

From a leaflet distributed in London in response to all the media hysteria ...

Reflections on Mayday

"I utterly condemn the violence and destruction of property by mindless thugs" – Ken Livingstone (London Mayor)

"It is only because of the bravery and courage of our war dead that these idiots can live in a free country at all" – Tony Blair

"... I was the first MP to call for air strikes to defeat his [Milosevic's] aggression" – Ken Livingstone¹

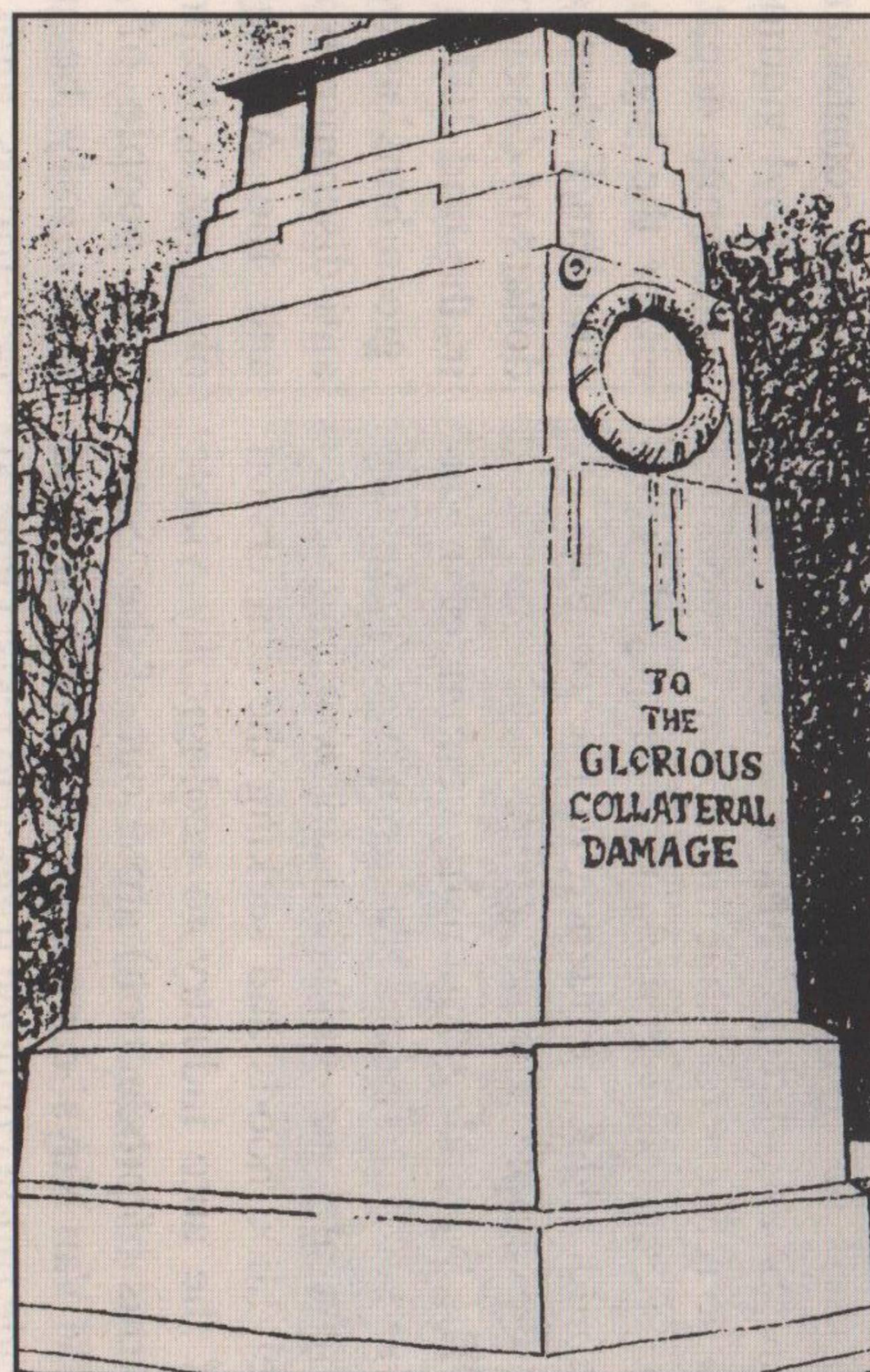
It may seem surprising that the politicians responsible for the dropping of 23,000 bombs and missiles on Serbia should be so outraged by the small amount of graffiti and window breaking on the London May Day action. However, hypocrisy is second nature to most politicians. Every Remembrance Day they solemnly lay wreaths at the Cenotaph, pretending to care about the suffering of war. The next day they are back in parliament justifying more violence, whether it is arms sales to repressive regimes or more air raids on Iraq (a country where sanctions have caused a million deaths since 1990).

The Cenotaph was unveiled on Armistice Day 1920, just three weeks after hungry unemployed ex-servicemen had fought running battles with police in Whitehall. Ever since then politicians have manipulated people's grief over war with eulogies to what the Cenotaph refers to as 'The Glorious Dead'. In an attempt to keep us passive, they endlessly promote the idea that the 'war dead' died for our freedom. No one could seriously argue that the soldiers slaughtered in the trenches died 'glorious' deaths for freedom. However, it is a common belief that World War Two was all about fighting fascism.

The truth is that Churchill heaped praise on fascist Italy, while members of the royal family, and papers like *The Daily Mail*, unequivocally supported Hitler. Britain had slaughtered millions through slavery and empire building across the world and Hitler essentially wanted to be left alone to do the same in Eastern Europe. However, this threatened the pre-eminence of the British Empire so the British establishment eventually turned against him.

Even so, World War Two was largely won by Stalin's Russia. Stalin had already killed ten million people by 1940, so his war with Hitler was hardly a fight for freedom. Meanwhile Churchill delayed the Normandy landings, hoping that the German and Russian armies would wear themselves out.² The result was that twenty to thirty million Russians perished and millions more died in the concentration camps.

The Allies refused Axis offers to send



them Jewish refugees and they never acted on desperate pleas to stop the exterminations by bombing the rail lines to Auschwitz.³ However, they did make great efforts to bomb German and Japanese cities, killing perhaps a million civilians. The culmination of these atrocities was the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki; bombings that were authorised by the 1945 Labour government even though Japan was ready to surrender.⁴

After the war, tens of thousands of German POWs starved to death in Allied prison camps, as did many civilians in a devastated Germany deprived of food aid.⁵ At the same time the Allies recruited prominent Nazis like Klaus Barbie, 'the Butcher of Lyon', and Walter Rauff, the inventor of the gas chambers. They sent them to Latin America where the US also introduced Nazi counter-insurgency techniques to maintain their control of the region.⁶

Although World War Two had nothing to do with fighting oppression, this has not stopped the media and politicians justifying more recent wars against Saddam or Milosevic as vital struggles against 'the new Hitler'. It has also not stopped them stirring up racial hatred against asylum seekers in a way that would not have been out of place in Nazi Germany!

A major reason that politicians get away with all this hypocrisy is that the left still claims that World War Two was a 'just war'. They still believe that, no matter how much they oppose democratic capitalist politicians, they need to join with them against any threat from dictators. But history shows this can only lead to massacres and war crimes – from World War Two to the Gulf to Kosovo.

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Tate Modern and Labour's new Britain. It's all about ...

Real Es(tate)

Welcome to the New Dawn, as the sun rises over a London resplendent, a London which has embraced municipal democracy, the "ultimate world city" (*World Architecture*, June 2000) with an elected mayor and assembly, a London enjoying the biggest building boom for fifty years. When the sun rises and its rays catch the Bridge of Light which links Tate Modern to the City the flashes of glory spark out to touch those other cities which court the grandeur of the capital – and the sparks light up the sites of regeneration on the waterfronts of Bristol, Gateshead, Hull and Salford. The promise of a New Age to match the ascendancy of New Labour has, we can see, been kept. What began at Millbank as the struggle for the hearts and minds of a people, with the Blairite campaign for power, ends there also with the miracle conversion of the Bankside power station into Herzog and de Meuron's palace of modern art. Old industry turned into a symbol of new creativity, another wave of the wand. And unto us a child is to be born.

Everyone, it seems, loves the new Tate. Bullshit reigns supreme. That Sir Nicholas Serota's dream might stand for anything other than what we've been told, passes without comment. No stones are ever turned. Yet the fervour for art which appears to have swept all before it, is founded not on aesthetics but on commerce, and Damien Hirst's painted dots serve to cover over the fact that the new money which roams across the capital is rooted in the attacks on working class living standards and the dismantling of industry that began in the late '70s. The development boom of today shows us capital triumphant, building monuments to itself, and finding new ways to push up real estate prices on the back of art.

Although little of it appears in Tate Modern, consigned instead to the hastily curated Tate Britain collection, the rush to art

began with the appearance of the 'young British artists' (yBas) on the scene in the early '90s – the commercially astute purveyors of what the art critic Julian Stallabrass has termed 'high art lite' – an "art that looks like art but is not quite art, that acts as a substitute for art" (*High Art Lite*, Verso, 2000). The scene that formed around artists like Hirst, Tracey Emin, the Chapman Brothers and Gavin Turk was focused on marketing because it came of age at a time when public subsidies for art were being withdrawn in favour of forcing the art world to seek commercial sponsorship for its endeavours. Playing games with the media, courting sensationalism as a means of establishing a profile, the 'yBas' represented an art fit for the new Establishment, for a country where the tensions between finance capital and industry, and between industry and labour, had begun to be definitively resolved. Joshua Compston, of Shoreditch's Factual Nonsense gallery, announced the 'yBas' intention to "exploit and eventually explode the gap between art, advertising, entertainment, high street retailing and real estate development". LA-based critic Peter Wollen was led to conclude that "the art world is now

at the level of sensation – found quickly its one real purpose: as an investment opportunity for new money. This connection with the young blood of capital – the hungry money of advertising and finance – is realised most obviously in the link between the 'yBas' and Charles Saatchi, generally recognised as one of the few powerful and serious British collectors, whose exhibitions of the likes of Hirst and Turk in his own gallery and then at the Royal Academy with the 'Sensation' exhibition profiled the new generation before a wider public. Saatchi's power distorts the possibilities of art by linking it to the aesthetic sensibility of its major buyers. As Turner Prize winner Chris Ofili has recognised: "A lot of artists are producing what is known as Saatchi art ... You know it's Saatchi art because it's one-off shockers. Something designed to attract his attention. And these artists are getting cynical. Some of them with works already in his collection produce half-hearted crap knowing he'll take it off their hands. And he does" (*The Times*, 13th September 1997).

The 'yBas' began their careers by squatting abandoned warehouse and factory space as mediums for shows of their work. The

challenge to what is, borne in the works of an artist such as Mona Hatoum, is buried here, lost within the vast prison of Herzog and de Meuron's designs. However much Louis



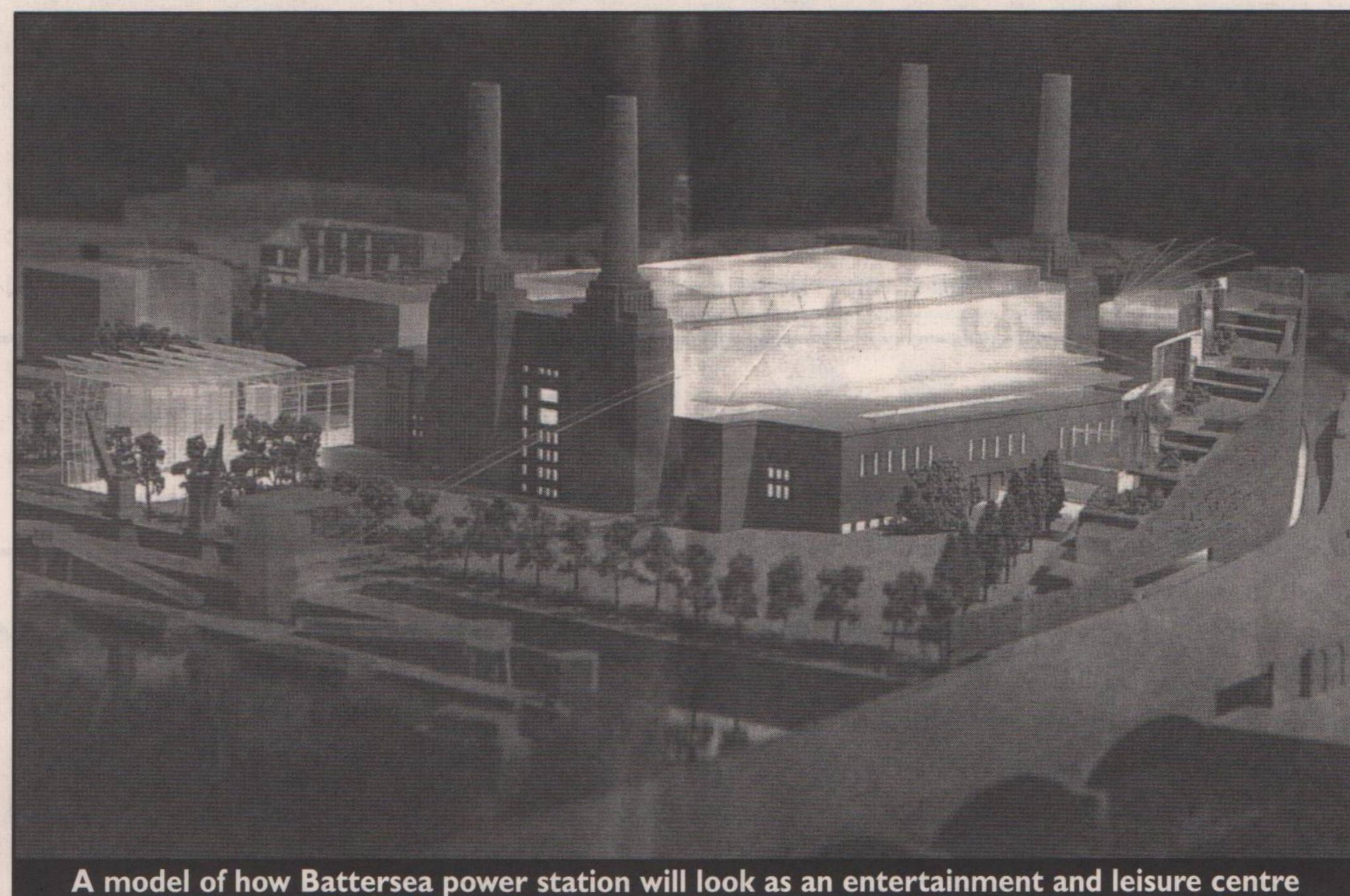
Gilbert and George exhibit at Tate Modern

Bourgeois's sculptures cry out that life is not what we are told it is, the sculptures are just things we pass as we move through Bankside's 155 metre long central street, drifting from gallery to shop to café.

Art now is no more than a honey trap for investment to push up real estate prices. The 'regeneration' of Shoreditch has meant only that the money in the hands of the practitioners of high art lite has colonised the cheap spaces available in the area and pushed up prices across the board so that the only people who can no longer afford to live there are those who never had the choice.

Residents in Southwark now face a similar fate, with Tate Modern boosting real estate prices and developers seeking to capitalise by vampirically exploiting public housing for private gain. Southwark Council intends to sell off all its 60,000 housing stock, with remaining public housing provision left to housing associations to manage. Working class people will find themselves squeezed between Herzog and de Meuron's Tate and Will Alsop's Peckham Library project, until the pain of poverty forces them out of the area leaving a vacuum for new money to fill. The process of regeneration and its architectural realisation in the realm of the symbolic begins to take on a surreal air, with the new political structures of Blairite 'devolution' – the London assembly and the Scottish parliament paying lip service to transparency in their design not, despite rhetorical claims to the contrary, because of a

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A model of how Battersea power station will look as an entertainment and leisure centre

inextricably linked with advertising and publicity through sponsorship of museum shows and through its association with 'lifestyle' marketing in the media, which leads to a convergence of art with design, fashion and even cuisine."

As Stallabrass, in his trenchant and astute critique makes clear, "in the end, high art lite has been successful within institutions, public and private, because they needed it: the private galleries to provide new and comparatively cheap blood during a period of retrenchment and then gradually renewed speculation; the public galleries to help justify their existence and their funding at a time when old commitments were being questioned, by drawing in new audiences." Young British art – an art that made no claims to critique and that functioned entirely

market their work created, through astute publicity-seeking, has rejuvenated the possibilities for art as investment opportunity such that what began in the abandoned industrial spaces of East London climaxes in the recasting of an abandoned power station as a British Guggenheim (juiced by \$221 million of lottery money). Tate Modern gives us art as spectacle, art de-historicised, depoliticised, dead. The vast gallery spaces assert the transformative power of capital over the redemptive power of art. The sheer size of Tate Modern serves as denial of any vantage point from which art might serve as critique, an art able to provide "a squint eyed look at the visible", as Jean-Francois Lyotard called it, "divergent enough to glimpse what is not visible there." The message of Tate Modern is, simply, there is no outside. Every



Bankside power station becomes Tate Modern

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commitment to openness in government, but because there is no threat to the political status quo from which they might wish to conceal their wranglings, while commercial projects like Future Projects' Selfridges development have no windows. The Selfridge store/empire will have an exterior made of a skin of linked discs – so only those who can afford to shop there will be aware of the transactions within. Government can masquerade as inclusion by smothering any and all opposition, while social exclusion becomes more and more the rule of commerce, from stores without windows to gated estates. Meanwhile, the new moneyed dwellers in the inner city and the artists who plot their lifestyles – adopt the mores of those they've evicted. Thus everyone from Damien Hirst to *Loaded* magazine apes a caricatured version of British working class culture as style-accessory. In an inversion of the strategy put forward by the proponents of the politics of identity – for blacks to reclaim the word 'nigger' to defuse its intent, or gays to seize hold of the term 'faggot' – the new middle classes adopt a mock working class identity to assert their triumph over their fear of a now-defeated working class. 'Look,

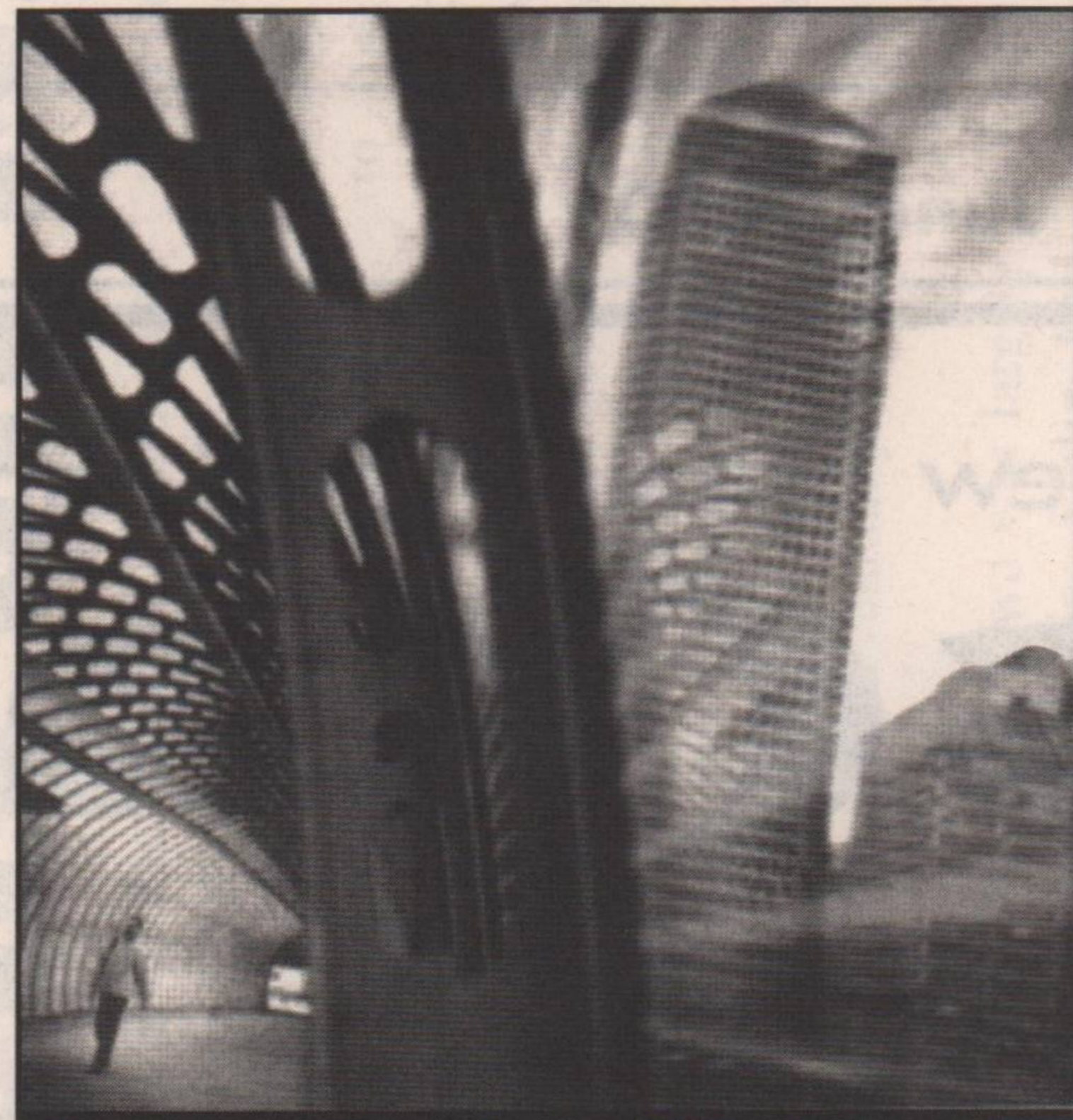


View from the Lowry arts centre café

we've stolen their homes and their clothes!' The absurd reigns triumphant.

London is awash with money. It is an economy in its own right with a GDP equivalent of US \$267 billion – larger than

the GDPs of Norway, Poland and Greece. It is part of the New Labour agenda to employ outside the capital the combination of 'regeneration' and social cleansing that have been seen to work so well. Thus the Gateshead project, with its Millennium



The overpass from Poplar DLR station to the Canary Wharf development in Docklands

bridge in Newcastle, and the golden triangle in Manchester formed by the Lowry complex in Salford, the Imperial War Museum project and the Trafford Centre. As the *Sunday Times* architecture critic Hugh Pearman has conceded, the agenda is obvious: "There are three vital ingredients in the mix. First, a poor part of town – redundant docks or wharves, usually – just across the water from a more affluent part of town. Second, build your new cultural complex in the poor bit. It makes sense, because land values there will be incredibly low, the site may well be free, and the local planners will be so delighted at such an arrival that they'll raise virtually no objections. Finally, build a bridge across to the wealthy sector. The bridge is the really clever bit, because land value flows across it just as much as people. The end result is a perceptual and financial transformation; not only has a forgotten area suddenly become very prominent, but it has also become high value. Some call this the transforming power of art. In truth, a shopping centre would do the trick just as well. Indeed, until the advent of the lottery, shopping centres were usually the way former industrial areas of Britain were salvaged" (*World Architecture*, June 2000). The dreams of wealth of the poor fund the security of the rich – and the money fleeced

from the poor is siphoned off to the rich via the medium of 'investment in culture'.

It is not an easy task to articulate the possibility of a realisable utopia, of the transformation of wealth into social wealth, of relations of oppression into cultures of solidarity and mutual aid. Cities, though, are zones of exploitation and conflict, where the wealth of the richest depends upon the poverty of the rest. Cities cannot function without cleaners, transport workers, office workers, building workers, maintenance workers, and cities function most effectively for those who own them when those who build and maintain them are paid the least. The struggle over wages – the struggle over the distribution of wealth – will provide one means of contesting who decides how we live in London, in Birmingham, in Manchester. Crucially, moreover, one battle currently being fought out is the struggle against the privatisation of housing – in effect, a struggle against social cleansing, a struggle over where we live. In Southwark, in Islington, in Lewisham, tenants have begun to organise against privatisation. In Hackney, tenants have mobilised against the Haggerston Canalside scheme, which seeks to bulldoze council estates and hand the land to luxury developers. Left as a battle to preserve the status quo, such efforts will come to nothing; posed as a battle for tenants' control over social housing, they can begin to force change. Tate Modern exists as a symbol of the defeat of working class aspirations for social change – from those who once laboured at Bankside power station who no longer lurk even as phantoms in the minds of those who walk the Tate Modern's bright new spaces, to those who laboured on the construction of Tate Modern whose labours are lost in the glory heaped on Serota and Herzog and de Meuron, to those whose homes are to be swept away in the tide of money intended to wash across the Thames. The opening of Tate Modern is intended as tribute to New Labour's transformation of Britain into a low wage economy where culture – commerce and infotech – has replaced the factory, and service is the new industry. We should mark its opening as a challenge – a chance to wipe the revanchist smile from Blair's face.

Nick S.

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A better way to oppose dictatorship is for people to make revolution against it and every other aspect of capitalism. This is not just sloganeering, it was shown to work in Spain when armed workers prevented Franco's coup in 1936 and proceeded to take over and successfully run industry and agriculture. Tragically, their 'anarchist' leaders then thought they could fight fascism by joining, rather than overthrowing, the 'left' Republican government. However, this merely gave the government the opportunity to destroy the workers' collectives and ruthlessly repress all opposition in the name of the anti-fascist war effort. Franco still won and the Spanish civil war set a precedent for the mass mobilisations of World War Two.⁷

During World War Two, people joined anti-fascist resistance movements just to survive. But the only way to really stop the carnage would have been for soldiers to turn their guns on their officers and make revolution. This may well have left them vulnerable to attack, but it could have also sparked off revolts behind enemy lines. After all, the end of World War One, Armistice Day 1918, occurred in the wake of mutinies and revolution across Germany inspired by the Russian revolution.

Wars are often ended by mutinies; examples

include the US army in Vietnam, the Iraqi army in 1991 and the Serb army last year. Such a scenario was not impossible in World War Two. Indeed the Allies had to violently crush anti-fascist resistance movements in Korea and Greece, as well as to occupy every inch of Axis territory, in case revolutions broke out. Certainly revolution was the only scenario worth fighting for and, whatever its outcome, it could not have been worse than the fifty million deaths of World War Two, the worst massacre in human history.

Livingstone's support for the Kosovo war dissuaded many from opposing Britain's first major war in Europe since 1945. This not only led to the deaths of at least five hundred civilians but it can only encourage more wars.⁸ Some of the graffiti on the Cenotaph was pointless; some, like the slogan: 'Why glorify war?', was appropriate. But let us hope the hysteria about it encourages all of us to think about why we were so ineffective during the Kosovo war and how we can better oppose the next war.

Footnotes

1. *The Independent*, 2nd May 2000 and 21st April 1999.
2. N. Rose, *Churchill, An Unruly Life*, pages 236, 299-302.
3. www.polisci.mit.edu/BostonReview/BR20.4/Forbes.html

4. www.valourandhorror.com/P_Reply/BC.htm#Morality, F. Williams, *Twilight of Empire*, pages 71-74.

5. James Bacque controversially claims that nine million Germans died during Allied occupation www.cia.com.au/serendipity/hr.html#c&m

6. See Chomsky at www.zmag.org/chomsky/rab/rab-7.html

7. www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/Lobby/2379/dauve.ht

8. Some estimates of Serb deaths exceed 2,000. The numbers of Kosovans killed by the Serbs is unclear. However only 670 bodies had been found by November 1999, implying that US claims of 100,000 murdered were completely invented to justify the bombing. See Pilger, *New Statesman*, 15th November 1999 and www.hrc.wmin.ac.uk/guest/radical/ESKOSOVO.HTM

To contribute to the proposed publication, *Reflections on May Day*, or to come to the 'No War but the Class War' discussion group or e-mail: maydayreflections1886@hotmail.com

Please note that the *Reflections* publication will only have room to include considered articles that attempt to get to grips with the problem of where the 'new anti-capitalist movement' goes from here. The articles should ideally also be critical, comradely and not too long. Other sorts of writings, such as simple commentaries on what happened on 1st May would probably be better sent to the Mayday discussion lists. The deadline is 1st August 2000. Thanks.

Hopefully some of the pieces will continue on the discussions in *Reflections on June 18* available at <http://burn.ucsd.edu/~acf/online/j18/index.html>

COPY DEADLINE

The next issue of *Freedom* will be dated 17th June, and the last day for copy intended for this issue will be first post on Thursday 8th June.

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).

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what happened on Mayday to push their own authoritarian agenda may not be too far fetched.

The police have an obvious vested interest in playing up the sense of ensuing chaos. After Mayday the new Metropolitan Police Commissioner made the most of these fears. This was followed up by Fred Broughton, Chairman of the Police Federation, who told the police conference that "there is a sense of disorder, and anarchy in many" city centres like Manchester, London, Liverpool and Leeds. Between 10pm and 2am, he claimed, some city centres are no-go areas because the police do not have enough funds to recruit more officers.

While the police demand more funds and stiffer laws, one delegate at the Trades Council Conference was expressing concern at the way the police at the London Mayday march were 'tooled-up'. Another delegate from Liverpool described how the police there had obstructed their efforts to have a Mayday demo and march.

Conference condemns style of policing

Most trade union delegates were anxious that their right to Mayday rallies were now under threat. And yet, Mayday this year in England has had more publicity than at any other time I can remember. Clearly some now fear that 1st May could become a significant annual event.

I would think the Greater London Association of Trades Councils, which has tried to have a rally on 1st May for many years, will welcome this. Certainly the Greater London Association refused to join the TUC druids in the Dome on Mayday, and condemned the trade union bureaucrats for holding it in that kind of dive.

A delegate at the Manchester conference declared that "extra-parliamentary activity is part of our democracy" – just as actions against the poll tax "were perfectly proper". Another warned of the dangers to trade unionists in the Anti Terrorism Bill.

The motion declared: *Conference supports those trade union organisations which are criticising the decisions of the police, in London and other parts of the country, regarding the levels and styles of policing. It calls on the TUC to lend its support publicly to trade union organisations in all the localities of England and Wales which hold Mayday/International Workers' Day events. We note misleading media coverage of events on 1st May, in particular newspapers' failure to report what happened to the London Mayday March. We further call on the trades councils and the TUC to act in defence of the rights of assembly and free speech, which were undermined by the banning of the rally and the subsequent media 'spin'.*

The motion was carried without dissent and with the backing of the platform.

BB

Trade unions and anarchy in the UK

The Trade Union Council Conference in Manchester in mid-May showed me that the awkward squad that makes up this part of the trade union movement is at least trying to catch up and understand the new radicalism that *New Musical Express* is now calling "the Direct Action Revolution". The unfortunate thing, as ever with the Marxists and the old left, is that they want to teach or take-over the new radicalism rather than learn from it.

The *Socialist Worker* is advertising what it calls "the biggest anti-capitalist forum in Europe" and claiming that "Marxism provides an explanation of capitalism and, above all, a socialist alternative". It is charging £31 to the unemployed for the luxury of this indoctrination.

The militants at the trade union conference were mostly not quite so cock-sure. But one delegate, from Luton Trade Council, said that "while a spontaneous upsurge against capitalism is to be welcomed, the guerrilla gardeners were undemocratic and individualistic".

Anarchists and the labour movement

The Tameside Trade Council bookstall had many Freedom Press and anarchist books. One delegate admitted to me that anarchism seems to be "having a bit of a resurgence". What followed was a discussion about the decline of socialism since 1984 and perhaps more rapidly since 1989.

A stalinist attacked us on the bookstall, saying "the Tories are the real anarchists". He claimed that some American universities are now trying to rehabilitate the Soviet Union as an historical entity.

It was pointed out by a Birmingham delegate that though the anarchists were influential among the young and the environmentalists, they lacked strength in the trade union movement. This indicates the continued failure of the formal anarcho-syndicalist groups in this country to impact on the unions, preferring, as they do, to busy themselves quarrelling over Spanish trade union politics.

Some anarchists have been active in the labour movement: Jim Pinkerton and Bill Christopher in the print and newspaper industry, Tom Brown in engineering, Peter Turner in the building trade, Bob Lees in textiles, Tony Crowder on the railways, Jim Petty and myself in textiles and engineering, and Derek Pattison in the water industry. Peter Turner is still active on Hammersmith Trades Council, and Derek Pattison is president of Tameside Trades Council. Both addressed the Manchester Trades Council Conference last month. Derek Pattison spoke on the sell-off of council houses by local authorities.

The role of the anarchist syndicalists in the British labour movement is briefly covered in my introduction to *The Tradition of Workers' Control* by Geoffrey Ostergaard (published by Freedom Press, 1997). For many who call themselves anarcho-syndicalists it becomes just another 'ism', not for them getting their hands dirty among workers or trade unionists. They don't practice what they preach. For this reason many industrial anarchists such as Derek Pattison, Peter Turner, Jim Petty and the Burnley comrades, and myself, have not joined the formal anarcho-syndicalist bodies in this country.

The tragedy of the British labour movement and the unions is that they had a 'semi-syndicalist' approach throughout most of the twentieth century. It lacked an anarchist/libertarian vision; it lacked an internationalist dimension, or any kind of vision or dimension beyond the narrow jockeying over

pay and conditions, and voting Labour.

The term 'semi-syndicalist' was used by John McLroy in his book *Trade Unions in Britain Today* (1988). McLroy argued that "the idea of semi-syndicalist ... trade unionism has been best exemplified in the 1980s by Arthur Scargill and the NUM". McLroy claimed that 'semi-syndicalist unionism' doesn't distinguish between the 'industrial' and the 'political'. Scargill and the 'semi-syndicalists', according to McLroy, seemed to hold that through the industrial muscle of the miners' strike in 1984 a political transformation could come about.

It didn't happen in 1984/85, and it probably couldn't happen like that. Anarcho-syndicalists who thought that it could should note that their cause suffered a serious setback after 1985, as I think it did after the General Strike in 1926.

In my introduction to Ostergaard's *The Tradition of Workers' Control* I wrote that, among anarchists, in the late 1960s and early 1970s "charisma triumphed at a time when, in Britain at least, the humdrum was required" and that "flower power and exotic campaigns to outrage became preferred to the everyday struggles of factory workers". The industrial anarchists failed to connect with the strikes of the factory workers at that time. At Roberts-Arundel, Stockport, where the Manchester Anarchist Group allowed the local International Socialists (now SWP) to outflank them in 1967, during the Pilkington strike in St Helens later, and during the factory occupations and take-overs of Upper Clyde shipbuilders by the workers in the early 1970s, and the miners' strike and the three-day week of Ted Heath's Tory government – there was minimal impact or involvement from many of the industrial anarchists.

That was the state of play then – and we industrial anarchists never really went in to bat. The flimsy history of industrial anarchist participation is touched on in my introduction and afterword, 'Modernity and its Aftermath', in the Ostergaard book. Clearly the recent Tameside careworkers' strike could be added to this history of British industrial anarchism.

Our strategy now will have to be different from that required in 1970. As Derek Pattison told me at the Manchester Trades

Council conference: "The delegates here seem to be getting older every time I come to these conferences". There were only two youth delegates – and if you were a thirty-something you would be a youngster at this conference. The antiquarian left is really old, and New Labour is not really left-wing, and they know they don't motivate young people.

The Liverpool dockers saw the light and linked up with activists and anarchists around Reclaim the Streets. Earth First! and Manchester anarchists got in on the action over the Tameside careworkers' dispute. The current issue of *New Musical Express* has nine pages of photographs and text devoted to Mayday and the 'direct action revolution'. Even this issue of the *Socialist Worker* has an interview with Noam Chomsky talking about the significance of Seattle and the wide struggle against global corporations.

Even this conference of antiquated trade union activists I think recognised that it must focus on the live issues which excite the young today. These old lefties are being forced to move to embrace direct action on the streets, as has the SWP among others.

Of course the Metropolitan Police knew on

Mayday they must tactically divide the trade unionists from the environmentalists and anarchists. Just as the Communist Party in France during the troubles of 1968 knew they must split the workers off from the students. When the communists shut the factory gates on the students, with the workers on the inside, that was a policing exercise as well.

Writing about early nineteenth century England, E.P. Thompson, in *Making of the English Working Class*, said: "Hence these years appear at times to display not a revolutionary challenge but a resistance movement, in which both the Romantics and the Radical craftsmen opposed the announcement of Acquisitive Man". Today we seem to be getting a more 'joined-up radicalism'.

In the US Chomsky says that "the variety of constituencies involved in these protests [Seattle and Washington] is remarkable". He claims that "they involve people who in the past did not have much to do with each other, like steel workers, gay activists and environmentalists". And that the protests have an international flavour, joining the landless movement in Brazil with the Indian peasant's movement and trade unionists in the USA.

Anarchists can only do the best they can to accelerate these developments.

Brian Bamford

Trade unionists slam police ploy

Last month militant trade unionists at the Trade Union Council's Conference in Manchester passed an emergency motion condemning the actions of the police on the Mayday rally in Trafalgar Square. The veteran anarchist and former *Freedom* editor, Peter Turner, seconding the motion, warned of police plans to use the anti-capitalists "to clamp down on the right to demonstrate".

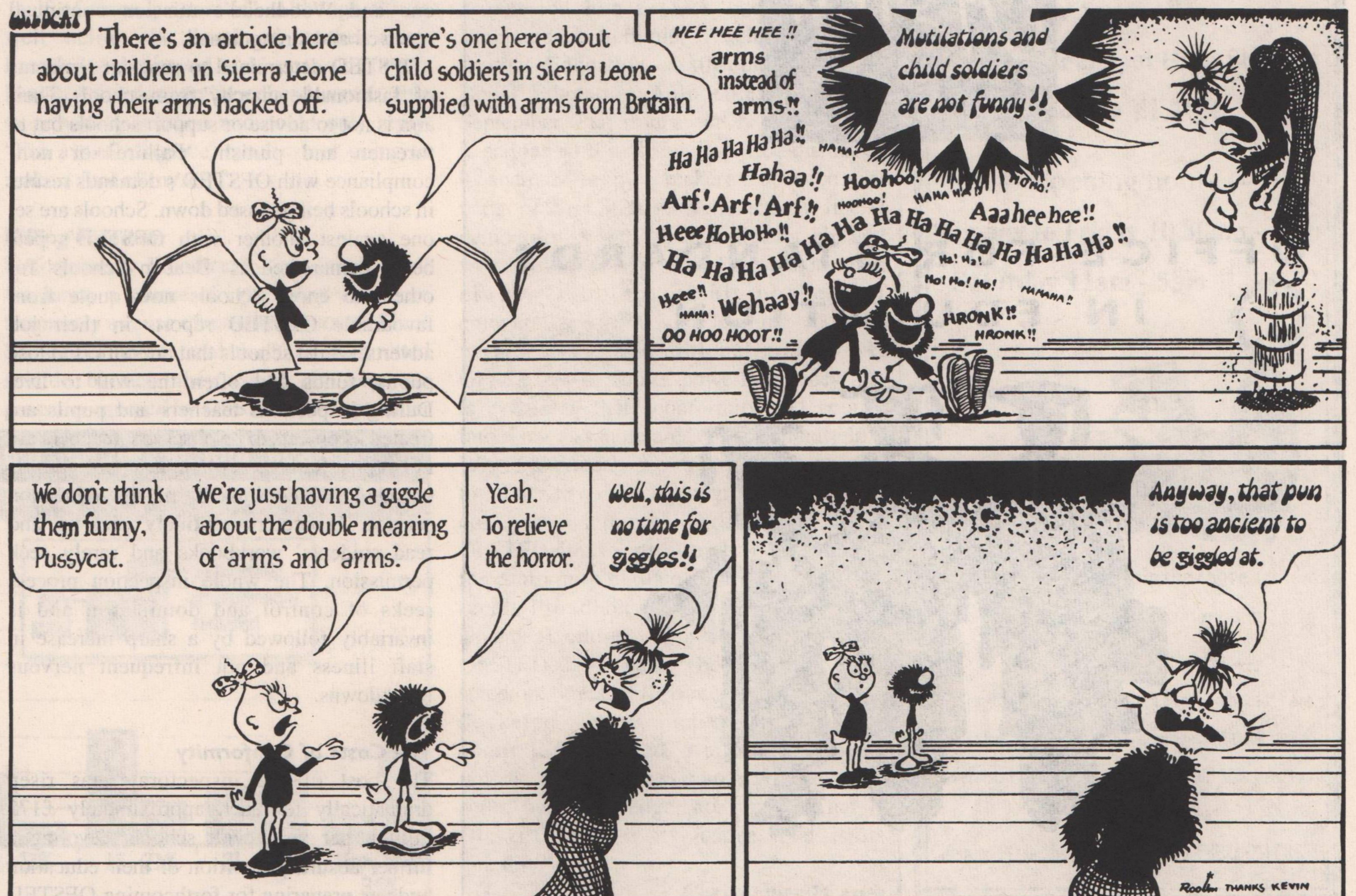
It was claimed by the delegate putting the motion on behalf of the London Association of Trade Councils, that the police deliberately prevented the workers on the London Mayday march from linking up with the anti-capitalists. One woman delegate, moving the motion, pointed out that the anti-capitalists wanted to join up with the trade unionists to protest together over the problems of "economic, social and environmental damage caused by international capitalism's drive for profits".

Peter Turner told the conference of the attacks in the right-wing press against the anarchists, suggesting that there was an attempt to whip up public hysteria by claiming there was an anarchist plot against the monarchy. While he said he was not too keen on the monarchy himself, he warned delegates to "beware of the forces of law and order" who, with the Home Secretary Jack Straw, are, he claimed, "trying to curb our right to protest".

Vested interests and 'tooled-up police'

The new Metropolitan Police Commissioner, Sir John Stevens, is already considering asking the Home Secretary to ban any "protest by an anarchist group" and some journalists on the *Daily Mail* are pondering a return to the old Riot Act. Mr Turner's suggestion that the police and politicians are trying to exaggerate

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OFSTED: Education's Thought Police

"OFSTED inspectors seem to be peddling one line and one line only – they know all the answers and are no longer questioning or even listening. Teaching strategies are measured against fixed yardsticks, and it is no longer a matter of what works, but whether what is being taught and how it is being taught matches what it says in the manual" – the words of a recently inspected headteacher in *Times Educational Supplement*, 25th February 2000.

Voluntary servitude is the highest form of bourgeois democracy. Citizens believe themselves to be free whilst they happily confine their expressions of opinion within a range of increasingly trivial options. New Labour, Conservative, Liberal, Manchester United, Pot Noodles, East Enders or Oasis, who cares as long as there's money to be made! The creation and nurturing of such an impoverished political climate is a task well served by modern politicians who appreciate the strategic role of the education system in reproducing 'appropriate attitudes'. The State created the National Curriculum to define an 'appropriate' content, and OFSTED (The Office for Standards in Education) to ensure that approved material is delivered in the prescribed manner by loyal operatives. Independent-minded teachers responding to the needs and interests of individual children is no longer an acceptable option. The system must be obeyed; there is no alternative.

This centralised command structure is nevertheless vulnerable. When its writ was recently challenged in court by Summerhill free-school, "the forces of conformity and control caved in" (*Times Educational Supplement*, 7th April 2000). The real nature

of the current drive for educational orthodoxy must be exposed on all occasions. It is not the inevitable result of a scientific reading of extensive research evidence. It is no more than the embodiment of a long-running determined political campaign, an attack on egalitarianism, co-operation and freedom. By travelling back along the road that led us to OFSTED we can begin to identify its reactionary roots.

'Fashionable Anarchy' and Authoritarian Reaction

The story began in 1968 with the publication of a widely publicised pamphlet claiming that "revolutionary changes have taken place in English education – the introduction of free play methods in primary schools, comprehensive schemes, the expansion of higher education, the experimental courses at new universities ... There is great danger that the traditional high standards of English education are being overthrown [by] the new fashionable anarchy" (*Fight for Education – A Black Paper*, Ed Cox and Dyson). Unfortunately this proclamation of the triumph of anarchy was premature but sufficient to rally the forces of the political right.

Following a well-orchestrated campaign, aided and abetted by Old Labour's James Callaghan, the reactionaries gained a great victory with the passing of Kenneth Baker's 1988 Education Act. Having 'fixed' the curriculum the reactionaries set about creating a draconian system of policing the practitioners. Kenneth Baker explained his perspective: "Of all the Whitehall Departments, the Department of Education and Science was amongst those with the

strongest in-house ideology. There was a clear 1960's ethos ... rooted in progressive orthodoxy ... it was devoutly anti-excellence, anti-selection and anti-market ... If civil servants were the guardians of this culture, then her Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HMI) were its priesthood. Reports on schools were written with an opaque quality which defied any reader to judge whether the school being inspected was any good or not" (*The Turbulent Years*, Faber & Faber, 1993).

The State decided to crack the whip. According to Professor Eric Bolton, then (1991) Chief Inspector of Education, "Kenneth Clarke (the new Tory Secretary of State for Education) made it abundantly clear that he, and the Government, found it hugely irritating to determine policies for education and then have HMI running around the country critically commenting on them" (*HMI – The Thatcher Years*, ORE, 1998). By enacting its Education (Schools) Act 1992 the Tories demolished the independent inspectorate and replaced it with its own vicious, but loyal, thought-police henceforth known as OFSTED.

The knowledge and expertise built up by HMI since its inception in 1839 was considered a barrier to the efficient acceptance and prosecution of government policy so it was largely disbanded and its responsibilities handed over to a motley collection of freelance teams hired by tender on a job-by-job basis. The one year apprenticeship previously required of all HMI inspectors was considered unnecessary for OFSTED inspectors who got one week's training before being unleashed upon schools. OFSTED waded in with the aggression, zeal and bigotry of Conquistadors, with Chris Woodhead as Pizarro. There was no salvation, heretics were cast into the flames: named, shamed and condemned to eternal damnation. Woodhead was on a mission from God, fully armed with the revealed truths of the National Curriculum. When Blunkett took over as Pope he re-anointed God's chosen one and Woodhead's mission continued renewed and strengthened.

OFSTED determined to root out remnants of 'fashionable anarchy' from schools. Their aim is not to advise or support schools but to threaten and punish. 'Failure' or non-compliance with OFSTED's demands results in schools being closed down. Schools are set one against another with OFSTED's pets being demarcated as 'Beacon Schools' for others to copy. Schools now quote from favourable OFSTED reports in their job adverts, whilst schools that are criticised lose pupils, funds and often the will to live. During inspections teachers and pupils are treated as objects to be observed, teachers are not consulted as colleagues nor pupils engaged as 'consumers' of the education service. Inspectors routinely pick-up and read students' workbooks and rarely seek permission. The whole inspection process reeks of control and domination and is invariably followed by a sharp increase in staff illness and not infrequent nervous breakdowns.

The Costs of Conformity

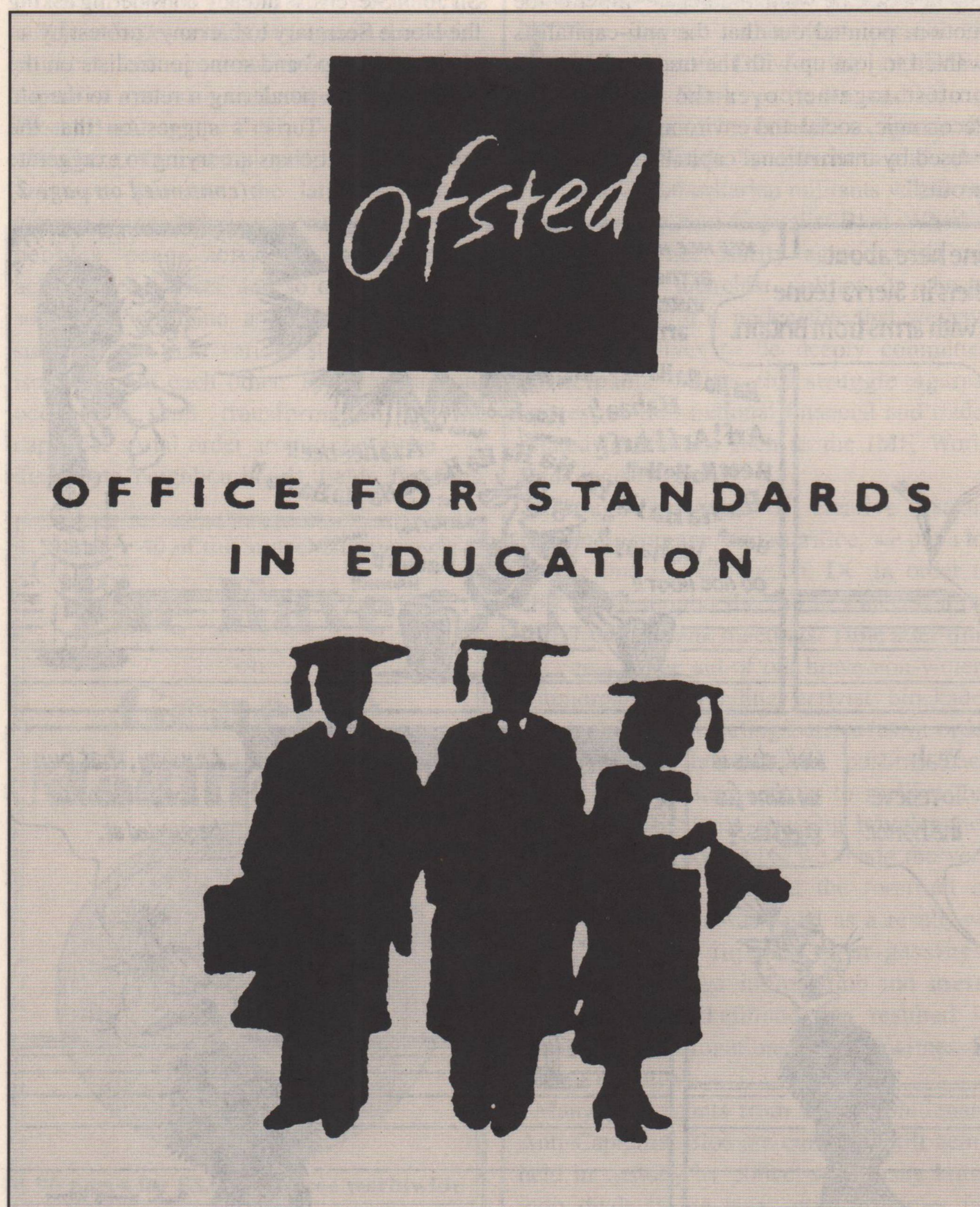
The cost of the inspectorate has risen dramatically to reach approximately £175 million per year, with schools devoting a further absurd proportion of their education budgets preparing for forthcoming OFSTED

inspections. In one notable case a school engaged a registered inspector to check every lesson-plan and every relevant school document over a period of three years, they employed a secretary to type and retype all associated paperwork and they rehearsed a battery of assemblies and primed parents and pupils for the big event. OFSTED were suitably impressed and subsequently listed the school as one of 'Woodhead's 100'! OFSTED's budget is further inflated by Woodhead's own salary, £118,354 (plus up to 10% bonus) although it has recently managed to drive down the rake-off pocketed by ordinary inspectors to a mere £250 a day. These self-employed teams of registered inspectors competitively tender for contracts to inspect specific schools. Many schools claim OFSTED inspection teams exhibit the characteristics of jobbing builders; the team often meet together for the first time in the school car park and then proceed to take the school apart. Complaints are futile, one school (Breeze Hill) wanted to sue OFSTED over its unjustified criticisms and received the backing of its local authority, only to be advised by a QC that OFSTED are almost legally invulnerable. Similarly there is a unique lack of parliamentary oversight of OFSTED and the belated appointment of an adjudicator has done nothing to improve democratic control, with written complaints remaining unanswered for almost a year. A string of complaints about the bullying and intimidating behaviour of one particular inspector, Geoffrey Owen, did eventually succeed in getting him de-registered but he continued to receive the backing of the Chief Inspector. Woodhead subsequently addressed letters expressing his personal admiration and praise for Geoffrey Owen, not only to the man himself, but also to John Harries a head who had suffered a nervous breakdown following one of Owen's hostile inspections!

The Politics of Prejudice

OFSTED claims to assess schools objectively, to judge only on the evidence but its inspectors and their reports are riddled with value judgements and personal and class prejudice. One inspector, to my knowledge, began his inspection by informing the teaching staff of a school in a very socially disadvantaged area that he always asked himself, 'Is this the sort of school I would like my daughter to attend?' Indeed Channel Four's *Dispatches* programme found that inspection reports overwhelmingly reflected the socio-economic nature of an area, with only one out of a sample of 83 'failing' schools being in a prosperous area. This correspondence is graphically illustrated by the chart opposite (*Times Educational Supplement*, 1999). OFSTED inspections demonstrate a similar bias against schools that cater for children with special needs. Following critical inspections almost 9% of Special Schools are subjected to OFSTED's punitive 'special measures' (even the language is Orwellian!) compared to only 3% of ordinary schools and whereas only 6.7% of 'failed' primaries are subsequently closed a staggering 26% of failed Special Schools suffer this fate. Another inspector revealed a typical OFSTED prejudice by announcing during a visit that, "I really don't think that Circle Time and all that stuff about developing

(continued on page 5)



MI6 – Fifty years of special operations by Stephen Dorril (published by Fourth Estate, London, 2000, £25)

Not so secret state

This substantial, indeed magisterial, work offers a comprehensive and compelling account of the post World War Two activities of that branch of government known as MI6 (Military Intelligence Section 6), latterly re-titled the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) – a much more suitable name for an organisation whose primary function is spying.

The main thrust of this book is encapsulated in the first few lines of the author's Preface, wherein he says "our view of MI6 has been distorted by (an) obsession with the activities of traitors and MI5's hunt for moles". He goes on to attempt, with some success, to redress the balance by analysing what MI6 was actually up to during the long

arid decades of the Cold War.

The book is written in a very accessible style, but at 900 pages is perhaps rather on the long side for the layman or woman. It seems, however, that Dorril is aware of this drawback and he has divided the material into seven sections, each of which deals with a particular aspect of the organisation's activities and thus allows the reader to focus on his or her particular area of interest.

A particularly dense half century of recent history is covered with great thoroughness and in chronological order: *Fifty years of special operations* begins with a chapter outlining MI6's role in World War Two and ends with one entitled 'On Her Majesty's Secret Service' which includes a reference to a speech made by the Foreign Secretary,

Robin Cook, at a formal dinner in April 1998 in which he sings the praises of SIS. This book is also global in scope in a specifically geographical sense. It deals with regions as far apart, culturally and physically, as Belorussia (Chapter 13) and the Yemen (Chapter 31). Large tracts of hitherto unexplored territory are investigated – as the author himself remarks "there is far more in the public domain than anyone has realised – least of all the intelligence agencies". It's gratifying to think that the bigger they get the more porous they are. Ben Franklin was right when he said: "Three may keep a secret if two of them be dead".

While everyone and his brother has heard of MI6 and its sister MI5, which is responsible for counter-espionage, i.e. the

maintenance of state security, it is easy to forget that this nomenclature confirms the existence of Military Intelligence units 1 to 4. The author mentions departments MI10, MI11 and MI14, and it's worth remembering they, with others not identified, cover all aspects of state security – censorship, signal intelligence (SIGINT), interrogation of suspects, codes and cryptography, etc., etc. It might have been useful if the reader could have been given a list of all these covert departments, some kind of family tree showing the relationships between them and, most importantly, an indication of who they are answerable to.

As well as giving us a comprehensive overview, Stephen Dorril provides some sixty pages of sources for those who wish to dig a little deeper. In addition, there is a list of more than two hundred of the acronyms so beloved of the intelligence community – my favourite being CROWCASS (Central Registry of War Crimes and Security Suspects). This brings us to one minor defect in the book as a whole. Perhaps Dorril could have treated the subject with a little less respect. Those involved in intelligence work all too often see themselves as leading actors in a Jacobean Tragedy, while in reality they are merely bit players in a Whitehall farce. The CIA was originally known as CIC (Counter Intelligence Corps) but rumour has it that the name was changed because everyone said CIC stood for 'Christ I'm confused'.

These small strictures aside this book is an essential read for anyone interested in the workings of the not so secret state.

Adrian Walker

MI6 – Fifty years of Special Operations is not stocked by the Freedom Bookshop but is readily available elsewhere.

(continued from page 4)

feelings is relevant to junior aged children. It takes up unnecessary time that could be better deployed on the National Curriculum" (*An Inspector Calls*, edited by C. Cullingford, 1999). Prejudiced but nonetheless devastatingly critical OFSTED reports often prove the final straw for schools struggling against the odds to serve severely disadvantaged communities, but OFSTED doesn't stick around to pick up the pieces. Having wreaked havoc on an educational community Blunkett's boot boys move on to the next scene of well-remunerated vandalism.

Despite mounting criticisms Woodhead pursues his witch-hunt with obvious glee. He has received the total support of both Tory and Labour governments who vie with each other to demonstrate who is the bigger classroom bully. His manner is so arrogant and aggressive that even a House of Commons inquiry into OFSTED last year was forced to admit that "Woodhead's statements appear sometimes to be more about ego than education". He characteristically shrugged this off by asserting that "as to my personal style, I have praised excellence and challenged complacency and mediocrity. That is what I am paid to do and what I shall continue to do."

Woodhead's personal agenda seems to extend far beyond his formal brief. In October 1999 he declared that independent schools should be funded to train teachers, "as it made sense to train the best teachers in the best schools". He is widely held to have been primarily responsible for the imposition of the national literacy and numeracy strategies, which Professor Margaret Brown has rightly observed to be "underpinned by predominantly Victorian values". He advocates the views of the privatisers for central state funding to be used to pay for education services provided by private companies rather than LEAs and has promoted this campaign through statements

in his annual OFSTED report, during a seminar with local government officers last November and on numerous other occasions. However when he extended the benefit of his wisdom to the Scots, informing them that 50% of their Primary Schools were under-performing, the Scottish union leader Fred Forrester reminded him that "He is an isolated figure in the English education system and the last thing we need in Scotland are his unpopular methods."

Unabashed, Woodhead has even used the columns of the *Church Times* as a platform for his sermons. In the February issue he claimed that schoolchildren should be taught absolute moral values in the same way as they are taught rules about regular and irregular verbs. His own personal morality has not, always seemed above reproach and his ex-wife continues to claim that he conducted an affair with a schoolgirl whilst teaching at Gordano School, Portishead in 1976. Woodhead claims he began the affair only after he had left the school, nevertheless he later told a group of trainee teachers at Exeter University that such relationships between pupils and teachers could be 'educative and experiential'. Whilst pontificating about the poor standards of mathematics in schools his own performance again fell short when he was asked by a BBC interviewer (October 1999) if he knew what "half of three-quarters is". Although this is well below the level of mathematical knowledge demanded of 11 year olds by the National Curriculum Woodhead wasn't able to provide a solution and could only reply, "I'm a total disgrace, but I'm not going to make a fool of myself."

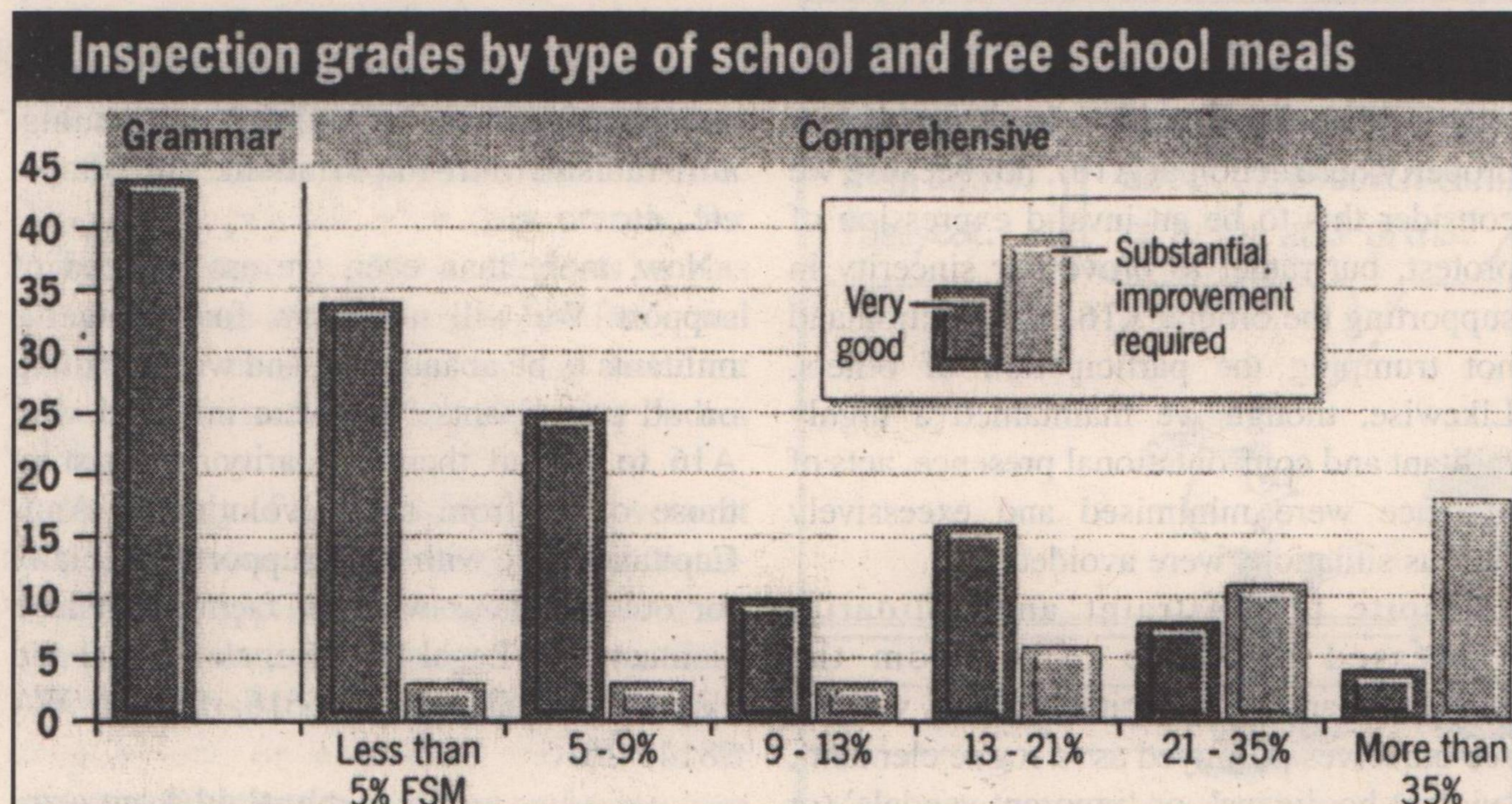
Killing Freedom

Unfortunately Woodhead's ignorance is all too rarely a source of light relief and more frequently a cause of unbearable stress. Since September three teachers have committed suicide because they could not bear the pressure imposed by OFSTED. In September

1999 Janet Watson, a 33 year old teacher at Rudheath primary School in Northwich, Cheshire, hanged herself after becoming terrified that she was about to receive a negative inspection report. In March an inquest revealed that James Patton, a 29 year old primary school teacher from Birmingham hanged himself before an OFSTED inspection because he felt his best might not prove good enough. In April another inquest was informed that Pamela Relf, a 57 year old senior teacher at Middlefield Primary School, Cambridgeshire, had drowned herself in an icy river on 4th January after a critical OFSTED inspection. Her previously uneventful career had spanned 36 years in the classroom and she was described as a "popular teacher with a quiet gentle approach" by the school's head, who recalled that the OFSTED inspectors had reduced her to tears. Woodhead told Radio 4's *Today* programme: "Miss Relf's death is obviously very sad and everybody at OFSTED is deeply upset that she was unable to accept what the inspectors said to her. We will continue to do all we can to ensure that inspection is rigorous, that it tells the truth about a teacher."

Having cowed State schools into submission OFSTED has now moved onward and upward. Well satisfied with Woodhead's McCarthyite zeal the State has empowered him to kick the shit out of Independent Schools, Teacher Training, Further Education, Sixth-Form Colleges, Local Education Authorities and, from September, Playgroups and Nurseries. This is serious stuff and should not be dismissed by anarchists as mere bickering between rival parts of the State bureaucracy. A liberal democracy is better than a dictatorship and we shouldn't forget that British education always used to permit pockets of comparatively liberated learning to exist within its dull, traditional framework. OFSTED is an active, powerful agency that is extending State conformity and control into more and more areas of community life. Where previously we might have been able to influence our local playgroups, schools or colleges in a more libertarian direction, OFSTED now exerts overwhelming pressure for conformity to State policy. Their actions recall Proudhon's devastating (suitably amended) critique of government; "To be OFSTEDed is to be watched over, inspected, spied on, directed, legislated over, regulated, docketed, indoctrinated, preached at, controlled, assessed, weighed, censored, ordered about, by men who have neither the right, nor knowledge, nor virtue. That is OFSTED, that is its justice, that is its morality."

Christopher Draper



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The next global day of action

The 26th September will be the next Global Day of Action against Capitalism. Already, many groups around the world are preparing for this event, in recognition that the capitalist system, based on the exploitation of people, societies and the environment for the profit of a few, is the prime cause of our social and ecological troubles.

From 26th to 28th September the IMF and World Bank are holding their 55th annual summit in Prague. A mass mobilisation of people to Prague is beginning. On 26th September peoples of the world will express their opposition to the World Bank and the IMF and their policies. Peoples of the world will join together in an expression of solidarity with the demonstrators in Prague.

European grassroots groups have met recently and are planning a European wide mobilisation to Prague and also decentralised action. The idea has been discussed and supported by several Latin American movements which met in Nicaragua recently. The Indian 'National Alliance of People's Movements' issued a statement, just before the A16 protests in Washington.

The 26th September Global Day of Action proceeds from the successes of the previous global Days of Action against Capitalism on 18th June and 30th November of last year and 1st May of this year. S26 expands on these previous days in the same spirit. Through those days our networks grew, we learned much, and we saw many new people engage themselves. 26th September will continue this process of building up a strong, bold, and creative grassroots movement for a society in which people do not exploit or oppress each other, communities or the environment, but one that is based on solidarity, co-operation, grassroots democracy and ecological sustainability.

As on previous occasions, people of different movements and different countries will join forces on this day against the social, political, and economic institutions of the capitalist system – in particular against the World Bank and the IMF.

Workers, the unemployed, students, trade unionists, peasants, the landless, fishers, women groups, ethnic minorities, indigenous peoples, peace activists, environmental activists, ecologists, and so on will work in solidarity with one another in the understanding that their various struggles are not isolated from each other. The simultaneous occupation and transformation of the capitalist social order around the globe – in the streets, neighbourhoods, fields, factories,

offices, commercial centres, financial districts, and so on – will strengthen mutual bonds at the local, national, and international levels.

As before, the day will be organised in a non-hierarchical way, as a decentralised and informal network of grassroots groups that employ non-authoritarian, grassroots democratic forms of organisation, struggle independent of the social, political, and economic institutions of the capitalist system,



and seek to effect change directly through their own action. Each event or action will be organised autonomously by each group, while coalitions of various movements and groups can be formed at the local, regional, and national levels. A strategy that may be useful at the local level is that various groups co-operate in creating a surrounding atmosphere of carnival and festivity as a setting for their various actions.

Examples of conceivable actions are: strikes; demonstrations; critical mass bike rides; carnivals; street parties; reclaiming streets, government land or office buildings for non-commercial and good activities; marches; music; dancing; speeches; handing

out flyers; banner hangings; distributing community controlled newspapers; street theatre; building gardens; handing out free food; mock trade fairs; offering no interest loans outside major banks; solidarity actions; pickets; occupations of offices; blockades and shutdowns; appropriating and disposing of luxury consumer goods; sabotaging, wrecking or interfering with capitalist infrastructure; appropriating capitalist wealth and returning it to the working people; declaring oneself independent from capitalism and authoritarian governments; setting up grassroots' community councils and holding meetings outside city halls; setting up economic alternatives, like workers' co-operatives; promoting economic alternatives to capitalist companies; promoting grassroots-based forms of community organisation, etc.

If you or your group plan to join this day of action, please let others know as soon as possible, to facilitate networking and communication. There are several international mailing lists available for open discussions and co-ordination.

A public international contacts list is regularly posted to them in order to facilitate decentralised and non-hierarchical networking. To have your contact information added to it, please contact resistance@x21.org, indicating the country and location in which you plan to take action, plus any other information you see fit – for instance the name of your group, coalition or yourself; the events or actions being planned; your land address, e-mail address, telephone number, fax number or

web site.

There are many things we need to do, to make the best of 26th September at the global, local, and national levels. We need to spread information about it among as many suitable groups and movements as possible. We need to spread and share propaganda materials, such as leaflets and posters. And, in general, we need to share our experiences, thoughts and ideas with one other and help each other out. At the local level, information about the day needs to be spread and discussed among groups and individuals, meetings need to be organised, events planned, leaflets printed and distributed, funds raised, laughter and conversation shared.

The process of building up our movements can and should be continued through further global days of action against capitalism in the future.

Any enquiries or concerns about the 26th September global day of action should be directed to other activists in the group, city, country or on the various mailing lists, for us to mutually help each other with ideas and advise. There is no-one in charge or pulling the strings for the day. It will be a radically decentralised and non-hierarchical event entirely of our own creation in co-operation and solidarity with one another.

Translators are needed to make S26 information available in every language, especially Spanish, French, German, Russian, Arabic, Dutch, and Chinese. <http://212.67.202.59/~resistance/s26/>

resistance@x21.org

Solidarity for the 'Revolutionary Anti-Capitalist Bloc'

For anyone who was present in Washington, DC for the anti-IMF / World Bank protests and direct actions, it would be difficult to ignore the contributions made by anarchists and other radical anti-authoritarian militants within the Revolutionary Anti-Capitalist Bloc. Whether or not one necessarily agreed with our revolutionary anarchist politics or chosen protest tactics, it is undeniable that we have proven ourselves to be deeply committed participants within the struggle against oppressive transnational financial and trade-related institutions such as the IMF, World Bank, and WTO.

Through a range of creative action, militancy, courage, and sacrifice, we put a lot on the line in Washington, DC in order to effectively support the call to shut down the IMF / World Bank meetings. Time after time we came to the aid of our brave non-violent counterparts, defending activist blockades and lockdowns, erecting barricades in order to fortify key intersections, pushing back lines of riot police in order to reclaim lost ground, and actively resisting brutal police tactics. Throughout A16, we made the very conscious effort to be at the forefront of 'where the action was', and as a result, we suffered many injuries, tear-gassings, clubbings, beatings, intimidation and arrests (which in all likelihood has resulted in numerous interrogations and unwitnessed acts of brutality).

Many participants from the Revolutionary Anti-Capitalist Bloc are currently still being held in custody by police, with many brave individuals facing very serious charges for

their actions. Unfortunately, in addition to this expected police repression, we are also forced to endure numerous denunciations, slanders and misrepresentations made by certain anti-globalisation activists intent on creating divisions within this movement. Hopefully some of this can be addressed in order to bridge some of the unnecessary schisms that have been growing since Seattle.

From the very beginning, those of us organising within the Revolutionary Anti-Capitalist Bloc have maintained a very principled relationship with the official A16 organisers. We have been up front and very honest in expressing our tactical differences, rather than paying false lip-service to guidelines that we did not agree with and then turning around and violating the trust of organisers through the use of tactics that would be interpreted to be contrary to these guidelines. Overall, we managed to refrain from the overt property destruction seen in Seattle (there were some minor instances of property destruction at A16), not because we consider this to be an invalid expression of protest, but rather to prove our sincerity in supporting the official A16 call to action and not trumping the participation of others. Likewise, though we maintained a highly militant and confrontational presence, acts of violence were minimised and excessively riotous situations were avoided.

Despite the restraint and solidarity expressed by those of us from the Revolutionary Anti-Capitalist Bloc, we still see ourselves portrayed as 'a rogue element', 'violent hooligans', or 'ignorant vandals' (or

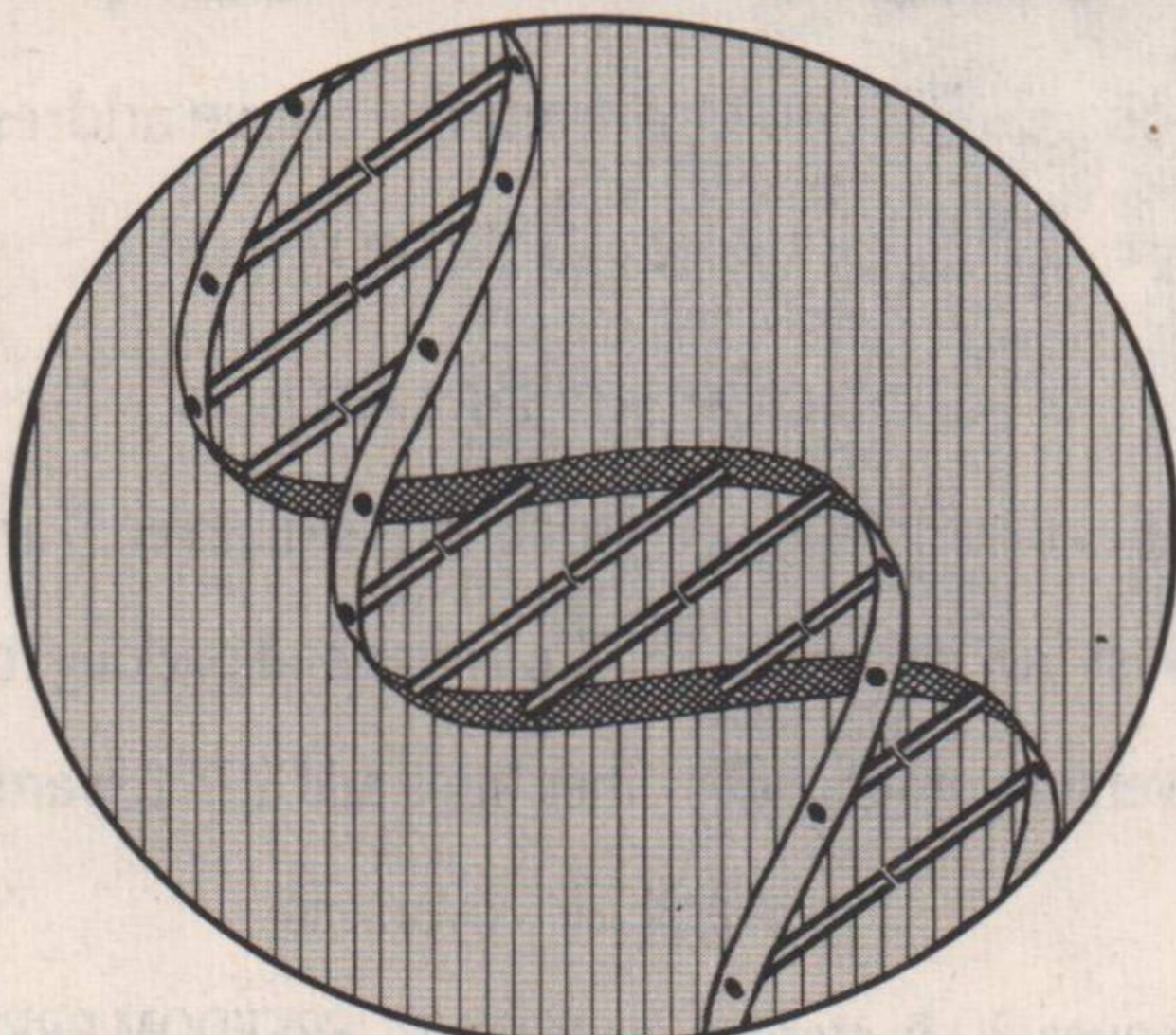
worse, 'agent provocateurs') out to destroy the movement. This is very demoralising for us, and only serves to divide the growing anti-globalisation movement in which we have continually played an important role within. Regardless of how our efforts are interpreted (by divisive left-activists and the mainstream media alike), we are all committed activists. Outside of our role within specific mobilisations such as the Revolutionary Anti-Capitalist Bloc, many of us have been front line activists for years (and, incidentally, most of us are indeed politically articulate, having just as much of an understanding of contemporary social, political and economic issues as anyone else within the anti-globalisation movement). Behind each black mask, activists from the entire spectrum of the left are represented: anti-poverty, anti-sweatshop, radical environmentalism, labour organising, anti-militarism, prisoner support, community organising, alternative media, queer activism, feminism, animal rights, squatting, anti-racism, anti-imperialism, infoshops, etc., etc.

Now, more than ever, we are in need of support. We will not allow for our active militants to be abandoned, and we are calling on all participants who were involved with A16 to extend their solidarity in assisting those of us from the Revolutionary Anti-Capitalist Bloc with legal support (especially for our comrades who are facing felonies). Contact: A16 Legal Defense, c/o Mutual Aid Legal Fund, PO Box 95616, Seattle, WA 98145-2616.

[<mutlaid@scn.org>](mailto:mutlaid@scn.org)

Number 40 of the anarchist quarterly

The Raven on Genetic Modification



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Working class environmentalism

Dear Freedom,

In my article 'Out of Fashion' (*Freedom*, 20th April 2000) I asserted that "if car production is to cease ... and make way for investment in less harmful new technologies ... such transformation can only come about through the social power mobilised by [car] workers and other workers whose jobs and futures are directly linked to theirs". Let some readers feel that this notion of working class environmentalism is a fantasy, I feel I should adduce evidence to the contrary. A few examples should suffice.

The Watchdog organising committee in Van Nuys, California (a group combating corporate air pollution in working class neighbourhoods and seeking the conversion of the auto industry to ecologically viable forms of production) arose out of the 'Save GM Van Nuys' campaign - a community and trade union coalition formed to resist General Motors plant closures. Workers who occupied the Caterpillar vehicle plant in Toronto worked with environmental groups

to devise a 'greenworks' conversion campaign. Toshiba-Amplex workers, who occupied a high-tech plant in Japan for eight years, redesigned their products to meet criteria of social and ecological responsibility, producing loud-speakers for anti-nuclear demonstrations, a citizens Geiger counter and a radiation detector for Chernobyl victims, funded from labour and community donations. We should not forget either the legacy of the New South Wales Builders Federation who stopped billions of dollars of development work around Sydney in the mid 1970s by instituting a system of 'green bans' as well as militantly supporting anti-discrimination campaigns, gay rights and the Aboriginal movement. As one observer at the time noted, through the BLF "the people of inner Sydney, who had previously been powerless against big developers and government, found they had an effective means of making their wishes known".

Nick S.

The Anarchism of Alex Comfort

Dear Freedom,

In response to Tony Gibson's call for 'younger comrades' to take up the Colin Ward / Alex Comfort debate (*Freedom*, 6th May 2000), I find myself firmly aligned behind Colin's 'aspirations of the heart'. Although my anarchist values are subjected to a rigorous intellectual examination, I cannot escape the fact that they are grounded upon an essentially moral critique of authority and hierarchical social relations. As a result, I am left wondering if any *Freedom* readers are aware of an anarchist theory that does not emanate from some kind of ethical standpoint. Even the alleged nihilism of Max Stirner appears to have a vague egoistic system of values at its core (see John Clarke's *Max Stirner's Egoism*, Freedom Press, 1976). With this in mind, I do not believe that it was purely scientific conclusions that drove Alex Comfort to anarchism. When I read his finest social and political essays I am struck by a definite sense of moral outrage. Pieces such as 'Peace and Disobedience' or 'The Social Causes of Ill-Health' (both collected in the 1994 Freedom Press book *Writings Against Power*

and *Death*, 1994) are not cold, value-free exercises in scientific enquiry. Instead, they represent the passionate endeavours of a man who seemed to be motivated as much by the aspirations of his heart as the deductions of his mind.

Dean Kendall



Dear Friends,

I am delighted that Tony Gibson so likes my introduction to *Against Power and Death*. With respect to the passage on pages 16-17, though, I'm not disagreeing with Alex Comfort's position. I first state Comfort's views, next Colin Ward's objection and then John Doheny's attempt to reconcile the two, rejecting the latter out of hand. I then proceed to explain that, in this respect at least, Comfort is at one with historic anarchism and its overwhelmingly positive perception of science.

By the way, the edited version of my obituary of Comfort, which you printed in full, appeared in *The Guardian*, not *The Independent*, on 28th March.

David Goodway

Preserving us from democracy

Dear Freedom,

Norman Epstein asks me (*Freedom*, 6th May) to "explain how solidarity rather than democracy would allow a free egalitarian community given all the available and relevant medical information to decide whether or not, for instance, to chlorinate the community's single-source drinking water."

I don't think I have ever suggested that solidarity should be a decision-making process. What I was urging - perhaps unclearly - in my letter of 11th March was that decisions, however made, should be motivated by feelings of solidarity rather than selfish wishes very possibly satisfied at the expense of others. The democratic ideal so easily leads to a callous 'the majority has given its vote; now you must be a good democrat and accept the result gracefully without whining about it'.

I did indeed ask, as Norman Epstein noted, "what happens if the majority decides that chemicals are to be added to the local

drinking water?" I was hoping that some anarchists might explain what their reaction to such a situation might be. A situation that could not possibly be described as the experience of a 'free egalitarian community' if it was simply allowed to rest there with the majority's will imposed and no further concern.

But if solidarity was the basic ethic of the community, the majority might then, for instance, help those who didn't want chlorine in their water to dig wells so that they could enjoy an uncontaminated supply or provide them with plant that could extract the chlorine. Naturally not all problems would find such simple solutions. But with solidarity the ideal, minorities or lone individuals would enjoy the double comfort of practical help and the knowledge that others were concerned for them. That, I think, would move humans closer to true freedom and equality, closer to a genuinely civilised way of life.

Amorey Gethin

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March 2000

Freedom Fortnightly Fighting Fund

Walton, GM £1; Wisbech, MG, £12; Holt, MW, £2; Montreal, CB, £3; Uxbridge, RS, £13; Wolverhampton, JL, £2; Oslo, FR, £16; Cambridge, MV, £6; Glasgow, JC, £1; Rugby, DR, £36; Denmark, RB, £5; Abingdon, MB, £5.

March total = £102
2000 total to date = £421

Freedom Press Overheads Fund

Wisbech, MG, £12; Holt, MW, £2; Wolverhampton, JL, £2; Nottinghamshire, MC, £1; Reading, AJY, £6; Denmark, RB, £4; Wimborne, DM, £2; London, SD, £5.

March total = £34
2000 total to date = £66

Raven Deficit Fund

Holt, MW, £2; Wisbech, MG, £12; Glasgow, JC, £1; Huddersfield, RR, £3; Denmark, RB, £5; Abingdon, MB, £5.

March total = £28
2000 total to date = £185

April 2000

Freedom Fortnightly Fighting Fund

Newport, NF, £10; London, NB, £9; Brooklyn, CM, £8; Wolverhampton, JL, £2; Hamburg, RM, £45; Wirril, NC, £6; Rochdale, PK, £6; London, SR, £3; Carmathen, JS, £1; West Drayton, FH, £10; Voldgade, VDM, £1; Windsor, SC, £3; Porthmadog, CJ, £6; London, AC, £5; Glasgow, JTC, £5; Newport, NF, £6.

April total = £126
2000 total to date = £547

Freedom Press Overheads Fund

London, NB, £8; Brooklyn, CM, £8; Liverpool, JF, £6; Wolverhampton, JL, £2; Wirril, NC, £5; Bronshøj, RB, £7; Bideford, JE, £2; Windsor, SC, £3; Porthmadog, CJ, £5; London, AC, £10; Newport, NF, £5; Stevenage, KW, £6.

April total = £67
2000 total to date = £699

Raven Deficit Fund

Newport, NF, £10; London, NB, £9; Brooklyn, CM, £8; Hamburg, RM, £35; Voldgade, VDM, £1; London, AC, £5.

April total = £68
2000 total to date = £225

Speakers' Corner

Dear Freedom,

Cheer up Neil Fisher! True, there has been rather a rush on anarchists' deaths recently but take heart, anarchism is alive and well in Speakers Corner! No doubt inspired by the late Philip Sansom's eloquent speaking skills, a couple of speakers now regularly speak from an anarchist platform (well, ladder actually) in Hyde Park on Sunday afternoons. Anarchism is in the news a lot at the moment. Not surprisingly it is treated in a very negative way and no space is given to explaining what it means. Now is the time to explain to people that anarchism is none of the ludicrous things the media portrays it to be. People are interested in anarchism and want to know more about it. Why not come down to Speakers Corner and help raise awareness of anarchist issues?

AH

Please keep sending in your letters and donations

Sheffield Anarchist

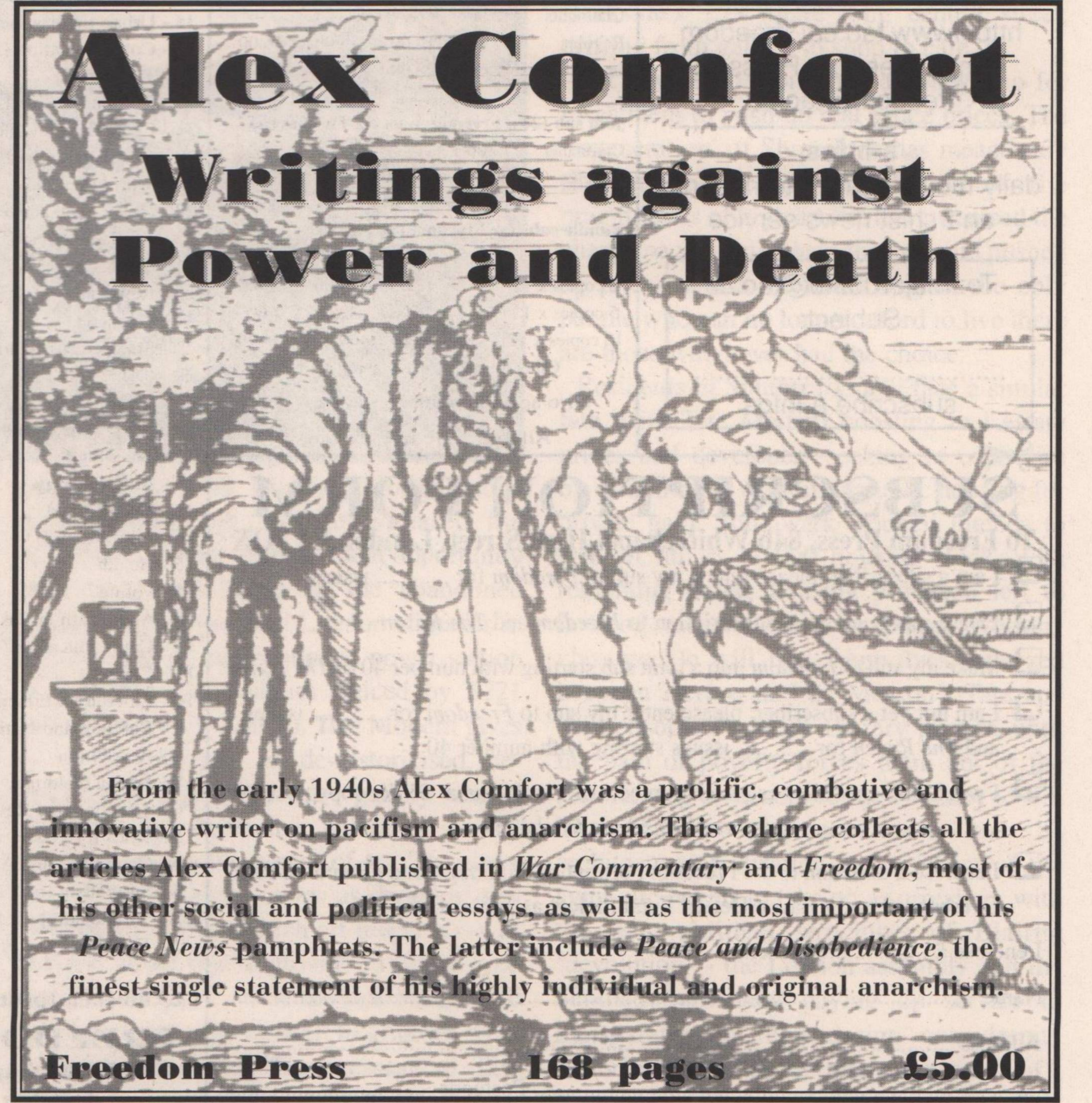
Dear Comrades,

I am trying to obtain some back copies of *The Sheffield Anarchist*, a paper I edited/co-edited from 1983 to 1987. If any of your readers have copies I would be very grateful to be sent photocopies.

Mark Barnsley

WA 2897, HMP Long Lartin, Evesham, Wores., WR11 5TZ

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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 2000 —

2nd June Some Thoughts on Political
Correctness (speaker Peter Neville)

9th June General discussion

16th June The Millennium Dome (speaker
Donald Room)

23rd June General discussion

30th June Chomsky's Anarchism: part two
(an illustrated discussion)

7th July General discussion

14th July The London Anarchist Forum in
Retrospect: suggestions for the future (open
meeting)

21st July 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

**10 heads of state, 800 chief executive officers,
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Join the people's pre-Olympic festival outside Crown Casino and make sure
the corporate fascists hear your voice as they plan your future ...

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<http://www.vicnet.net.au/~anarchist>

e-mail: anarchistage@geocities.com

**Renewing the
Anarchist Tradition**

A conference in Plainfield, Vermont,
from 24th to 27th August 2000

for more info contact either of the co-organisers:

Cindy Milstein, 5641 S. Blackstone Ave.,
Chicago, IL 60637-1898, USA
e-mail: cbmilstein@aol.com

John Petrovato, PO Box 715, Conway,
MA 01341, USA

e-mail: ssimon@shaysnet.com

**Libertarian Socialist
Discussion Group**

(forming now)

will meet on the second Wednesday of the month
for action and discussion

at 8pm in The Vine, Kennedy Street

(off Fountain Street), near Manchester Town Hall

**Fifth Anarchist
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