers tried to get into the Tameside Council meeting, the Labour Council press office told the *Manchester Evening News* that the careworkers strike had been "hijacked by political extremists [and] agent provocateurs". When the opponents of the council sell-off of council houses held a meeting at Ashton's Enville Club (sponsored by UNISON and the Tameside Trades Council) Mr Farnell was there. Later he told the press that the campaign was dominated by the Socialist Worker's party and the Socialist Alliance (formerly Militant).

Strangely enough, it seems that Mr Farnell served his own political apprenticeship in Militant before becoming Rochdale's youngest Labour councillor ever. He later progressed to become Labour Leader of Rochdale Council, and thence to greater heights as a salesman of second-hand furniture and a hack journalist. Recently it has been reported that Mr Farnell has had to withdraw from active politics in Rochdale owing to the political sensitivity of his senior role as a council officer at Tameside.

Associating with violent society!

Both sides, it seems, are dishing the dirt in the vicious gutter-politics of Tameside. Mr Derek Pattison, the libertarian leader of Tameside Trades Council who has been mentioned in council dispatches along with former careworker Sheila Carpenter and her husband Paul, came close in August to hitting Mr Farnell's fist with his chin in the market square after he called him "fatty Farnell". Pattison and the Carpenters were

accused, in a leaflet put out by the council, of not being council tenants. Pattison has been a council tenant for donkey's years.

Pattison was ensconced in the visitors' gallery of the council chamber during the August attacks on the Liberals by Roy Oldham. He had been relieved of his umbrella and plastic Tesco bag by security guards. As he left the chamber, one female Labour councillor asked Liberal councillor Carron Wright if she was now "associating with the violent society". Then, to add a little colour, she said that she had asked for 'police protection' during the careworkers' dispute because of her fear of Pattison and his 'brother'. It seems this particular lady formerly accused a Labour colleague of sexual assault.

The group of Tamesiders Against the Sell Off (TASO) have described the slurs put around by Oldham, Farnell and the Labour establishment as 'scaremongering'. For TASO, Councillor Wright declared in an open letter: "TASO is opposed to the sell-off

of 17,000 council homes by Tameside Council. We opposed this sell-off because it will inevitably lead to higher rents, loss of tenancy rights and the end of affordable social housing".

In Ashton, Derek Pattison has been accused by veteran anarchist Jim Pinkerton of playing 'old Labour politics'. Indeed, he and other libertarians on the Trades Council have played footsie with some funny people lately. During the careworkers' dispute they became pally with some antiquated Trotskyists. Now, in the TASO campaign, they seem equally happy working with Liberal Democrat politicians.

This is a kind of non-sectarian parish pump politics. It is not surprising that the detractors of Labour boss politics in Tameside should come together as they have done. Most anarchists groups are in big cities and become protest groups. In smaller towns like Burnley, Ashton, Bury, Rochdale or Hebden Bridge, libertarians can get involved in a kind of grassroots community politics - in the TASO of Tameside to great effect.

People in Ashton are asking if Roy Oldham will become the new millennium mayor! Unlike Dick Whittington, will he find gold in the gutter?

Mack the Knife

Pacifists and the Anarchists

A recent feature in *The Guardian* (31st August) reminded us that the Second World War broke out sixty years ago last month. In 'Pacifists look back and wonder' James Meek interviewed some of the veterans of the wartime peace movement, representing the sixty thousand Britons who refused to be conscripted, three thousand of whom were jailed.

We were particularly interested to read the comment of Bill Hetherington, archivist of the Peace Pledge Union: "Officially in 1939 we were going to war to save Poland. It wasn't just a case of people saying Poland was a far-away country of which they knew little, but that they looked back to the experience of the First World War. Millions of people killed - for what? They wondered whether there was going to be another four years of mass slaughter and whether that would actually save Poland."

This is close to the position of the small group of British anarchists who became war resisters - indeed it was in 1940 that Vernon Richards and others started the journal *War Commentary*, which opposed from the beginning not only the propaganda of the capitalist press but also all those, both sincere anti-Nazis and left-wing revolutionaries, who supported the war effort. (*War Commentary* changed its name to *Freedom* when the war ended.)

The most interesting material from *War Commentary*, illustrated with cartoons by John Olday and Philip Sansom, has been reprinted by Freedom Press in a series of volumes. May we recommend *World War - Cold War* (420 pages, £6.95), *Neither East Nor West* by Marie Louise Berneri (192 pages, £4.50) and *The Left and World War Two* (80 pages, £1.95), post free in the UK (elsewhere add 15%).



— COPY DEADLINE —

The next issue of *Freedom* will be dated 16th October, and the last day for copy intended for this issue will be first post on Thursday 7th October.

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).

New and recent arrivals at the Freedom Press Bookshop

Food for Thought ... and Action

The Necessity of Atheism by Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Freethinker's Classics No. 2* published by G.W. Foote & Co. Was it really porphyria that sent old George III bonkers and turned his piss purple? Or could it have been reading this notorious anti-religious tract, considered an outrage in those ultra-religious times? It certainly got Shelley chucked out of Oxford in 1811 and alienated his family, ruining his prospects for good. This new edition of his very first non-fiction prose work makes it cheaply available again, in a smart pamphlet whose entire back cover is an attractive illustration of our Percy. The editor, Nicolas Walter, describes the essay as 'remarkable', and I think I would have been pretty pleased with myself if I'd penned such a work at eighteen. Included is the introduction to the 1906 reprint which sets it in context, an editorial note which discusses Shelley's motivation and the various editions, and a new preface. 28 pages, £1.50.

Alternative Press Review: your guide beyond the mainstream, no. 4/1, AAL Press. A glut of exceedingly worthwhile reading awaits you in this special issue on war in the Balkans. No fewer than six main articles gleaned from a broad swathe of anarchist and alternative media demonstrate that the many North Americans who are against military interventions and war by their government have not been stifled, despite the efforts of the capitalist mass media. Under the rubric 'War Criminals' Noam Chomsky looks at the reality behind Kosovo in 'The Current Bombings – Behind the Rhetoric'; Edward Herman and David Peterson suggest 'Bomb the *New York Times*?'; other writers supply 'Twenty Reasons Why NATO's War Sucks'; 'How the US State Department Recruited Human Rights Groups to Cheer on the Bombing Raids', and more. And the silence from North American radicals over the issue of genetic modification is at last broken with 'Against the Grain', an examination of how not just Monsanto and co., but three government departments are conspiring to make GM foods untraceable in the food chain. 76 pages, £3.50.

The great are great only because we are on our knees. Let us rise! – Max Stirner*
Work is the curse of the drinking class – Oscar Wilde*

It's been so long since I've had sex that I've forgotten who gets tied up first!*
America: the Land of the Free and the Home of the Slave – John Rush*
Help the police – beat yourself up!*

The above slogans are five new stickers from See Sharp Press in Arizona. They will stick to practically anything, and are approximately eight inches by two inches at just 75p each. Award yourself a discount of 5% for orders of five or more.

The Third Revolution: popular movements in the revolutionary era, volume I, by Murray Bookchin, Cassell. A large, fascinating, extremely informative work available, while stocks last, at a mere fraction of its normal price. It examines peasants' revolts in Europe, the English revolution and the American and French revolutions – not just from our present, rearward-looking viewpoint, but from the perspective of the grassroots

participants in the popular movements "that propelled the great revolutions forward to their most radical and democratic extremes". The title comes from the cry taken up independently both by the *sans-culottes* in France in 1793 and the Russian soldiers and sailors of Petrograd and Kronstadt in 1921, both of whom felt that neither the first 'revolution' (to depose an absolute monarchy) nor the second (to replace a more moderate, partially representative government with a much more radical one) had gone far enough, and who demanded "a third revolution". It is these people whom Bookchin is interested in, whether they be the New Model Army and the Levellers and Diggers of the English revolution, or the American militias, Committees of Safety and Shaysites, or the Parisian neighbourhood sections and *sans-culottes* of the French revolution. They were mainly simple, yet often eloquent people who merely wanted the freedom to control their own lives. That's not too much to ask now, is it? Here, their ideas and actions are given the attention they deserve, freed "from the historical dungeons to which many of them have been confined by conventional historians". Besides a preface, the author has also provided an introduction 'Revolution from Below', a bibliographical essay and a good index. 406 pages. Normally £16.99, our price only £3.99.

Riot Against the Royals, video, Movement Against the Monarchy (MA'M). The story of the first march against the monarchy this century – it could soon turn out to be the only one – which was organised by MA'M on 31st October last year. The blurb on the cassette reads "See the emotion, the

heartache, the booze, the police violence". What you won't see though – yet – is the toppling of the royal family, despite the presence of a guillotine on the demonstration. We haven't had a chance to view this but we're told it was screened on Channel 4 on 10th August this year. No running time given, £7.50.

Once Upon a Time There Was a Place Called Nothing Hill Gate* by Paddington Bear, B.M. Blob. The people behind the hype surrounding the latest Hugh Grant publicity vehicle/film *Notting Hill* have got a lot to answer for. The area's increasing gentrification has now been boosted to the point where even Peter Mandelson thinks it's safe to move in, and London's *Evening Standard* is running a competition to win a flat there worth more than a quarter of a million pounds. But the jazz musician and sometime anarchist George Melly has already moved out, along with many others, complaining that "Since Grant made that blasted film the rents have gone up enormously, small shops have gone under to make way for chains and the community spirit is disappearing". However, some of the wealthy new residents could be in for a nasty shock if they don't first read this critical history of the area by Mr Bear (only his friends call him Paddington). It examines the area's celebrated bohemian reputation, its libertarian traditions and multi-ethnic character from a working-class anarchist, situationist-influenced perspective over a period of thirty years or so. On the way it takes in aspects as diverse as the riots, the carnivals, the artistic set, the Angry Brigade, community politics, crime and the police – even the stock market crash (?). As for the notorious slum landlords and the squatting scene – who, having once heard of it, could ever forget the Ruff Tuff Cream Puff Squatters Estate Agency, whose 'property magazine' advertising potential squats would list such gems as "Number 36, empty two years, entry through rear. No roof. Suit astronomer". They also initiated the squatting of the Cambodian Embassy and the Palm Court Hotel in Richmond, not to mention Mick Jagger's empty country house. Although not new, this large-format pamphlet could not ask for a better time to be read/re-read, with the current media saturation coverage of Notting Hill. It provides a detailed glimpse into numerous aspects of daily life in one of London's villages which is quite addictive, marred only by a few typos and some eccentric punctuation – probably a WWII speciality, but a nuisance when all you want to do is keep turning the pages. The author urges others to produce something similar for their local areas – it might help to save them from a similar yuppie invasion. 72 A4 pages, £1.50.

Secularism, the True Philosophy of Life: an exposition and a defence by G.W. Foote, *Freethinker's Classics No. 1*. In this companion to the Shelley pamphlet (above) we find the founder of *The Freethinker* magazine cheerfully putting the boot into religion, God, miracles, prayer, life after death, and some of the weird sects which such beliefs throw up, and mounting a robust defence – though not without accepting criticism – of

secularism. He generates less heat, but perhaps more light than Bakunin in *God and the State*, and of course does not touch on the state. The references to arguments, for and against, put forward by certain philosophers, scientists and theologians are very informative, and the text is edited by Nicolas Walter who provides additional notes about various relevant people and events, and an introduction. 32 pages, £1.50.

Lobster, no. 37. Electronic privacy and the encryption debate is the subject of the investigator Jane Affleck's article, in her continuing and impressive series on the electronic communications media. This piece is about the attempts by intelligence and law enforcement to control the new technologies led, predictably, by the FBI and NSA (the National Security Agency). They, it would seem, have been putting pressure on Britain and other European countries, perhaps via GCHQ and the Home Office, to set up systems to beat whatever encryption systems people might choose to adopt for their e-mail and internet communications. Affleck's careful, efficient and dedicated research always repays reading – my only gripe being that almost the only sources she gives are website documents, and whilst I realise that this is almost inevitable, given the subject, there are an awful lot of people who are going to be affected by any such code-breaking technologies/legislation and who are thus concerned to be informed about it, but who haven't got access to the technology, who would like to know where they can get the printed information. 52 pages, £3.00.

KM

Bookshop notes in brief

Publications received but not yet reviewed ...

Some Intellectual Consequences of the English Revolution* by Christopher Hill, University of Wisconsin Press, 102 pages, originally £8.00, now £3.00.

Guy Debord by Anselm Jappe, translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith, University of California Press. Reputedly better than the Bracken book reviewed earlier this year. 194 pages, £11.50.

Anarchy: a journal of desire armed, no. 17/1, CAL Press, 84 pages, £3.50.

Do or Die no. 8, Special PMT (Pre-Millennium Tension) issue. Double the usual size for double the usual price. 348 pages, £3.60.

Total Liberty: a journal of evolutionary anarchism, no. 2/1, 12 pages, £1.00.

Fifth Estate, summer 1999. Kosovo, Y2K, Toronto's anarchist free school, and (no kidding!) 'Did the State Come From Outer Space?' – Christ, beam me up Scottie, I can't take it any more. 28 pages, £1.50.

The Dispossessed by Ursula Le Guin, Millennium. Long-awaited reprint of this anarchist sci-fi utopia. 320 pages, £6.99.

Film and the Anarchist Imagination by Richard Porton, Verso. As far as we know, the only full-scale work of its kind on the subject in English. Includes introduction, notes and index. Illustrated, 314 pages, £14.00.

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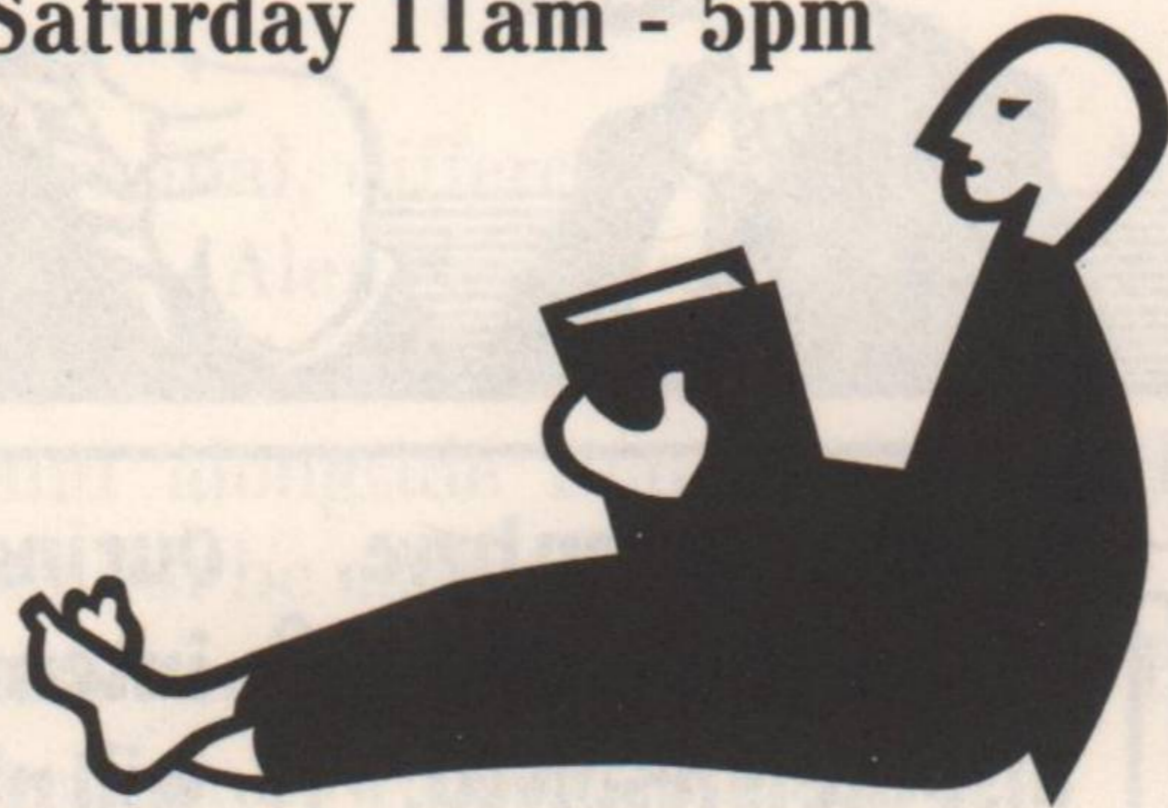
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— ANARCHIST NOTEBOOK —

Education, education, education ...

It is interesting that to refer to people as *Guardian*-readers is a means of ridiculing them as having a concern about social or political injustice rather than about getting rich quick. But meanwhile the *Guardian* is an embarrassment to its readers as it tries so hard to be just as trivial as its rivals, just as infatuated with the sex lives of the famous and with the media itself.

For a few days last month the paper regained something of its old image by commissioning the writer Nick Davies to report on schools in Sheffield (14th, 15th and 16th September). His book *Dark Heart* published last year described poverty and crime in contemporary Britain, where the number of children growing up in poverty has trebled in the past thirty years, and where, as Clive Wilkinson found in his study of *The Drop Out Society*, very many, in effect, leave school at 12 or 13 and "vote with their feet" since, as one head teacher told him, they are "doomed to failure from the start".

The first character in Nick Davies's account of Abbeydale School is the Bleeper Man, a teacher on patrol as "a kind of fireman who can be called out to deal with any crisis. Tantrums, fights, breaking windows, smoking cigarettes, all riddled in among the daily rituals of a stable school. On a bad day, the bleeper will call for help forty or fifty times – a crisis every eight minutes or so."

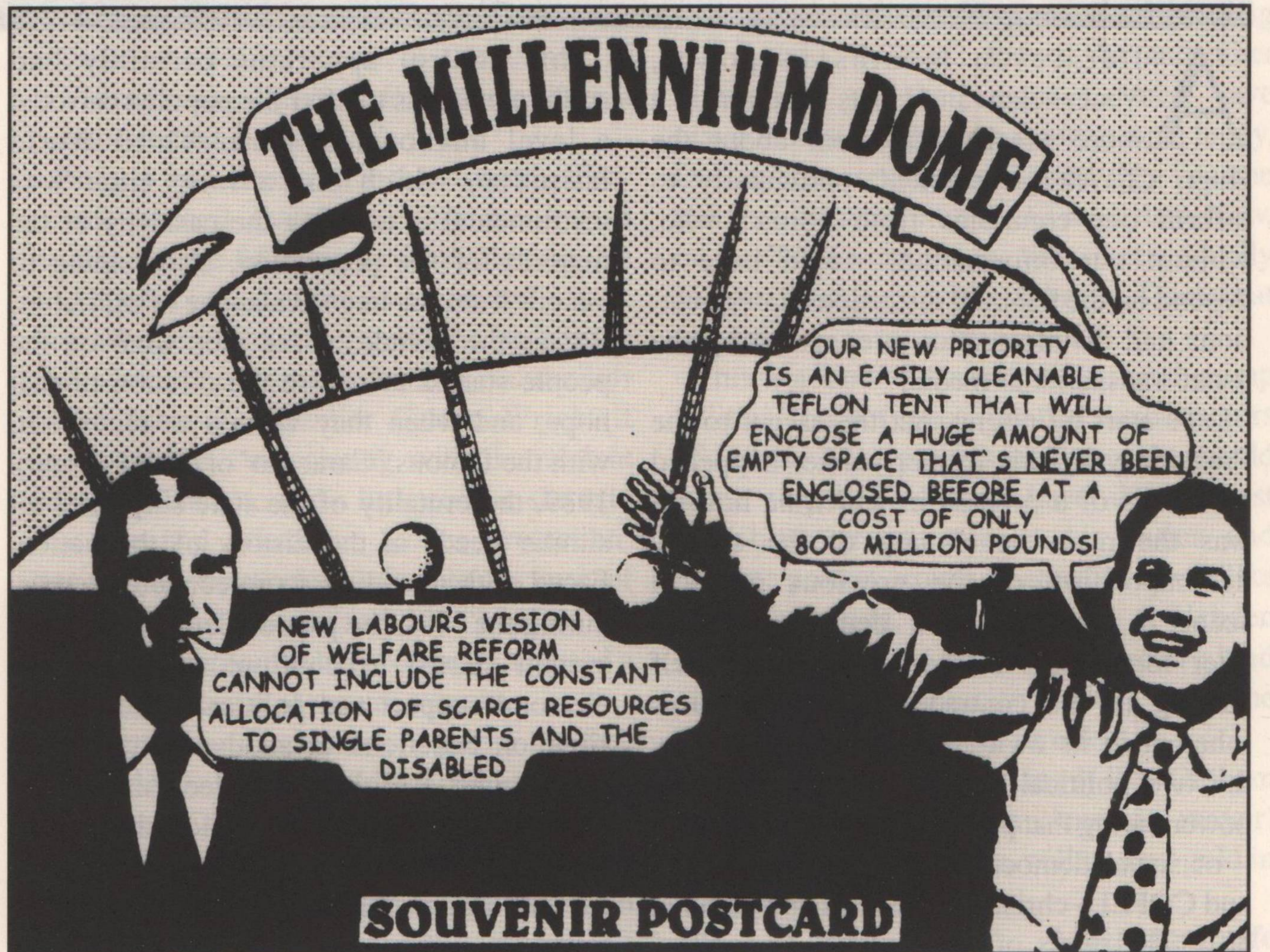
Abbeydale, "once the cream of Sheffield's schools" is one of the 40% of secondary schools said by Ofsted to fall below the required standard, its numbers have fallen from more than 2,000 to just over 500, while its budget is "drowning in deficit". Half the pupils in the first year are in the process of learning English. Others have home

backgrounds with every conceivable problem. And Davies explains that "Sheffield's traditional economy has been destroyed, 60% of the old industrial jobs have been lost for ever" and "last year one out of every five young people who left Sheffield's schools had no work to go to".

Davies compares Abbeydale with another Sheffield school in "an affluent white suburb", Silverdale, where pupil numbers are rising: "Middle-class parents fled from Abbeydale Grange and bought their way in to Silverdale's catchment area. No poor family from the north-east could afford to make the move. Children in the north-east were left to make do with their struggling local schools. All parents could choose, but some could choose more than others. Forty-five per cent of Abbeydale's pupils have special educational needs, compared to less than two per cent of Silverdale's."

In his second article Davies went to interview Lord Baker who, as Kenneth Baker, designed the rules laid down by the Thatcher government for Britain's schools and maintained by the Labour government: "standard assessment tasks, league tables, national curriculum, parental choice, local management of schools and, later, Ofsted". He reported that Lord Baker, in his beautiful house in Sussex, is laughing: "He knows a lot of people tried to say he was just settling political scores, that his real agenda was to punish the teacher unions and to kill off the local education authorities; that secretly the big master plan was to wipe out comprehensive schools by stealth. And now he's laughing because the funny thing is – they were right!"

And, speaking of the current Minister, David Blunkett, Lord Baker remarks, "He seems to have recycled a lot of my speeches."



The same thought has occurred to many others too.

The *Guardian* reports an enormous postbag following the articles by Nick Davies, and several readers pointed to the convenience of the alleged educational reforms. The paper quotes the findings of Peter Mortimore of the Institute of Education in London, that "by pin-pointing the work of teachers and administrators, it completely absolved central government of all possible responsibility for failure. By sidelining the impact of intake, it permitted policies which focussed on detail in the school and were therefore relatively cheap. And so the department for education and Ofsted were committed to hunting down failing schools and attributing their failure

entirely to the weakness of teachers and managers, ignoring the destructive impact of an intake which had become progressively more delinquent as the new poverty swept through the country."

These are precisely the points I tried to make when I had the opportunity of an interview in the *Times Educational Supplement* on 16th April. Once we have got beyond this point in the argument about schooling it may become possible to begin the debate on education and on its uses in tackling the appalling impact of joblessness and poverty in a country where one third of all children now live in a household with below half the average income.

Colin Ward

(continued from page 8)

unemployed, lone parents and their children, people with disabilities or pensioners and to live in social housing ... A similar picture emerges if poverty is defined as the receipt of Income Support. The number of people receiving Income Support has risen from just over four million in 1979 to 9.6 million in 1996."

The Acheson Report's recommendations in light of this were straightforward enough: "Policies which increase the income of the poorest are likely to improve their living standards, such as nutrition and heating and so lead to improvements in health. This can be done by improving social security benefits, specifically for families with young children and pensioners ..."

... We recommend further reductions in poverty in women of childbearing age, expectant mothers, young children and older people should be made by increasing benefits in cash or in kind to them.

... We recommend uprating of benefits and pensions according to principles which protect and, where possible, improve the standards of living of those who depend on them, and which narrow the gap between their standard of living and average living standards.

... We recommend measures to increase the uptake of benefits in entitled groups."

Simple enough, really. The two major studies into the causes of poverty reporting since New Labour came into office both concluded that the major determinant of poverty was low income, that the prime cause of low income was dependence on

benefits, and that the obvious solution was, a) to raise benefit levels, and b) increase benefit take-up. Except that, in the section of the new DSS annual report headed 'Key Features of Poverty and Social Exclusion Today', income does not feature as a factor in and of itself, but is referred to only as a consequence of "lack of opportunities to work". The annual report is, it turns out, not designed to highlight the government's anti-poverty strategy as such, but something much more specific (but yet, in true New Labour style, strangely amorphous at the same time) – 'poverty of opportunity'.

Poverty, it turns out, is part disease, part self-inflicted injury. "For many, disadvantage has been passed from generation to generation as children inherit poverty from their parents before passing on this debilitating legacy to their own children." (*Opportunity For All*, page vii). Thus, the report does not seek to establish a minimum income level, does not propose increases in the rates of Income Support or Job Seekers Allowance, and makes no proposals with regard to benefit take-up. What is on offer instead is the opposite of what everyone from Donald Acheson and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation to the Child Poverty Action Group has called for. Benefit entitlement will become more conditional, with the establishment of the ONE service (closer working between the Benefits Agency and the Employment Service) to implement the New Deal scheme. Pensioner couples are the lucky winners of a Minimum Income Guarantee of £116.60 for couples (the EU definition of poverty is "below half average

income" – half average income being, in 1996/7, for a couple, £148 per week).

New Labour's commitment to a "sustained attack on poverty and its causes" (quote by Alistair Darling) amounts, in fact, to the establishment of the Working Families Tax Credit, which "guarantees a family with someone in full time work £200 per week (on 1996/7 figures, half average weekly income for a couple with two children was £214 per week), and the introduction of the minimum wage. Where minimum income levels have been suggested, they have been geared to fall under the EU-defined poverty level. New Labour's "anti-poverty strategy", as *Opportunity for All* spells out, is in fact designed to "build a proactive welfare system to help people into work".

A decade ago, the Child Poverty Action Group, in its audit, *The Growing Divide* argued that the growth of poverty and inequality during the first eight years of Thatcherism were not accidental, but part of a strategy of inequality pursued primarily through changes in taxation, including reduction in the higher rate of income tax for the rich (from 60% to 40%); higher thresholds of inheritance tax; reducing the basic rate of income tax; a shift from direct to indirect taxation. By 1991 52% of the tax cuts implemented since 1979 had gone to the top ten percent of income earners, while the real value of social security benefits had fallen. Since 1977, the proportion of the British population with less than half of the average income has more than trebled.

New Labour is no more committed to the alleviation of social inequality that its

Conservative predecessors. Blair declared that New Labour would "think the unthinkable" when it came to reforming the welfare state. The "unthinkable" turned out to be the New Deal. The Thatcher-Major years had created a reserve army of unemployed labour, which served as a drag anchor on wage levels. As the 1999 Public Expenditure Statistical Analyses show, the price paid for this was a massive hike in spending on social security – between 1989-90 and 1993-4 the share of GDP consumed by benefits rose from 10.1% to 13.4%, a cash increase of £34 billion in four years. New Labour's solution: cut benefit costs by driving the unemployed into low-paid, casualised work. New Labour's strategy of inequality is disguised by rhetoric about 'rights and duties'. Blair has declared his intention to create a 'something for something society', where we play by the rules. You only take out if you put in. That's the bargain". Quite who this is a bargain for is obvious. The combined effects of the New Deal (where you get to work for your benefits, and your employer gets paid for giving you 'something' to do), the minimum wage and the Working Families Tax Credit is not to guarantee a minimum income, but a maximum. The "radical and far-reaching campaign to combat poverty" is in fact designed only to maintain poverty, but on altered terms. The Treasury, meanwhile, by holding down public spending, is anticipating a budget surplus of up to £20 billion by 2002/3, which will be used not to fund increased expenditure on health, education and welfare, but on tax bribes at the next General Election.

(continued on page 6)

— Chavez in Venezuela —

There's no bread but the circus is good

After seven months in power, Venezuelan anarchists can make a more precise statement about the Hugo Chavez government, particularly to inform our comrades from abroad who, without our information, would have to depend on the habitual distortions, interpretations and disinformation propagated by the usual transnational media.

Let's start by noting that the ascent to the Presidency by this former soldier happened by means of a process in which he himself was the main beneficiary of the speedy decomposition of the previous political scene, a 'representative democracy' that, after forty years at the helm, found itself sinking in the contradictions and failures inherent in its own structure, dominated by the two political parties that took turns in power during that period: Accion Democratica – of social democratic and populist roots – and COPEI – christian democrat and populist also. The rulers of these parties ('cogollos' we call them here) in cahoots with the transnational and local bourgeoisie, and counting with the blessings of the USA empire, took advantage of the immense oil revenues in order to 'modernise' the Venezuelan state, in the sense of turning it into an oppressive machine serving their own interests.

This control apparatus certainly had sufficient means to offer the populist carrot at a level unknown to other Third World latitudes, which for a long time was instrumental in assuring the passivity of the majority of the population, also hoping to benefit from the huge avalanche of oil riches. But as the decade of the '80s wore on the people started to realise the dilution of that hope, and when they wanted to recover it, with the famous 'Caracazo' of 27th February 1989, the brutality of the state surpassed all similar deeds in the history of the nation. Faced with unending socio-economic crisis, during the '90s, the pseudo democratic party system started to confront a decrease in electoral support and political legitimacy, a situation beneficial to another candidate to power who assaulted this decaying model from the military sector, which the parties had made into their accomplice and support.

Even though Chavez and his followers failed, in 1992, to displace the regime by force, they established themselves as an alternative to the obvious decay of the bipartisan system. The 'Comandante's' position – he was released from prison in 1994 because his adversaries saw him as a sort of political dead body – acquired significant electoral strength due more to the corruption and stupidity of the 'cogollos'

than to any brilliancy in his strategy or leadership, where Chavez counted on not only the former military men that accompanied him in his attempted coup but he also added first the remains of the disorganised marxist left (for whom he was the providential life saver), in a weird mix with the local exponents of that Latin American Right always ready to support a military government, with the always present company of former Accion Democratica and COPEI opportunists that joined the Chavez bandwagon as it became evident that he would win the 1998 presidential elections, and, like the cherry on top of this beautiful cake, many of the same local and foreign capitalists that twelve or six months before the elections decried the "haggard statism and leftism" represented by Chavez, but who saw the chance for a photo opportunity with the winner when it came time to share the spoils.

Chavez assumed power after winning elections that confirmed two important facts: 1) the electoral decline of the old political party machinery, whose weakness became obvious not only in the vote count but even more so in the pathetic manoeuvrings that preceded their electoral shipwreck, when they sought the life belt of a single candidate and left in the lurch those others whom they had supported fifteen days before the elections;

2) the consolidation of abstention as the best proof of the relationship between the Venezuelan people and the political system's electoral show, since despite the promises and threats (including those inherent in the law of mandatory vote), more than half the Venezuelans eligible to vote have not taken part in any elections in the decade of 1990. Of course, the winning team loudly proclaimed the first fact, keeping silent on the second, about which only the anarchists (and a few political analysts) have noticed its importance, since neither the disgruntled anti-Chavez opposition has any interest in advertising it.

Once in power, the Comandante's political performance has been plagued by image seeking gestures that simply repeat the old Latin American populism, empowered by a constant use of the media that has proved efficient in maintaining his constituency awe-struck and in shutting down the discredited voices of the opposition 'cogollos'. Besides, as we anarchists have warned for so long, he hasn't delayed the turning the Armed Forces into "the party of the government", the source of not only a large part of the leadership of Chavez's civilian party apparatus – the MVR, Movimiento V Republica – but also an important percent of the large high bureaucracy that the state requires for its functioning. The military has been put in charge of directing and executing the so-called 'Plan Bolivar 2000', an updated version of the old party procedures to guarantee their electoral clientele by means of demagogic distribution of goods and basic services, so that lately we've seen a large presence of uniforms in the streets clearly linked to the consolidation of its new role as transmission belt between 'the masses' and 'the leader'.

The great banner displayed by Chavez's tireless discourse is that of his challenge to 'the corrupt ones', a term that includes all opposition. Lucky for them, AD and COPEI fit that description perfectly, so that support of the government has been kept in similar

terms to those that allowed his rise to power, as no solid opposition has taken form to combat the populist incongruities and the threatening peril of a military dictatorship from a position consistent with the interests of the majority, since on the economic and social spheres the Comandante's government has been a repeat of the same strategies and policies we have suffered in Venezuela, courtesy of the IMF and such, for over ten years, bent on globalising us fast track and based on the immediate and servile donation to international capital of the natural and labour resources of the country, in exchange for the nebulous promise that things will get better for everyone in an undetermined future.

Strangely enough, the florid anti corruption language of the President has not denounced a single concrete case of theft to the public treasury during preceding governments, proof of which should be easily found in the official archives now within his reach. Even less strange is the fact that, as those who bid on work and services to the government attest, in the new administration the practice of bribes – 'mordida' (the bite) as they say in Mexico, and 'bajarse de la mula' (getting off the mule) around here – continues to hold sway in order to obtain official contracts, although now they are justified as 'contributions to the MVR'.

These mundane issues, however, do not claim the attention of the politicians, both government and opposition, currently entangled in the debate over a new Constitution, in which Chavism is heavily involved trying to sign the death certificate of the bipartisan political model as well as the birth certificate of its hegemony; while their rivals, weak in the domestic front, have scuttled abroad, where they present themselves as long-suffering and honest democrats, attacked wholesale by the apprentice dictator. In this respect, we shall insist that the new judicial structure will be capable of renewing actors, props and decorations in the political stage, but certainly will not change the oppressive character of the Venezuelan state nor the social and economic inequalities that rule among us, character and inequalities that neither the government nor the party opposition have any intention of changing.

Nelson
CRA, Venezuela
(translation by Luis)

(continued from page 5)

In 1895 Charles Booth commented that "our modern system of industry will not work without some unemployed margin, some reserve of labour". The social security system has never been intended to abolish poverty. Its purpose is to regulate the poor, to control inequality, and as the social historian Tony Novak observed, "to assist in the creation of a less secure and more vulnerable workforce that the changing demands of capital in the last quarter of the twentieth century require" (quote from *Poverty and the State*, OUP, 1988).

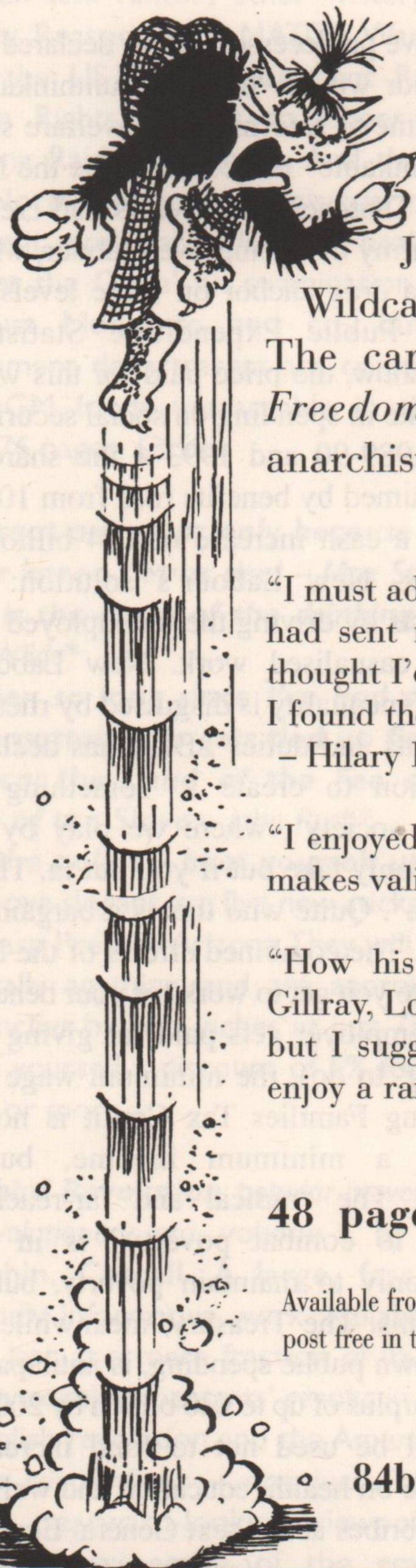
If we want to eliminate the "poor housing, poor health, poor education" which, according to Alistair Darling, "remain a scar on the nation" we have to set ourselves the task of eliminating the system which requires poverty and social exclusion as the necessary price for its continued profitability.

Nick S.

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Machiavellian calculations ... and theorisation disease

Dear *Freedom*,

In his letter to *Freedom* (18th September), Jonn Roe suggests I've fallen victim to the 'theorisation disease' in suggesting that the Kosovo crisis was manipulated by the US to suit the interests of US foreign policy ('Machiavellian Calculations' in *Freedom*, 21st August).

I'm not sure precisely what Jonn means when he refers to 'theorisation' as a disease. If he means simply putting ideological preconceptions before the truth of a particular set of circumstances, then I agree that such closed-mindedness would be foolhardy. If, however, he wants to condemn any attempt to look beyond appearances then, clearly, we don't agree.

Jonn suggests that public pressure led to NATO intervention in Kosovo. He produces no evidence in support of this proposition. Amnesty International's 1998 report reveals that between 28th February and 6th March 1998 Serbian police killed at least eighty ethnic Albanians in the villages of Likosane, Cirez and Donji Prekaz in the Drenica region of Kosovo. Up to two hundred were killed between 17th and 21st July 1998 at Orahovac. There was widespread condemnation of these atrocities – but no action from NATO. By August 1998 170,000 people from Kosovo were internally displaced. At this point, Slobodan Milosevic was still someone "we can do business with", as US envoy Richard Holbrooke put it, and the KLA were still 'terrorists'. Milosevic has pursued his goal of a Greater Serbia for a decade, with the connivance of the powers that opposed him in March 1999. What changed? Jonn says public pressure. I say, 1) the KLA had begun to impact on regional stability, 2) Clinton realised the opportunity to shackle the western European powers to US leadership in the new NATO. To suggest otherwise is to pretend that the interests of capital are driven by ethics, rather than economics. (It's interesting to note that in this age of 'humanitarian intervention', the US's primary role in relation to East Timor has been, 1) training the Kopassus death squads, and 2) cautioning against sacrificing relations with Indonesia for the sake of the East Timorese. If I suggest that the US are more than happy to see

Australia carry the weight of UN intervention in East Timor because of the damage it will do to the Lucky Country's special relationship with Indonesia, will Jonn accuse me of 'theorisation' again?)

Jonn says that my analysis is flawed because "Kosovans cheered NATO troops marching in", and as victims of Serbian atrocities they know best. In truth, the NATO/UN military occupation of Kosovo is a deliberate frustration of Kosovan desires for independence. As the *Washington Post* put it: "A long-held Western objective in Kosovo is to drain away the KLA's militant spirit by integrating its leadership into more moderate ethnic Albanian political structures. The strategy is meant in turn to make the KLA more vulnerable to Western pressures and undermine the group's demand for independence from Serbia". Far from having illusions in NATO, at least some of the KLA leadership are aware of this – hence the speed with which the KLA rushed to fill the political vacuum left by the departing Serb forces, setting up interim governments in several cities, racing to establish at least a minimal form of self government before KFOR had cohered in the region. If NATO had wanted to protect refugees and support the KLA in March, it would have either, 1) sent in ground troops, or 2) provided air cover to the KLA. Instead it embarked on the one strategy which would be guaranteed (as its own intelligence sources warned) to accelerate the ethnic cleansing of Kosovar – precisely because this would weaken the chances of the KLA consolidating its hold, on the back of the retreating Serbs.

Jonn seems to imply I'm some sort of quasi-Maoist for, 1) quoting from the *New Left Review*, and 2) suggesting that the bombing of the Chinese embassy may not have been an accident. Apart from the fact I find the suggestion offensive (especially from someone who imagines he will be 'smeared' in this reply), it doesn't make sense. In my article I explained precisely what, strategically, the US gained from the bombing: cancellation of a visit to China by Schroder, the scuppering of German-Russian diplomatic efforts to end the war. To point out that the US and China have conflicting economic interests – particularly in relation to Asia-Pacific trade – isn't to take the side of China over the US, but simply to comment on the driving forces behind competing imperialisms (again, as Jonn appears to think that ethics rather than economics underwrites foreign policy, he won't think any of this matters a damn).

Nick S.

Dear *Freedom*,

Nick S's lengthy piece on what (to adopt his perception of events) one might summarise as the Balkans conspiracy masterminded by the American State operating in the interests of global capitalism (*Freedom*, 21st August) warrants a more substantial reply than I could condense into half the space available

in a whole issue of *Freedom*. Whether it would merit the time it would take to produce such a reply is another question. Since I haven't the time and *Freedom* hasn't the space, I can do little more than indicate the nature of my objections.

Essentially this is a plea to anarchists to eschew knee-jerk reactions and reach-me-down explanations so characteristic of left-wingers in general. Anarchists in particular should make sure they're doing their own thinking and be particularly wary of Marxist-'inspired' arguments. Thus while what Nick has to tell us about Boutros-Ghali's perceptions of US-UN relations in recent years is at least interesting (even though he does appear to uncritically endorse such absurd statements by Boutros-Ghali as "in the Yugoslav arena, the Serbs had their national rights trampled underfoot by the Western powers"), his reliance on Peter Gowan's analyses of 'the Balkan tragedy' is, to say the least, ill-advised.

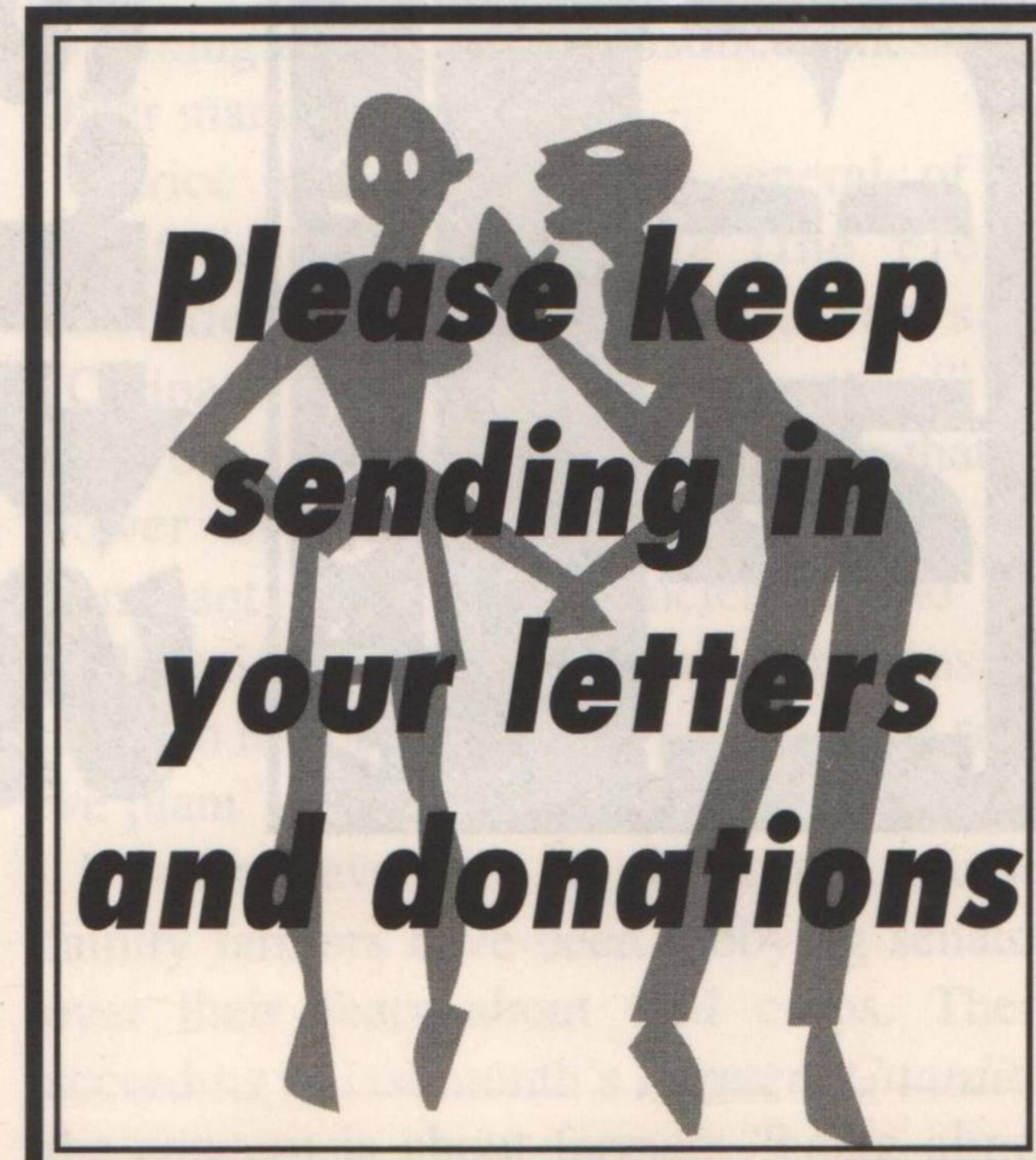
A common stumbling-block in the search for the truth by left-wing intellectuals is their psychological and propagandistic need for black-and-white pictures of the world in which they live. Reality is not so satisfyingly simple. This urge to over simplify is neatly epitomised in the title of Nick's article, 'Machiavellian calculations'. Machiavelli was indeed a very calculating gentleman – though by no means necessarily in a derogatory sense! In matters of political power he was of superior understanding and intelligence to most of his contemporaries, largely because he was relatively free of illusions. To such 'calculations' we should all aspire, if not to his cynicism.

Of course we are right to think and talk in terms of 'conspiracy' where capitalism and the State are concerned. But to apply these general perceptions to particular situations and particular people is not so straightforward. Machiavelli possessed in rare measure knowledge of himself, from which he derived the high degree of political consciousness you need to be in the full sense a 'conspirator', as distinct from a tricky operator who knows he is breaking the rules. There aren't that many people in the world of affairs to whom we can attribute Machiavellian self-awareness and understanding of power structures. (Kissinger, perhaps, but Clinton? You must be joking!) On the contrary, most people are naive about such matters and full of self-contradictions, with, for example, elements of altruistic concern all mixed up with ulterior motives. So like it or not, anarchist thinking must be flexible enough to admit the possibility of such strange hybrids as, for instance, the kindly capitalist, or even the (at least temporarily!) well-meaning politician. When it comes to assessing the conduct of the leading actors involved in the West's mishandling of the break-up of Yugoslavia, due allowance must be made for ignorance, stupidity, incompetence, and cowardice. While it is certainly pertinent to point out in what ways their motivation is likely to have been, to say the least, impure, it is not in the least illuminating to be told by left-wing pundits (who all too often, incidentally, have taken a pretty off-hand attitude to the fate of the biggest victims) that 'our leaders' are simply schemers and devils. They ain't that clever! Besides which, however clear-sighted we believe ourselves to be, to a greater or lesser extent, all of us, politicians and people alike, are prisoners of our circumstances,

both personal and historical.

In considering that "the Clinton administration's approach made sense only as the product of some obscure Machiavellian calculation" Boutros-Ghali (and presumably Nick S.) are attributing degrees of intelligence, cool calculation, and sheer prestidigitation way beyond the reach of your Clintons, Albrights, and Vances (or your Carringtons, Owens, Majors, Blairs, Robertsons, etc., if it comes to that). Yes of course there has been all along calculation of the best interests, as they see it, of the West and of themselves as power-game protagonists (who could think otherwise?), but if you ask me, the decisions of, for example, William Jefferson Clinton, chief clown in this in most senses pathetic performance, owed more to cock-up and cowardice than to conspiracy. In short, his 'administration's approach' didn't really make much sense at all. If it had, the whole story would have been at least a little less of a tragedy.

Donovan Pedelty



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Call for papers

An issue of *The Raven* is being prepared on the subject 'Racism and Resistance'. We would particularly welcome contributions from anarchists outside the UK, detailing the processes of, and opposition to, racism, in their countries. Any contributions should be sent to Nick S., c/o Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

China's weaponry

Dear *Freedom*,

The recent long, erudite article (21st August 1999) comparing Stalinist and fascist weapons in the Spanish civil war has no more relevance to anarchism than a comparison of British and French muskets at the Battle of Waterloo.

Much more relevant, to world peace if not anarchism, is the current militarism in China. In recent years China has stolen every US nuclear secret worth stealing and is currently on a conventional weapon-buying spree. Why? Can anyone hazard a guess?

Some clues are the recent non-aggression agreement with Yeltsin made in Kirghizstan, the fact that China's rulers are nowadays more nationalistic than the Nationalists of Taiwan, and the gradual revival of that old (and horrible) idea of China as the Middle Kingdom.

'Middle Kingdom' meant "Central Power".

Jeff Robinson

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— PROGRAMME 1999 —

- 1st October** General discussion
 - 8th October** Getting Anarchist Ideas Over
(symposium)
 - 15th October** Open meeting for any
comrades coming to the Anarchist Bookfair
 - 22nd October** General discussion
 - 29th October** Selfishness as an Ethical
Precept (speaker Donald Room)
- 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**
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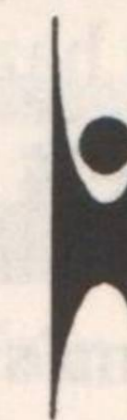
Woodthorpe, Beacon Hill, Windmill Hill: Meet
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leader Mike.

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
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