

FREEDOM

anarchist fortnightly

Vol. 61 No. 13

1st July 2000

50p

Euro 2000 gives an opportunity for the Brits to show that we're a ...

Land of hope and boozers

Few things excite the Englishman more than sport, particularly football. The French and other Latins may have their passion for food, but the English will get more worked up about backing a horse or arguing over some off-side decision.

When I was young the question 'Do you want tripe for tea?' was met by 'A can 'ave'. In England you always seem to get massive understatement about matters like food or issues of aesthetic consideration. Like the lady who said to Coleridge 'Yes, it's the prettiest thing I ever saw' about some waterfalls the poet considered 'sublime'.

But in relation to sport, and especially football, the English can get really carried away. Commenting on the development of sport between the wars

the historian A.J.P. Taylor wrote: "Sport, or rather the watching of professional sport, mounted steadily. Horse racing continued to provide the main outlet for gambling. £200 million is said to have gone on bets in 1929. The pools – betting attempts to foretell the results of football matches – expanded steadily during the 1930s ... Greyhound racing, introduced in 1926, gave the masses a more public, cheap version of the green tables at Monte Carlo."

Even during the slump, rather than reading books the English ran after public entertainment. And George Orwell claimed that "professional footballers, boxers, jockeys and even cricketers enjoy a popularity that no scientist or artist could ever hope to rival".

Strong drink and the law

Last week the newspapers were full of reports that up to 520 England fans were arrested in Belgium and deported back to the UK. Editorial columns echoed to the tune of the sermon of the 'shaming spectacle'. The *Independent* listed "alcohol, testosterone and tribal loyalty" as obvious causes for the violence, while the *Observer* declared that "society is to blame – football thugs are made, not born".

It has long been obvious that Englishmen can't handle strong drink in any quantity. For this the curious English licensing laws introduced during the Great War has a lot to answer for. At that time Lloyd George cut down on the hours of drinking and even watered down the beer by government order.

For donkey's years it always seemed to me one couldn't go in a pub with a group of friends or workmates without feeling that you were in a race to get as

much beer down your throat before closing time. It was called boozing and the result was drunkenness. Belgian beer is not watered down and is notoriously strong and tasty. To a people like ours, who unlike most Europeans don't have a grown up attitude to drinking strong liquor, the terrain of the Grand Place in Brussels and the surrounding ginnels were bound to offer themselves as a battleground.

Deranged by drink and overwhelmed by victory over the Germans, the English fans set-to on a bunch of German supporters. Perhaps we are better losers than victors, as there was no trouble when later we lost against Rumania and were knocked out of the competition.

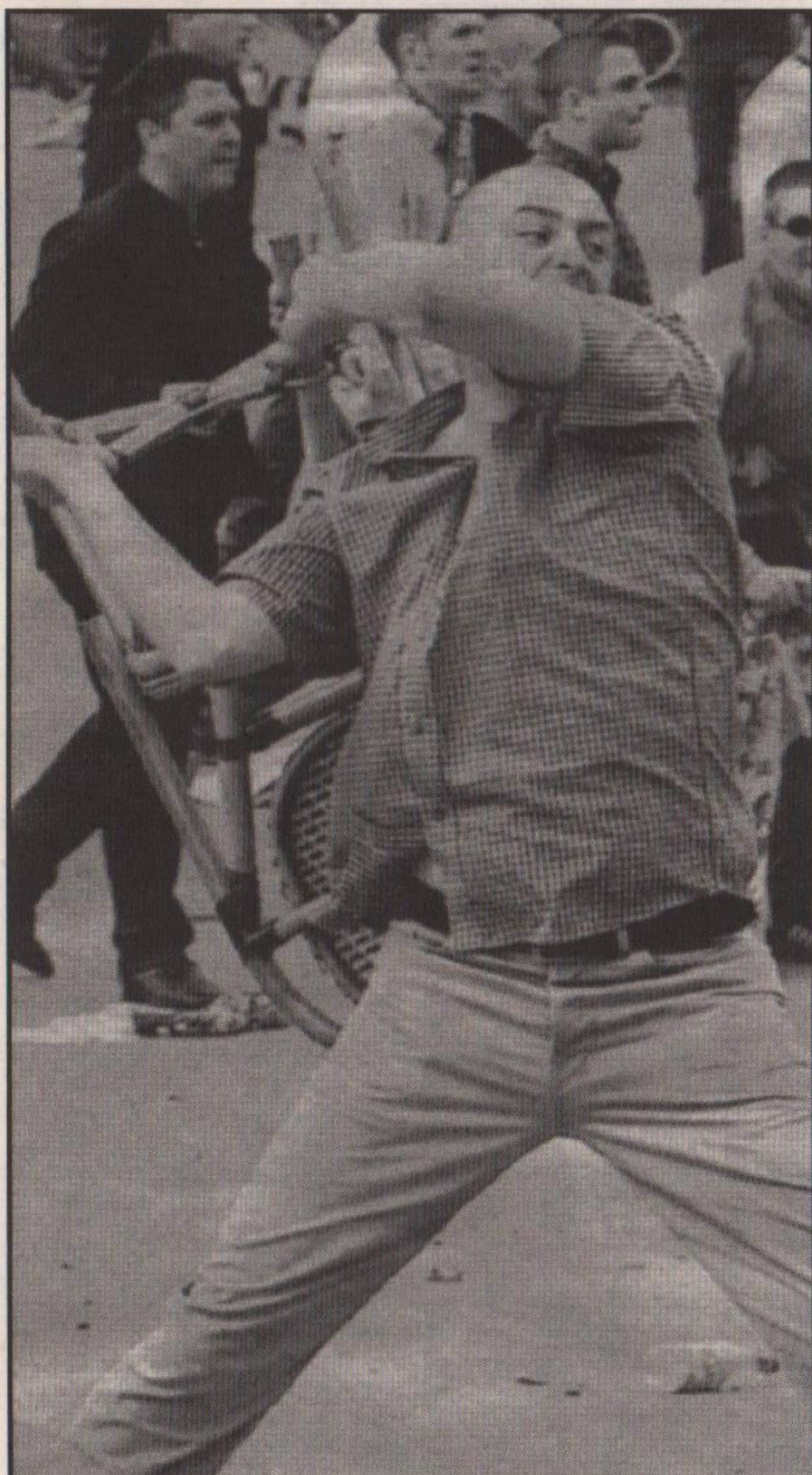
John Bull: our 'heroic demi-god'

Someone once said that 'sport is war by other means' – that sport is an unfailing cause of ill will. It goes without saying that Anglo-German relations will now be a bit worse after the Brussels skirmishes.

Gazzetta dello Sport, before England's defeat by Rumania and next in line to face our team, declared that "in the lunatic mind-set of these fans, there's no bigger thrill than routing the Italians after the Germans, the two defeated enemies of the Second World War".

Wyndham Lewis argued that by exaggeration we could lay bare "a sort of subterranean ideologic stream whose presence is usually only revealed by a sort of misty snobbishness". Mr Lewis thereby suggested that "the nineteenth century John Bull ... was the proud aristocratically minded person he was because the migratory Achaian or Dorian was of divine race, or imposed himself as such on the subject

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Taking from the poor and giving to the rich makes the Labour Party ...

Supporters of excellence

On Wednesday 7th June 2000 Tony Blair told the Women's Institute that the class war was over. "Let's hear no more about class war ... We are unashamed supporters of excellence" (whether by excellence Blair meant such triumphs of the fusion of commerce and aesthetics as the Millennium Dome and the Bridge of Light wasn't clear). "Gordon Brown and I believe passionately in extending opportunity for all. But neither of us will have any truck with old-fashioned egalitarianism that levels down." The levelling-up Blair is committed to was manifested soon after in the publication of a report by UNICEF, which revealed that Britain has one of the worst records on child poverty in the industrialised world. Nearly 20% of young people live in families which are below the official poverty line (judged as household income below half median earnings). The UNICEF report states that Britain fails with regard to five key indicators of childhood poverty. The childhood poverty rate is high; the number of lone parent families suffering from poverty is high; the number of workless households is high, as is the number afflicted by low wages/benefits. New Labour, having failed to implement any of the key recommendations of the 1998 *Acheson Report on Inequalities in Health*, has simply held to the concept of egalitarianism developed by the Thatcher and Major governments – taking from the poor, and giving to the rich.

New Labour's use of the high pound as a means of shaking out uncompetitive industries meanwhile continues to reveal the extent of Gordon Brown's real commitment to the notion of 'full employment'. In the last week Dunlop has announced 1,100 job losses at its tyre plant in Wolverhampton; the steel

firm Corus has axed 1,400 jobs; BAE Systems has cut 3,800; the closure of C&A will cost 4,800 jobs; and the *Observer* on 18th June 2000 forecast the loss of 35,000 jobs in the car components industry.

The class war, though, is, we're told, well and truly over. In one sense, this is true. A war is only a war if there is a clash between contending forces – otherwise it's really a turkey-shoot. The trade union leadership is begging to join the euro (even though, as the TGWU's Bill Morris points out, the euro gives New Labour an excuse to oversee further job losses and deny moral culpability, as Morris notes, New Labour could "if it so wished, ameliorate unemployment". Monetary union removes the power to do so "to nowhere", putting the economy "outside democratic control" (*EMU and the Democratic Deficit* by Bill Morris, Macmillan, 2000). We're expected to cheer when Stephen Byers announces that the minimum wage will be linked to rises in average earnings, so that "two million poorly paid workers keep pace with those at the top", even though the minimum wage was set so low that it did nothing to alleviate low pay, but merely became a statutory maximum in many workplaces. The link to the rise in average earnings is an empty promise given that New Labour policy is to keep wage rises down by increasing the pressure of the reserve army of unemployed labour to drag wages down, through the combined use of job cuts and the creation of peacetime conscription in the war against decent wages, through the New Deal.

It is, though, the case that a substantial number of us refuse to accept the Blairite contention that 'We're all middle class now'. It may well be, as the Office of National

Statistics recognised recently, that none of us any longer pick coal or throw timber, but, as the Office of National Statistics make clear, the fastest growing sector of the labour market belongs to those who clean, shop, child-mind or garden for the professional classes who lack the time or inclination to so act themselves. As the *Guardian's* Charlotte Denny recognised: "It is the new upstairs-downstairs economy for the cash-rich, time-poor, though nowadays the servants do not live in. Big companies are out to make money out of the service economy. Unilever has launched My Home which promises to take care of household tasks." Further, despite the constant assertion by everyone from Peter Mandelson to Anthony Giddens that the knowledge based economy has brought the notion of a 'career' to an end, and that "most people must expect more jobs in a lifetime or to have to switch vocation", permanent employees represented 81.7% of the workforce in 1999. The proportion of people who have held the same job for more than ten years remains around 30% of the workforce. The imposition of 'flexibility' across the board remains, all propaganda to the contrary, a battle yet to be won. According to Nick Burkitt of the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR): "New technology is creating new jobs in professional and routine occupations and destroying some others but some of the biggest growth areas are in old fashioned personal service jobs such as waiting, bar work, cleaning and especially care work." The IPPR notes that the biggest single occupation groups are administrative or secretarial workers among women, and skilled trade workers among men. The majority of us are still employed in 'routine

occupations' – working class blue or white collar jobs. Trade union membership has begun to rise. TUC figures show that unions carried out 983 ballots for industrial action in the year from last June, compared with 464 the previous year, producing votes for strike action in 95% of cases. Of last year's ballots, led to strike action, while 155 led to strikes from this year's votes. Of the remainder, the ballot in and of itself led to improved deals. The Communications Workers Union (CWU) conference at Bournemouth voted to refuse to increase funding to the Labour Party, on the basis that such an increase "would effectively endorse the 75p a week rise in pensions and £1,000 per year university tuition fees" (Pete Boswell, CWU Oxfordshire).

If New Labour weren't so concerned to consign to the flames all history prior to the Coming of Blair in 1994, this latter might cause them particular concern. The election of the Wilson government in 1964 mirrored in many ways that of Blair's 33 years later. Wilson, like Blair, sought to embrace the 'white heat of technology', and railed against those working class 'forces of conservatism' who felt job security and higher pay were worth preserving against the 'white heats' of ruling class prosperity. "We shall be frank in condemning all those who shirk from their duty as a nation" Wilson railed, targeting particularly "the professional fomenters of unofficial strikes." What the Wilson government offered, as Leo Panitch and Colin Leys observe, was "a foreign relations orthodoxy grounded in Atlanticism ... symbolised by the Government's support for American policy in Vietnam and by its readiness to blame strikes on communist influence" ("a tightly knit group of politically motivated men" as Wilson described the striking Seamen's Union workers") (*The End of Parliamentary Socialism* by L. Panitch and C. Leys, Verso, 1998). The baton of anti working class politics was picked up by both Heath and Callaghan in the governments which followed. As Jeremy Seabrook and Trevor Blackwell put it: "The public admission by a Labour Government that the only thing wrong with Britain was its irresponsible working class set the tone for the 1970s, and indeed furnished them with their leitmotif" (*A World Still To Win*, Gollancz, 1985). As significant, though, was the response of working class Labour voters. In 1970 a substantial portion of the working class vote deserted Labour, with manual workers support falling from 69% in 1966 to 58% in 1970, falling still further to 50% in 1979, "after a second experience of Labour government", as Panitch and Leys explain. Eric Hobsbawm argues that "the workers, and growing strata outside the manual workers, were looking for a lead and a policy. They did not get it. They got the Wilson years – and many of them lost faith and hope in the

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mass party of the working people" (Eric Hobsbawm, *The Forward March of Labour Halted*, Verso, 1981). That 'loss of faith and hope' took two forms: a loss of belief in class identity as having any bearing on politics at all (manifest in the working class vote for Thatcher in 1979) and a rise in extra-parliamentary militancy which led to the upsurge in a community based politics which directly challenged the values and priorities of the status quo (squatters groups, the Irish Civil Rights Solidarity Campaign, prisoners rights, through to the extra parliamentary orientation of a large section of the labour movement, shown in the violence of the clashes with the state in the 1972 building workers strike, the mass picket of Saltley coke depot on 10th February 1972 and the mass picket of Pentonville prison in support of the docks stewards jailed under the Industrial Relations Act.) Linked in with this, Panitch and Leys observe that "throughout the late 1960s, it was common to see reports of branches voting to disaffiliate from the Party because of the actions of the Labour government" (the most significant instances of disaffiliation took place among the railway, miners, textile and sheet metal workers unions. The number of individuals who contracted out of the political levy portion of their dues also increased). The purpose of the neo-liberal policies pursued by the variety of governments which followed on from Wilson and Heath was precisely to re-discipline the working class – to ensure that the terrors of Saltley and Pentonville were never repeated. It is to the

shame of the left that their response to the extra parliamentary militancy of the late '60s and early '70s was to direct it towards a campaign to transform the Labour Party, at a point when that party had begun to collapse (the Labour Party lost 150,000 members from 1964 to 1969 and Ken Livingstone has estimated that the Party lost half its



A humiliated Tony Blair after his WI speech

membership during this period). In an interview with *Big Flame* in 1980, Raymond Williams commented that "if you say the channel for our aspirations is the Labour

Party and if you stay in that channel, the very things which are necessary to correct the Labour tradition of centralised experts and directors of the economy, would be neglected in favour of the centralised mechanisms which again and again destroy local autonomy and initiative" (*Revolutionary Socialism* issue 5).

Williams went on to state that he'd quit the Labour Party after the seamen's strike in 1966, because "when it came right down to it, they were more against the working class than they were against the existing order". The tragedy of the New Left was that, in ignoring Williams' analysis, they rebuilt the Party machine that put Blair into office in 1997.

With New Labour haemorrhaging, and the first signs of that 'autonomy and initiative' returning to the stage, the heirs of the New Left legacy are looking to repeat their errors, albeit in a new form. In the London mayoral

elections, the London Socialist Alliance scored 1.6 % of the vote – less than the British National Party. In the real world, such a vote would evidence disaster, and a need to re-examine tactics, to determine what went wrong. In the latest (June) *Red Pepper*, though, Tariq Ali daydreams of a "new, inclusive party, an alliance that can contain the likes of Livingstone and [Denis] Canavan, as well as Liz Davies, George Monbiot, Dianne Abbott, Sheila Rowbotham, Jeremy Hardy, Darren Johnson and Candy Unwin". It is, perhaps, significant, that Ali envisages such a party as being built around a self-selected leadership of second rate media personalities, failed comedians and occasional *Guardian* columnists, rather than focused around the needs and desires of, say, Ford Dagenham workers or Southwark tenants. Doubtless Ali and his ragbag of cronies think they know what's best for all of us. Part of the problem with initiative such as the LSA is that they are based on the fixations of those who claim to lead them, rather than the everyday needs of those of us they see as their constituency-of-right.

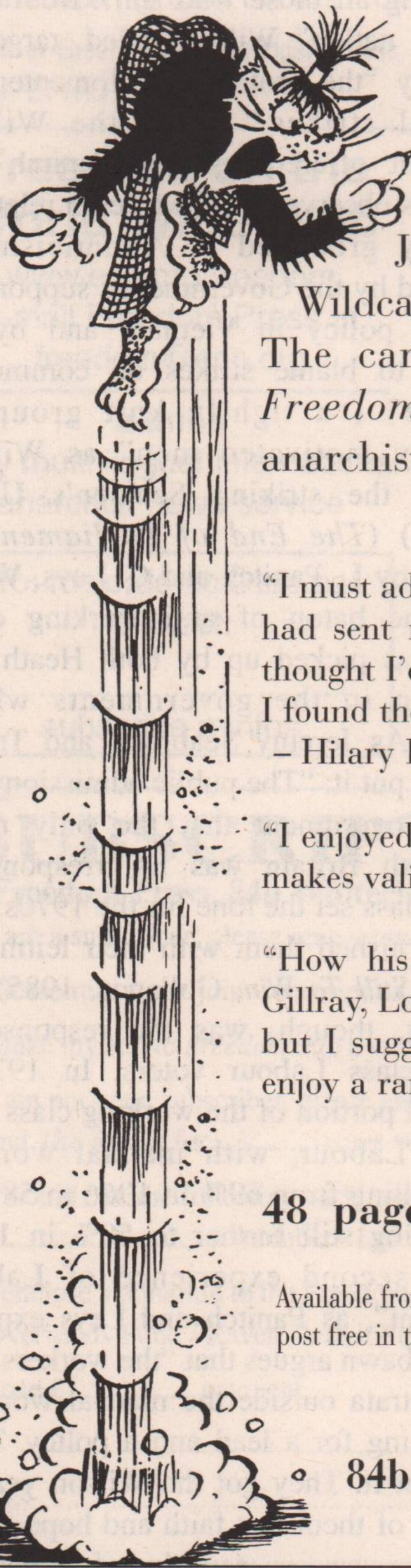
More than this, though; the nature of parliamentary politics is that it sets up a fiction convenient to capital; that power resides in Parliament. The social power of ordinary people – the power manifest at Pentonville in '72 is emasculated by parliamentary politics precisely because it denies the constituent power of those led to believe their role in the political process is only to elect their chosen policy makers once every four or five years. As Rudolf Rocker had it: "Political rights do not originate in parliament; they are, rather, forced upon parliaments from without". Forgetting that lesson bequeathed us the defeats of the 1980s. To forget again will allow New Labour the chance to carry through its agenda of egalitarianism-for-the-rich with opposition confined to the one arena where it matters least – at the polls.

Nick S.

Another new title published by Freedom Press

Donald Rooum

Twenty Year Millennium Wildcat



The cartoonist Donald Rooum is perhaps best known as the political cartoonist of *Peace News* during its heyday in the 1960s. An anarchist since 1944, since January 1980 he has been contributing the Wildcat strip to the anarchist fortnightly *Freedom*. The cartoons are copied and translated from *Freedom* (and the Wildcat books) by various anarchist publications in other countries.

"I must admit that my heart sank when I discovered that Matt had sent me a collection of anarchist cartoons to review. I thought I'd find them unfunny, obscure and pedantic. In fact, I found them humorous to the point of laughing out loud."

– Hilary Robinson in *Society for Strip Illustration Newsletter*

"I enjoyed this book; it's original, different and funny. And it makes valid points."

– Alex Noel Watson in *The Jester*

"How his work will stand alongside that of Rowlandson, Gillray, Low and others cannot be assessed in this present age, but I suggest that it is outstanding and that Freedom Press enjoy a rare privilege in being allowed to publish it."

– Tony Gibson in *Freedom*

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population". He then adds that "the heroic demi-god of the homeric saga was the distant example of the 'beer-drinking Briton; who could 'never be beat'."

Addressing the problem of 'Vulgarisation and Political Decay', Mr Lewis tackles the issue head on: "The sporting training of the Englishman and American makes him into a fighting machine. Even his military training is disguised as sport. This robot is manipulated by the press. By his education he has been made into an ingenious free-looking, easy-moving, 'civilised', gentlemanly robot. At a word (or when sufficiently heated by a week's newspaper suggestion), at the pressing of a button, all these hallucinated automata, with their technician-trained minds and bodies, can be released against each other."

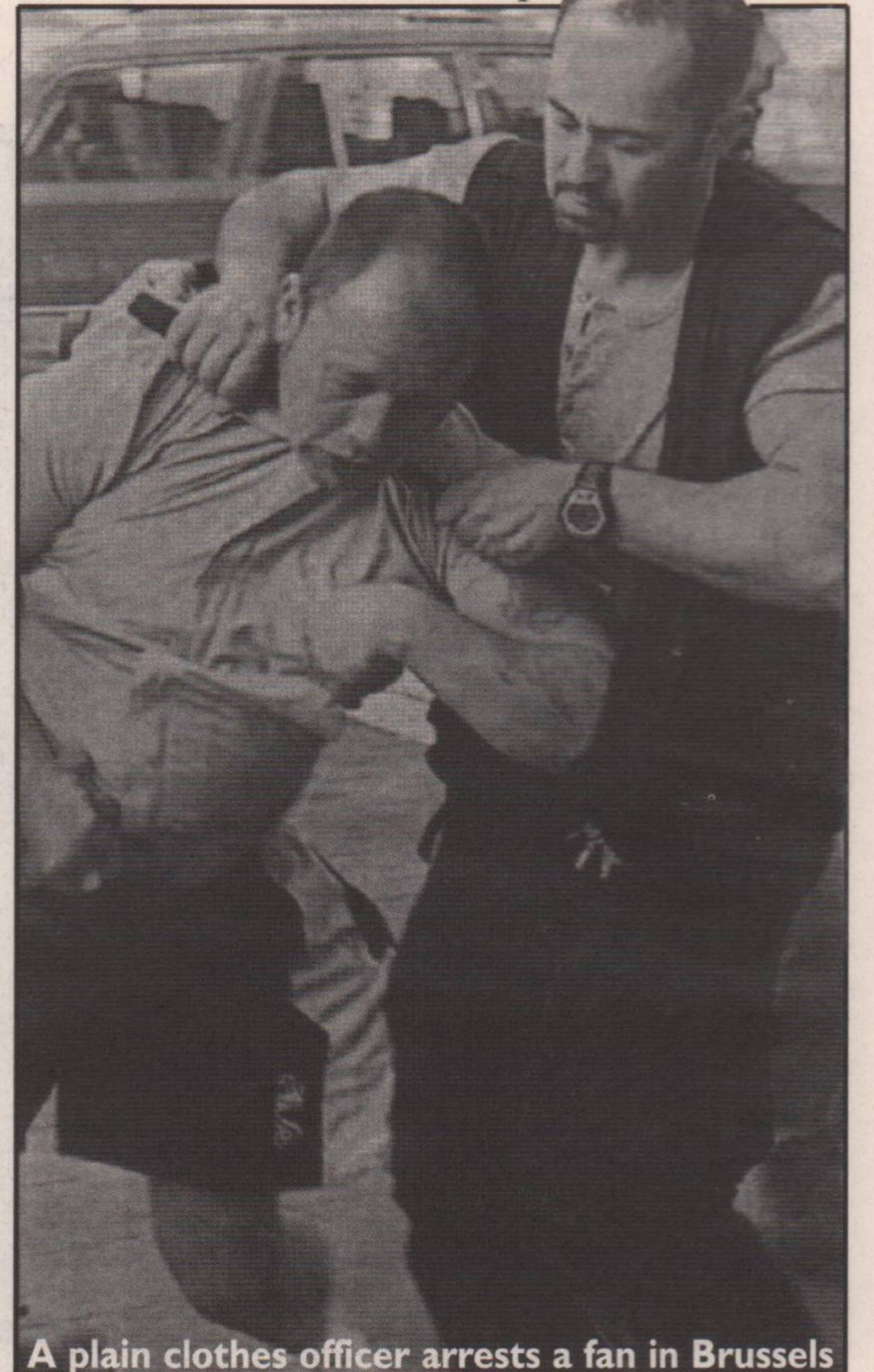
Curious, isn't it, that Mr Wyndham Lewis writing in 1926, and often thought to be a reactionary writer, should now find his view echoed in the editorial columns of the 'liberal' press such as the *Independent* and the *Observer*.

Commenting on the football violence, the *Independent* claimed that "the real causes of such behaviour as social or cultural".

Arguing that it is English society that produces slobbishness, violence and xenophobia, the *Observer* editor hit out at the "tabloid and right-wing broadsheet press" claiming that "what has been constructed is a daily infusion of poisonous, mindless jingoism feeding prejudice and hatred". The editorial goes on to propose that "the drunk, violent, bare-chested English football fan,

tattooed with the Cross of St George, is the product of a winner-takes-all society in which he has little chance, but which gives him the chance to ventilate his frustration by identifying foreigners as the enemy."

These editorials neglect the claim that international sport inevitably inflames nationalism, and by its very nature provokes tribal hatred. The develop-



A plain clothes officer arrests a fan in Brussels

ment of large-scale professional sport seems to have historically gone hand-in-hand with the rise of nationalism.

BB

Bastille Day

On 14th July 1789, the people of Paris stormed the Bastille. This French Prison was a powerful symbol of repression, which was torn down in the revolution that followed. On 14th July 2000 diverse and independent groups will unite, taking action against prisons and the companies behind them.

Now is an important time because prisons are being privatised. Private companies and multinational corporations are building and running prisons for profit. This allows more prisons to be built and creates a huge industry that protects the powerful and the rich. Security Companies like Group 4, Wakenhut and Correction Corporation of America, construction firms such as Kvaerner and Carrilion and even hotel corporations like Sodexo are fighting for contracts to build and run prisons. Hundreds of others from Microsoft to *The Ecologist* magazine are queuing up to exploit cheap prison workers.

Prison populations are growing, but so is our resistance. There are groups fighting racist policing, private prisons, increased police powers, the new Terrorism Bill, clampdowns on political activity, prison labour, immigration detention centres, harsher sentencing and a whole range of similar issues. Here is an opportunity to bring our struggles together.

The idea for Bastille Day is that groups and individuals both on the 'inside' and 'out' take independent action around the same day. This could be anything from prisoner strikes, solidarity actions with prisoners, occupations, disrupting prison building, sabotage, leaflets, pickets, stalls – separate actions gaining

strength by happening together in resistance.

As part of this CAGE will be organising an occupation of a space related to the prison industry. We aim to transform it into a place where resistance can grow and groups of people can meet, discuss ideas, plot and scheme and promote their campaigns. We also aim to provide some legal, technical and moral support for other groups taking action and hope to build on Bastille Day to create a broad network of groups resisting the prison industry.

CAGE is a network set up to support and create resistance to prisons. Our roots are in both the Reclaim the Streets and Earth First! networks, and we organise without leaders to take direct action against prison building.

To contact us ...

By e-mail prison@narchy.fsnet.co.uk
 For a bastille day discussion list see bastilleday@narchy.fsnet.co.uk
 By post at CAGE c/o PO Box '68, Oxford, OX3 1RH, England (tel 07931401962)
 Website at <http://www.veggies.org.uk/cage>



For a minimum wage?

I don't know what other comrades think about the minimum wage, but it's vital for less skilled workers who are penalised for no fault of their own, but get a raw deal otherwise. I have no illusions that the minimum wage will 'fix' everything, but it's a step forward, providing everyone who's entitled to it some security in the market place.

So I for one will be helping to set up an awareness group under the slogan 'Are you getting yours? Insist on a minimum wage'. Any comrades who feel the same should contact me at Tameside Claimants Party, 91 Manchester Road, Audenshaw, Manchester M34 5PZ.

Mick Vick

Mass civil disobedience on tenth anniversary of sanctions on Iraq

August 6th will mark the tenth anniversary of UN sanctions on Iraq. Sanctions have led to a humanitarian crisis in Iraq, with huge increases in child malnutrition and mortality rates. Last year, UNICEF reported that there had been half a million excess deaths of children under five during the period 1991-98. Most of these deaths were primarily associated with sanctions.

To mark the tenth anniversary, and to highlight our government's complicity in the ongoing suffering, voices in the wilderness and other groups are organising mass non-violent civil disobedience in central London on Monday August 7th (see also back page of this issue of *Freedom*). This will take the form of a procession from Trafalgar Square, culminating in a die-in to represent the hundreds of thousands of people who have died in Iraq as a result of sanctions. The demonstration will be calling for an immediate lifting of economic sanctions on Iraq. Actions will take place on the same day in Washington DC, and at Faslane, Scotland.

We are asking you to spread the word about this event. If you produce a newsletter, we

would be very grateful if you could put in a listing about the day, or tell your members at meetings. We are able to supply leaflets for inclusion in mailings, or could offer a speaker to talk about the issues around sanctions as well as the event on August 7th. In addition to the civil disobedience on Monday 7th, there will be a vigil in central London (venue yet to be decided) from 1pm to 4pm on Sunday 6th August followed by an evening of non-violence training, action planning and a legal briefing (accommodation will be provided). We would also welcome your input at organising meetings.

Andrea Needham and Gabriel Carlyle
 voices in the wilderness

COPY DEADLINE

The next issue of *Freedom* will be dated 15th July, and the last day for copy intended for this issue will be first post on Thursday 6th July.

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).

HMP Onley action

About thirty people invaded the construction site of HMP Onley and shut down work for the afternoon.

HMP Onley is the site of one of three new prisons currently under construction. Group 4 and Carillon are building it next to a secure training centre, for 12-14 year olds, and a young offenders institute, for 14-20 year olds.

Carillon is the construction arm of what used to be Tarmac before it de-merged. It works in a Consortium with Group 4 to construct prisons. As Tarmac it built Cookham Woods, the first privately run children's prison, and it gained the contract to build the new GCHQ with Group 4 and British Telecom.

Group 4 is the largest private security company in the world – they do prisoner transport and run cells at courts. Group 4 got the contract to manage the first private prison in the UK, Wolds Remand Centre. Group 4 now runs HMP Rochdale, Buckley Hall and Altcourse. Group 4 also runs Campsfield House Immigration Detention Centre in Oxford.

On a sunny afternoon, Tuesday 30th May, thirty people surprised security guards by descending in two vans on the construction site at HMP Onley. Charging into the site people had to find their way through an almost finished perimeter wall to stop the work of about a hundred workers. People climbed cranes and sat on machines, whilst others invaded the offices and annoyed a senior manager for three hours.

Towards the end of the period that people were on site, the people on the crane managed to communicate with the people inside the young offenders' institute, who

were playing football at the time.

The best part of the day was that we arrived with out the police being present and left just as they looked like there were enough arriving to deal with us. With a well thought out escape route, we all left with no arrests. And so began the campaign against prison building ...

Abortion

Debbie Prinselaar would like to speak to anyone about back-street abortion, past or present, for a Granada television documentary. Contact her on 0161 827 2635.



A Brief History of Free Schools

State mis-education is not compulsory and *Freedom* recently outlined a range of free-schooling alternatives (20th May 2000). Despite its absence from the history and education books free-schooling is no new phenomenon in Britain and we can trace the threads back through two hundred years of experiment and development to William Godwin.

William and Louise

Godwin was the first to set out the libertarian stall with his *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793) which presented a devastating critique of state education nearly a century before it existed! In *The Enquirer* (1797) Godwin went on to suggest a practical pedagogy for the organisation of liberated

children were fully involved in community life only Whiteway operated its own school, whilst Clousden kids had to attend the local board school. Two separate influences stimulated the creation of new libertarian schools in the early twentieth century, an influx of politically-conscious Jewish refugees from Russia and the ideas of Francisco Ferrer. In 1906 a 13 year old girl, Naomi Ploshansky, began a regular Anarchist-Socialist Sunday School in her house at 163 Jubilee Street in London's East End. Though Naomi moved to America in 1917 the school continued to operate, under the auspices of the anarchist movement, for many years. Further, similar ventures began in Charlotte Street (1908), Commercial Road (1912), Cambridge Road (1915) and

response to rumours of sexual misconduct but Homer Lane's pioneering example was soon taken up by others.

Rural Idylls

Five privately owned, self-governing boarding schools opened in Britain between 1924 and 1940; Summerhill, Lyme Regis (1924), Dartington Hall, Totnes (1926), Beacon Hill, Petersfield (1927), Monkton Wyld, Charmouth (1940), Kilquhanity, Castle Douglas (1940). Although inspired by libertarian ideas and in some ways resting on foundations created by Francisco Ferrer none of these schools embraced anarchism, or indeed any, explicit political philosophy. Nevertheless A.S. Neill of Summerhill soon became Britain's most effective advocate of the free school philosophy whilst Dora Russell of Beacon Hill provided the clearest statement of the aim of libertarian teaching, which "should be not to possess or project ourselves upon the younger generation, nor to teach dogma, but rather to seek to set them free so that they may, in very truth, create themselves and their opinions and, in time to come, shape their own future and that of the world which will belong no longer to us, but to them."

Despite their outstanding example these rural idylls had obvious shortcomings. They charged fees and so of necessity excluded the poor, they were boarding and so excluded kids who wanted to live with their parents and they were owned by individuals who inevitably had an unequal control over policy. All these points were creatively tackled by the new city free schools which, emerged in the 1960s.

City Free Schools

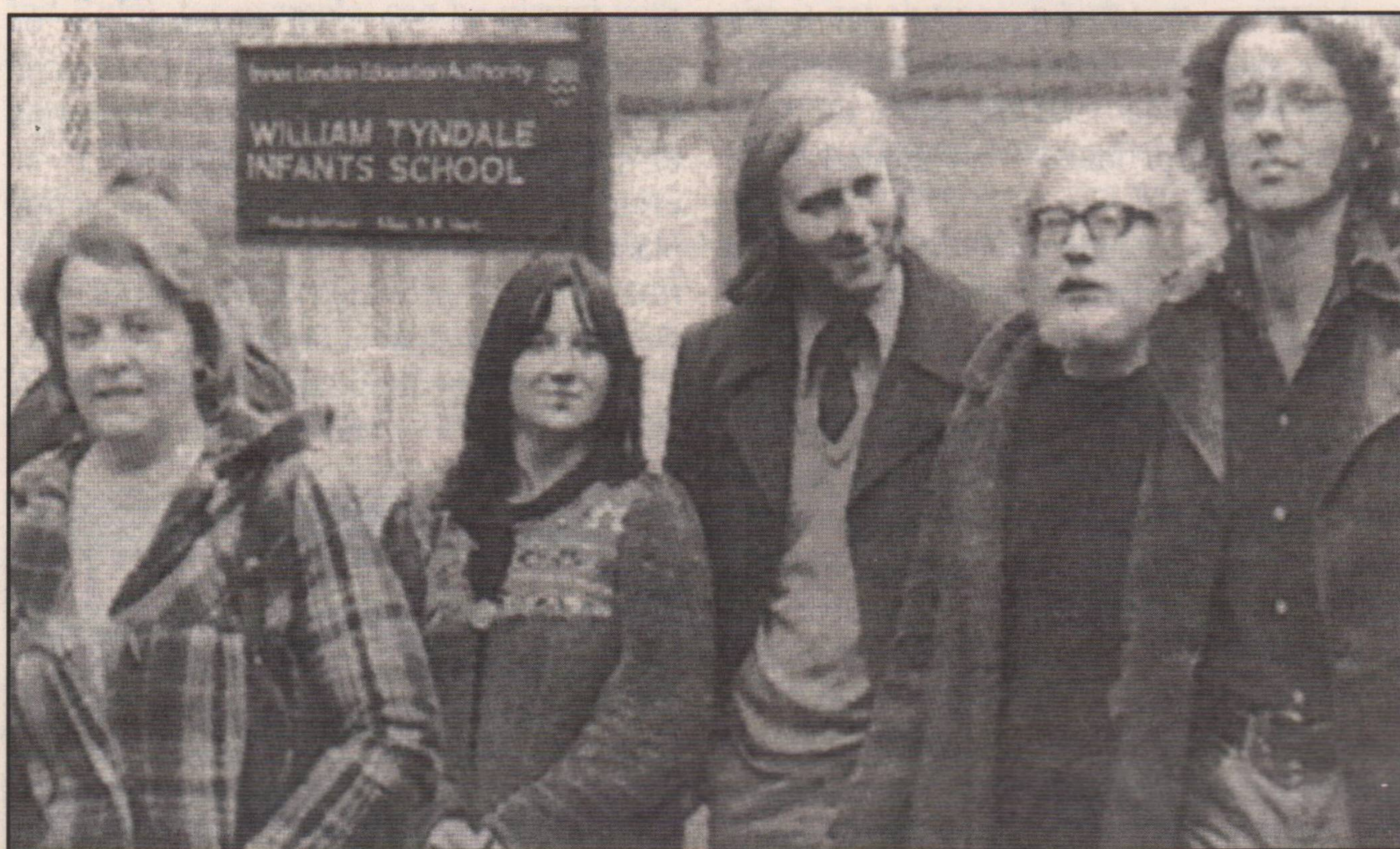
The London Free School opened in Notting Hill in 1966 with great expectations but few clear ideas. It evolved into a sort of neighbourhood community and learning centre but neglected to create a working relationship with the local authority who continued to regard young people attending the school as truants. Eventually the problems overcame the enterprise and closure followed in 1971 but not before a more politically conscious enterprise had begun in Scotland Road, Liverpool. Founded by two local teachers, Bill Murphy and John Ord, the Scotland Road Free School was the most original step forward in libertarian schooling since the creation of Summerhill. The school's prospectus announced its consciously revolutionary aims and approach. "The school will operate as a day

school but will never close whilst people desire to use its facilities. Lessons will not be compulsory, the onus will be upon the teacher to stimulate the children sufficiently to attend. At the same time the school will offer its participants a range of social and academic activities comparable with state schools. The school will not have a headmaster or hierarchy, nor will it recognise any central authority, but will be controlled by the parents, children and teachers together ... These aims cannot be dismissed as impractical. At this time in Denmark there are 174 free schools ... The ultimate aim of the free school is to bring about a fragmentation of the state system into smaller, all age, personalised, democratic, locally controlled community schools." Despite the enthusiastic attendance of around fifty local kids the school fragmented before the system. In 1972 the school was wound-up in the face of mounting practical problems; the self-selecting clientele consisted of many very challenging older boys, there was little financial support for the project and the building was a slum. Yet valuable lessons had been learnt both inside and outside the state-system.

In the Belly of the Beast

Further city free schools followed, in Bristol (1971), Birmingham (1972), Nottingham (1972), Camden, London (1972), Islington, London (1972), Brighton (1972), Leeds (1972), Parkfield Street, Manchester (1972), Burlington Street, Manchester (1973) and Glasgow (1973). All shared the approach and philosophy articulated by Murphy and Ord at Scotland Road and almost all went the same way. In the 1970s there was enough charity and trust money about to keep these radical projects afloat but come the end of the decade the more rigorous financial climate often provided the final straw that broke the camel's back. Meanwhile their radical example began to be copied within the belly of the beast and several local authority schools turned themselves into models of liberated learning. Summerhill Academy (Aberdeen, 1968), Countesthorpe College (Leicester, 1970), William Tyndale Junior School (London, 1974) were probably the most innovatory examples. Inadequate funding and the provision of decent teaching facilities were no longer a problem but this was counter-balanced by the political complexities of challenging the state system on its own ground. In every case a local coalition of newspaper editors, opportunistic

(continued on page 6)



Like the eponymous saint, the William Tyndale teachers were martyred by the state

learning through desire. "The true object of education", wrote Godwin, "like that of every other moral process, is the generation of happiness ... It is of less importance, generally speaking, that a child should acquire this or that species of knowledge, than that, through a medium of instruction, he should acquire habits of intellectual activity ... According to the received modes of education, the master goes first and the pupil follows. According to the method here recommended, it is probable that the pupil would go first, and the master follow. If I learn nothing but what I desire to learn, what would hinder me from being my own preceptor?" Godwin's learner is motivated by natural, healthy curiosity and supported by the teacher not directed. Unfortunately Godwin's ideas remained largely theoretical until in 1890 Louise Michel opened an International School in Fitzroy Square, London. As an anarchist Louise had played an active role in the 1871 Paris Commune and was keen to carry the egalitarian, freedom-loving and rationalist ideals of the revolution into the classroom. She left no formal account of her distinctive pedagogy but it seems the autonomy of the children in controlling and organising their own learning was considered paramount. After a couple of years Michel's pioneering venture was closed down by the authorities on the pretext of alleged involvement with the activities of the 'Walsall Bombers' but her International School was not forgotten.

Anarchist Schools

Anarchy flourished in that final decade of the nineteenth century and libertarian communities were founded at Clousden Hill (Newcastle, 1895), Norton Hall (Sheffield, 1896) Purleigh (1896), Ashingdon (1897) and Wickford (1898) (all in Essex) and Whiteway (Gloucester, 1898). Although

Fieldgate Street (1921). Each was modelled on Ferrer's ideas on education and indeed his visit to Liverpool in 1907 prompted a local syndicalist, James Dick to open The Liverpool Anarchist-Communist Sunday School. Although these libertarian ventures respected children and refused to manipulate them through rewards and punishments there is little evidence that the kids were really involved in managing their own schools. The content was radical and the methods progressive but the first really systematic revolutionary pedagogy was developed by Homer Lane, an exiled American liberal.

Lane's Revolutionary Road

Lane founded his Little Commonwealth at Flowers Farm, Dorset, in 1913. Unlike previous libertarian ventures the Little Commonwealth didn't cater for the converted, not even for sympathisers, instead Lane chose to serve the 'unconvertible'; youngsters who had completely rejected schooling and in turn had been rejected by society. There were 42 older boys and girls already convicted as criminals who were otherwise destined for prison and nine younger kids whose alternative was either the asylum or orphanage. The school was a residential community divided up into three 'family-units' with the only rules those made-up by the kids themselves. The 'family' members were offered paid work and each family was expected to pay its way but individuals could choose whether to 'work or loaf'. The idea was that the 'family' would encourage and support each member to put in a fair effort. Serious problems were dealt with by a 'court' made-up of the kids' chosen representatives. The Little Commonwealth operated as a self-regulated, egalitarian community, a sort of simple anarchy-in-action. Tragically after four years the Home Office closed the school in

Anarchist-Socialist Sunday School,
Held at the
WORKER'S FRIEND CLUB & INSTITUTE, 165, JUBILEE ST.,
MILE END ROAD, E.

NEW YEAR'S
Children's Entertainment,
of the above,
SUNDAY, JANUARY 6th, 1907.

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Readers' Round-up



From *Do or Die*, the occupation camp at Crystal Palace Park in the shadow of the giant television transmitter. Bromley Council wanted to replace the woods and historic Great Exhibition site with a massive shopping centre and multiplex cinema.

We have managed to bag a small number of copies of the respected historian Victor Alba's comprehensive and important book *Politics and the Labor Movement in Latin America** at a greatly reduced price. This is a 404-page hardback complete with notes, index and bibliography and was published by Stanford University Press at £34.00, but our price is only £9.95. Its three sections cover background; political aspects including the anarcho-syndicalist, socialist, communist and populist movements; and the labour movements, covering every country in Latin America, including the Caribbean. Order quickly to avoid disappointment.

There are still some copies left of issue 10 of *Corporate Watch* (£3.00) magazine, whose major part is devoted to an in-depth look at planning and development in the UK including the destruction of the countryside, New Labour's bias towards developers, and the myth of job creation used by the supermarket chains to get planning permission and positive coverage in the local press. Wicked developments by the evil capitalist barons is only one of a vast array of topics covered in the equally vast 445-page *Do or Die*, no. 8, which has the most comprehensive reports seen anywhere on last year's 118 actions (34 pages), globalisation (20 pages), GM crop-trashing and biodiversity (35 pages), and a whole host of direct action camps and squats from the squatted army camps of World War Two to the Crystal Palace Park occupation against redevelopment. Plus the same amount again

on international actions and events, all a mere £3.60 plus £1.40 p&p.

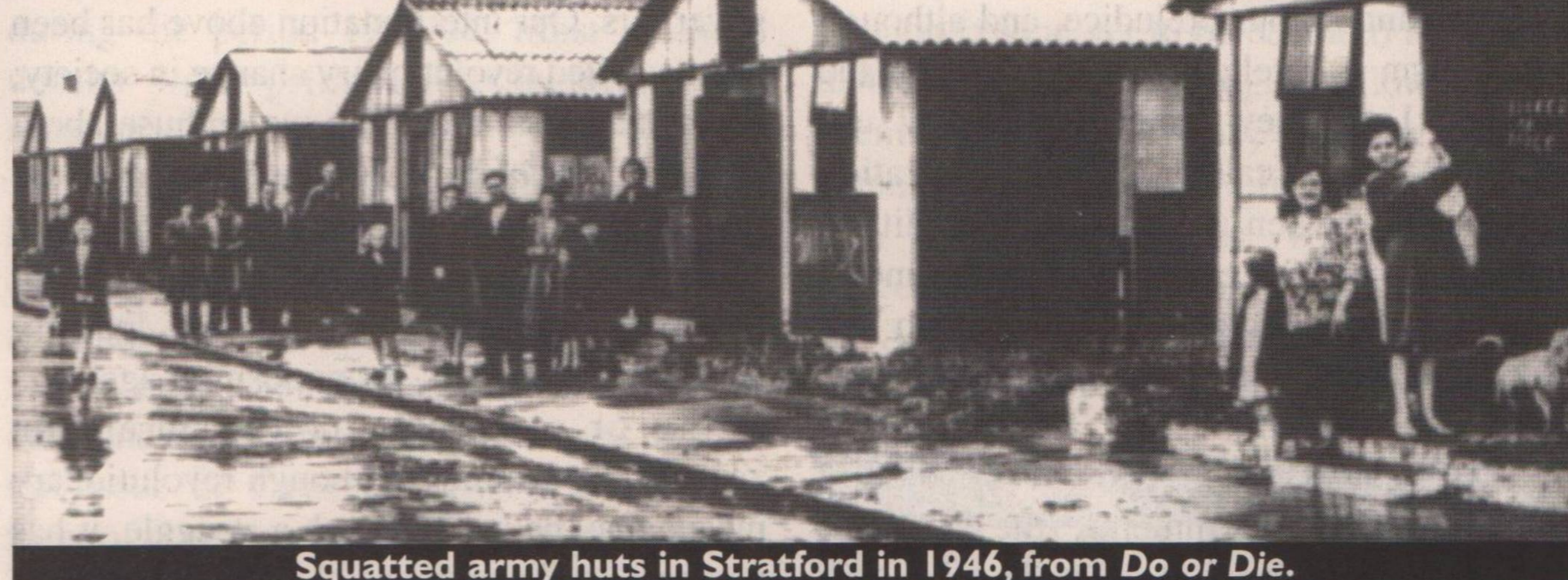
Although there was no *Anarchist Yearbook* for 1999 and won't be for 2000 either, *The Agitator* (£1.00 plus 50p p&p), which describes itself as "a directory of autonomous, non-hierarchical groups, centres, bookshops and such like" more than fulfils its remit - 67 pages packed to the brim with very useful information, 16 of which are on international groups, list local and national groups, periodicals, autonomous centres, distribution services, national networks and a whole lot more in this excellent revised second edition published by Haringey Solidarity Group and Counter Information.

Two titles just off the AK Press production

line are Murray Bookchin's *Anarchism, Marxism and the Future of the Left** (352 pages, £13.95), which consists of a collection of interviews and essays from 1993 to 1998, and *A Cavalier History of Surrealism** by 'J-F Dupuis', better known as the Situationist Raoul Vaneigem, (£7.95 for 131 pages). The latter answers the question 'what was living and what was dead in surrealism?' and was allegedly written in two weeks as part of a school textbook series in 1970. This is the first English translation. Another new one by the same author is the paperback edition of *The Movement of the Free Spirit* (Zone Books, £8.95), described as "a fiercely partisan historical reflection on the way religious and economic forces have shaped Western culture ... Vaneigem examines the heretical and millenarian movements that challenged social and ecclesiastical authority in Europe

penchant for long, elaborate titles is reflected in the subtitle *General considerations and firsthand testimony concerning some brief flowerings of life in the Middle Ages, the Renaissance and, incidentally, our own time!*

Mad Pride: a celebration of mad culture is a collection of articles by 24 nutters, edited by Ted Curtis and others and published by Spare Change Books at £7.95. It claims that the first great civil liberties movement of the 21st century will be Mad Pride - people diagnosed as having mental health problems who are reclaiming the experience of madness and the language surrounding it, sharing their accounts of liberation through madness and celebrating madness in all its forms as a means to all-



Squatted army huts in Stratford in 1946, from *Do or Die*.

from the 1200s into the 1500s. [He] vividly portrays the radical opposition presented by these movements to the imperatives of an emerging market-based economy and he evokes crucial historical parallels with other anti-systemic rebellions throughout the history of the west". With notes and index the book runs to 302 pages. Vaneigem's

out social revolution. The Mad Pride group spreads the word through promoting rock concerts and raves. "Sick of discrimination, marginalisation, medication and being treated like shit, psychiatric patients are preparing to rise from the ghettos and make the world a place fit to live in ... Tough, uncompromising, subversive and very funny, this is a book that no one in their right mind will read". 224 pages of good fun, with a lovely cover design.

Peter Marshall's latest book *Riding the Wind: a new philosophy for a new era*, is now out in paperback, published by Continuum at £9.99, which should make it more accessible than the £17.00 hardback. And finally *Fifth Estate*, the latest issue of which was mentioned recently, is not £1.50 any more but £2.00.

Four Eyes



From *Corporate Watch*, the planners' attitude to local protestors

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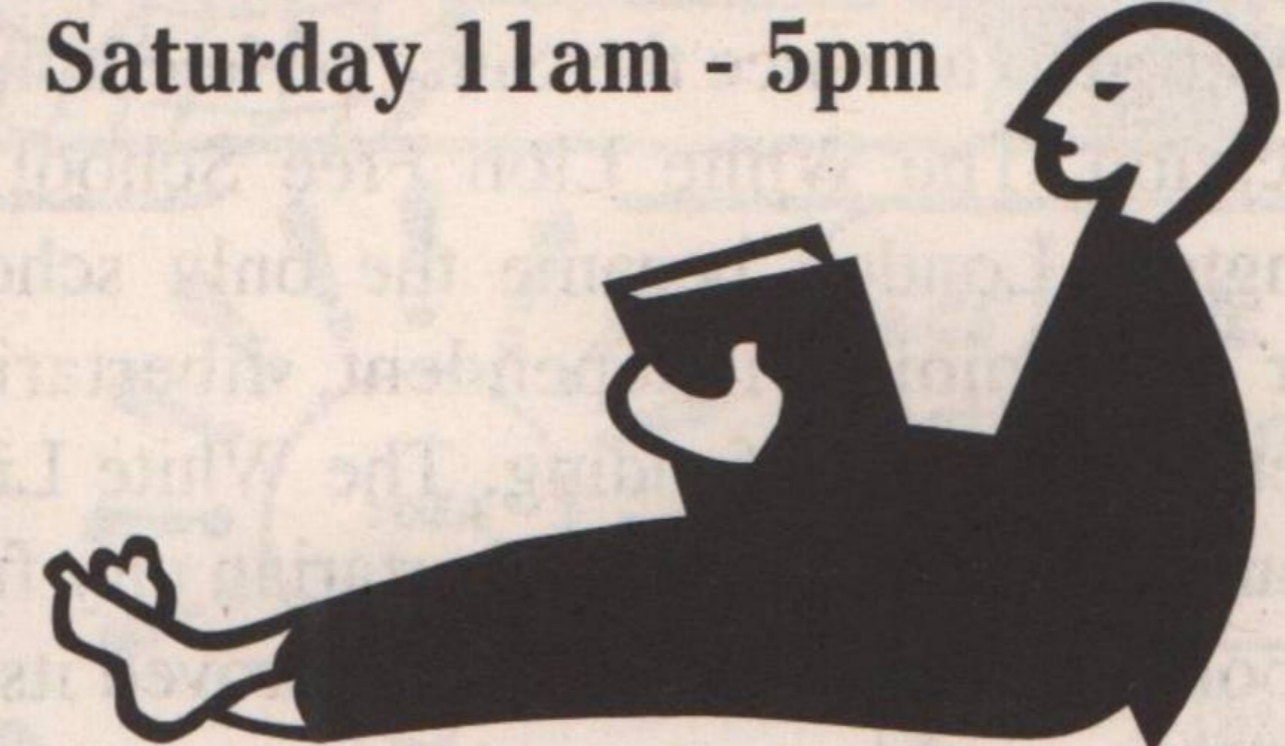
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Anarchism and Nationalism

Superficially, anarchism is a movement of the Left but this is not strictly so, since it implies being part of the political spectrum. Anarchists reject this, asserting that there is more in common between Right and Left political parties (like the struggle for power) than between even extreme Left political groups and the anarchists. History has shown us that no matter how 'Left' a party is when it starts off, the achievement of power brings it round to the Right, for every government wants to maintain the status quo; wants to extend the control it has over the people, and isn't this what the Right really means?

Certain right-wing attitudes are specifically rejected by left-wing parties – until they become useful in the power game. 'Divide and Rule', for example, can be played with many variations, from wage differentials to religious and colour prejudice, and although nationalism is intellectually rejected by the political Left, they quite shamelessly use what are quaintly called 'National Liberation Movements' when it suits their political ambitions – and a 'Left' party in power knows very well the usefulness of nationalism and indeed patriotism as a weapon of government. Even if this were not deliberate cunning on the part of a so-called 'revolutionary government', the logic of authoritarianism leads to it.

Even allowing for soviets or workers' councils, the actual operation of state power cannot be carried out by the entire population. This demands the workers' own revolutionary party sitting at the top doing the actual governing, like suppressing all opposition in the name of the revolution and ensuring internal security by the perpetual policing of the population in its own interests to effect the immediate spotting of any deviationary elements. At the same time as this defence of the revolution is strenuously maintained, the population also has to be kept safe from external aggression, so an efficient army, navy and air force is kept at the ready and since a workers' state is the most democratic state, a form of conscription becomes desirable to ensure that everyone does his bit.

This is really no sacrifice since the state belongs to everyone and everyone belongs to

the state, but to keep the people enthusiastic for service to the state, a leader comes forward to give every citizen someone to identify with on a personal level. In order to provide the cosy feeling of collective security, of belonging to the corporate body around him, the idea of the nation is encouraged and patriotism becomes a virtue once again – if, indeed, it ever fell out of favour.

Thus the service of the revolution achieved through authoritarian means brings the wheel full circle. The ideologies and justifications for lack of freedom – indeed for ruthless totalitarian control of the entire country – will differ from those of the old regime, but *in fact* the institutions and the realities of life are exactly the same, if not worse.

For this reason anarchists do not enthuse about revolutions which are mounted in order to bring to power another set of governors. Our interpretation above has been of a so-called revolutionary change in society; how much less, then, can we enthuse about changes which do not even pretend to be revolutionary from the start?

Into this category fall the movements for national liberation which are frankly nationalistic and call for opposition against a ruling or occupying power purely on xenophobic grounds. Although revolutionary means may be used in such a struggle, it has no more to do with social revolution as the anarchist sees it than the xenophobia of a Hitler or an Enoch Powell. Pathetic examples of this are to be found in Wales and Scotland. In fact – and here is where the situation seems to get confused – 'movements for national liberation' in the trouble-spots of the world today tend to give a social-revolutionary veneer to their claims, in order to get support from the Communist states. The classic example of this was in Egypt, where a successful anti-colonial struggle established a nationalistic, military regime (much like the Greek colonels!) with the aid of Russian arms and technology. By using devices like nationalisation and land reform, the veneer of socialism was applied – but, in spite of Russian 'friendship', the Communist Party is banned and Egyptian Communists are in prison. Meanwhile rabid nationalism was whipped up, patriotism by the imperial pint kept on the boil, but nothing prospers

like the state and the international arms merchants. But your authoritarian left – the Trotskyists and the Communist Party – supported the new Egyptian state!

Anarchists do not play this political game. We are not jockeying for position all the time and trying to further one or other of the power blocs that divide the world and its workers. We are truly international and oppose all those forces which divide people. Hence it is quite logical for anarchists to oppose an imperial power *and* the indigenous politicians who lead national resistance. For example, in condemning the Russian military occupation of Czechoslovakia, we did not thereby support the Dubcek Communist state which was in conflict with the Kosygin Communist state, in the sense that we wanted to see Dubcek remain in power. We supported the *Czech people* and their right to choose – even though choosing Dubcek (as the lesser evil!) – because this is a right that

all people must have, and also because they were using revolutionary means (if only because there were no others) and so were learning how to do things for themselves. In the event, what opposition there was came from the people and not from Dubcek. Our attitude was the same on Vietnam (against US imperialism), but not for the Vietcong; Cuba (against Batista, not for Castro), Black Power (the answer to white racism is not black racism!), the American Revolution of 1776 (to hell with George III and the American state that followed him!); and all Arab, Jewish, Indian, African nationalisms.

The answer to imperialism is not nationalism and reactionary regimes – it is international social revolution, destroying all national, religious, racial barriers. We have learnt from history!

This article first appeared in *Freedom* on 21st February 1970 and has been reprinted several times

Alex Comfort Writings against Power and Death

From the early 1940s Alex Comfort was a prolific, combative and innovative writer on pacifism and anarchism. This volume collects all the articles Alex Comfort published in *War Commentary* and *Freedom*, most of his other social and political essays, as well as the most important of his *Peace News* pamphlets. The latter include *Peace and Disobedience*, the finest single statement of his highly individual and original anarchism.

Freedom Press

168 pages

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(continued from page 4)

councillors and authoritarian parents contrived sensationalist adverse publicity campaigns culminating in a dismantling of free school practice. Libertarian teachers were sacked and traditional values safeguarded.

The White Lion's Roar

Throughout the 1980s one city free school continued to advance the cause of freedom in education. The White Lion Free School in Islington, London became the only school ever to combine independent, libertarian practice with state-funding. The White Lion began as a typical hippie libertarian city free school in 1972 but by 1981 had proved itself an indispensable community resource and was granted secure funding by the Inner London Education Authority. There was no head, decisions were made democratically by all the school community, no fees were charged, kids controlled their own learning with teachers to support, not direct them. About sixty kids attended but teaching was done in small groups or individually. The school occupied a big old townhouse and this

helped to create a family atmosphere. Although the authorities paid the school's bills they were content to allow the White Lion to operate more or less autonomously. At its best I believe the White Lion was the most important model of free schooling that has ever existed in Britain. Tragically, it was destroyed by twin acts of the Thatcher government, the dismantling of the Inner London Education Authority and the 1988 Education Act, and the collusion of the local Labour Council. The Tory's destruction of the ILEA passed control of the school to Islington Council who were keen to ditch their old 'Red Republic' reputation and grateful for a chance to demonstrate their new commitment to respectable, traditional education. The 1988 Education Act forced all state-funded schools to follow the Tory's new National Curriculum and this provided Islington with a heaven-sent excuse to demand compliance or closure. No institution can remain free if it is directed by the state and so in April 1990 the White Lion Free School came to an end. Free schooling survives in Britain but no other school has yet managed to provide such an accessible,

community-based, non-fee-paying, non-residential libertarian education as that offered by the White Lion. It is a model that I described at some length in *Lib Ed* magazine in 1986, when the school was still going strong. The concluding words of that article serve as both an epitaph and an encouragement: "It has achieved much, it has helped many kids who were failed by traditional schooling, it has supported many local families and it has demonstrated that freedom isn't just for the upper and middle classes. It has shown that free-schools don't need idyllic rural retreats or fee-paying parents ... but are a real, viable alternative for all our children."

Christopher Draper

Recommended sources of further information:

Francisco Ferrer, *The Origins and Ideals of the Modern School* (1913)
Dennis Hardy, *Alternative Communities in Nineteenth Century England* (1979)
Ray Hemmings, *Fifty Years of Freedom* (1972)
John Shotton, *No Master High or Low* (1993)
David Wills, *Homer Lane* (1964)
Dora Russell, *The Tamarisk Tree*, vol. 2 (1980)
Nigel Wright, *Free School* (1989)

(continued from page 7)

The "talk of thousands and millions" is of people who died. We don't quite follow the mention of Gandhi, who developed a theory of non-violent resistance which we have yet to understand. During the war his Congress Party collaborated with the British in return for independence after the war, and, as Philip Sansom wrote, "the pacifist Indian leaders maintained official neutrality, but allowed British troops to travel through India to get at the Japanese in Burma ... while after the war Attlee's government had to be forcefully nudged by massive riots and demonstrations before they would fulfil Churchill's reluctant bargain".

Discussion of the war naturally arouses strong emotions in those who took part, or whose parents or grandparents fought or died at the time. We thank our correspondent for putting his views on paper, and welcome the opportunity to re-state our own. We hope that soon a more balance appraisal will take place, and believe that when that moment comes the writings of that generation of anarchists will not have been in vain.

Editors

After Mayday: a reply

Dear Freedom,

Both Richard Griffin and Amorey Gethin raise important points in their thoughtful responses to me (letters, 17th June 2000). I don't intend this reply to be anything other than provisional, aimed, perhaps, at continuing a debate, with a view to working out a way forward.

The first point, I think, is to establish why the question of 'class' is important. I don't disagree with Richard when he says that "anarchism is not just about class"; that the fight against racism and sexism can't be put off to some golden revolutionary dawn. I also accept that working class communities are themselves not homogeneous, but split by those same oppressions of race, sex, etc. The oppression of the working class, though, is fundamental to the existence of capital – without the exploitation of labour capital would be robbed of meaning (and, more importantly, of profit). It's equally true that the oppression of women and of the gay community is linked to the reproduction of the social relations necessary to the survival of capital, that racism is an essential ideological construct to ensure the permanent division of working people, etc. The struggle against each form of oppression is indivisible from the other. Any notion of working class autonomy in a real sense is meaningless unless those sections of the working class not oppressed by race, gender etc., are convinced of the need to oppose such oppression in their own interests as well as those of the oppressed groups. It remains, though, that the perpetuation of class relations is fundamental to capital, and, as such, has to be key to any effective anti-capitalist movement. Think of it, perhaps, as a question of democracy – what kind of movement are we likely to build that doesn't have at its heart the needs and interests of those most exploited by capital? This is the point I was trying to get over in relation to Monbiot and co. Their class background

means not only that they are oblivious to the needs and desires of working class people but, as Monbiot showed with regard to the Rover workers, often hostile to them.

I think it's a mistake to say, as Richard does, that the issue is whether we have to wait for "the working class to rise up". The point is that working class disenchantment with the status quo is more or less permanent – people aren't stupid, they know that high prices, low wages, crap housing, etc., aren't in their interests. One problem is that the left has for years sought to channel such anger back towards Labour – more often than not the very cause of such dissatisfaction, and a strategy which boils down, as far as most people are concerned, to seeing not your own social power as an agent for change, but voting for your landlord as a means to social justice! The size of the vote for the BNP is a reflection of this disenchantment. The far right succeed because they are, visibly, militantly against the status quo, in a way that the pro-Labour left can never be. From the point of view of capital, they're useful because they're outside the 'big tent' but committed to its survival (cf Haider) – from the point of view of a council tenant on the Isle of Dogs, what matters is that they're outside the big tent, and the left are in it holding up the props.

Moreover, the BNP succeed because they go to areas the left has long since abandoned, and at least go through the pretence of pretending that working class experience matters to them. The left has been in headlong flight from areas like the Isle of Dogs for years. If we want to build an anti-capitalist movement that matters, its terrain

Please keep sending in your letters and donations

The Mayday leaflet

Dear Friends,

The leaflet on Mayday is both disheartening and misleading (*Freedom*, 3rd June).

I was fifteen years old when the war broke out. My father was in his thirties in a rural job in a rural area, one and a half miles to the nearest shops, that sort of circumstance. To transfer from a non-essential to an essential job and thus avoid call-up would have been easy, and was in fact offered.

Discussion on the offer between Mum and Dad, was not about his work, but whether the war against Germany was a just one, and whether he join up or not. The conclusion they came to was that the German armed forces were both an evil, and evilly motivated. It was up to all of us to do what we could to defeat them. There was none of this twaddle about politicians manipulating us, flag-waving, cardboard generals strutting up and down, or the Tory press bellowing from the sidelines. Whispers of atrocities in Germany were commonplace long before the war had started. The truth will out despite censorship and distorted news reports.

As a people we knew what we were about and what Germany intended for us.

Finally, why all this talk of thousands and millions? What does it mean, what does it convey? We each have a worm's eye view of magnitude, that of our own experience. We are fortunate indeed if people we meet today are here tomorrow and again the day after,

and I would be astonished if I could recall off the top of my head a list of one thousand people I have met in my lifetime, assuming the memory bank is functioning as it ought. In fact I am even astonished I have managed to put these observations together. It is the Gandhi in me I suppose.

H.G. Bradford

We don't question for one moment the sincerity of those who, without any flag-waving, joined up and fought Nazi Germany. Our correspondent's point is whether the war was a just one, and most people would agree with him that it was.

We published the leaflet on our front page because it follows closely the line taken by *Freedom* (and its predecessor *War Commentary*), the main point of which is that the war was *not* about opposing fascism, and that it not only did not prevent the atrocities but may have caused or accelerated them.

What we said at that time is reprinted in our volume *World War – Cold War* (£6.95) and if our reader would look at *The Raven* no. 29 on *World War Two* (£3.00) he will find the just war ably argued by our old friend Arthur Moyses, and in the same issue Colin Ward, himself in the army at the time, points out that *War Commentary* was "one of the very few journals which were totally opposed to the war aims of both sides".

(continued on page 6)

should be precisely such areas, not Downing Street or the City of London. The concerns of such a movement have to be the everyday concerns of the majority of us – rents, wages, housing, fear of debt, etc. We need to look at how direct action tactics can refocus working class communities, allow communities to cohere around their own defence. Some of the tactics used by the animal rights movement in relation to, say, Hillgrove, could equally well be applied to bailiffs firms, solicitors firms which undertake possession proceedings, etc. (it's the fear of such tactics which underlies the revamping of the PTA). Similar tactics were employed, at least against bailiffs, during the anti-poll tax campaign. The brief link up between Reclaim the Streets and the Liverpool Dockers shows

one possible way forward. The point that matters most for me, though, is that unless the anti capitalist movement is made up of those most exploited by capital – ordinary working people, and unless their everyday needs are supported and extended (with direct action as a means of demonstrating the power communities have to organise in their own interests, as opposed to the electoral disempowerment the left has offered for years) then what passes for such a movement now will go the way of every protest group since 1968 on, precisely because those with most to gain from an anti-capitalist politics (and, hence, those with most power to wield against capital) will have seen nothing on offer that was anything to do with them.

Nick S.

And on Alex Comfort...

Dear Freedom,

Since there has been some discussion of Alex Comfort's anarchism and responses to it in two issues of *Freedom* (6th May and 3rd June) which also contained incidental references to a letter I wrote to *University Libertarian* over forty years ago, I wish to make some comment. I no longer have my subscriber's copies of the journal, nor can I say with any degree of certainty that I still know what I meant to say and said so badly.

In *The Pattern of the Future* (1949) Comfort writes of "the tradition of science. Now science is not, in its essence, a system of belief, it is a particular technique for the finding of fact, for the verifying of beliefs ... [science] fundamentally altered, over a period of about two hundred years, our whole conception of the way in which beliefs should be formed, and of the kind of evidence which should form them" (page 11). This conception involves empirical and repeatable experiments leading to verifiable truth. Other evidence may occur which through this same method will lead to changed or expanded truth. "The demand of the new tradition of thought is for evidence to support statements, evidence of their conformity to the same tests of reality which we employ in scientific study or everyday life" (page 12).

My guess in 2000 is that in 1957 I was trying to say that science itself begins in hunches, or 'aspirations of the heart', but the move from prejudice and blind faith to understanding requires verifiable evidence, and that is acquired, if it ever is, by way of the scientific method. Comfort, himself, argued that position everywhere. In 1965, in *The Nature of Human Nature* (US edition with this title published in 1966), he wrote: "the relationship between Man and 'Nature', i.e. things outside himself ... has been brought, like so much else, within the scope of the method of intelligent guess followed by verification which has yielded such tremendous intellectual dividends in every field where it has been applied – the scientific method" (page 13). The method is the same while the subject has expanded. "Since Man is now himself the subject of science, we need a science of Man. Or rather ... we need several ... This branch of science is biology, and human biology covers every aspect of Man from his chemical composition to his social behaviour and his mental processes, conveniently taking in on the way all the various elements which he carries with him as heirlooms from his inorganic, organic and pre-human past" (pages 19-20).

According to David Goodway's interview with Comfort in 1988, that scientific method still verified anarchism (See Goodway, page

26). Perhaps there are other possibilities, but to rig evidence in order to make it prove what we already know or what we wish it to prove is unworthy of any tradition and has no significance and leads us to no future as a society or a civilisation.

John R. Doherty

* * *

Dear Freedom,

The adulation of Alex Comfort, the man of science, may be going a shade too far. Tony Gibson writes (letters, 6th May) that Colin Ward's idea of anarchism springing from "aspirations of the heart" may lead some individuals to embrace fascism or any other ideology".

This may be true. But was it Alex Comfort's scientific denunciations, or some vagary of his human heart, that led George Orwell to accuse him in 1942 (in *Partisan Review*) of desiring "a nazi victory because of the stimulating effect it would have upon the arts"?

What upset Orwell then was Comfort's letter to *Horizon* in which he argued: "As far as I can see, no therapy short of complete military defeat has any chance of re-establishing the common stability of literature and of the man in the street. One can imagine the greater the adversity the greater the sudden realisation of the stream of imaginative work, and the greater the sudden catharsis of poetry ..."

Accusing Comfort of "money-sheltered ignorance capable of believing that literary life is still going on in, for instance, Poland", Orwell claimed that Mr Comfort then belonged to the then latest 'literary clique' – the 'pacifist gang' which had succeeded the earlier 'catholic' and 'stalinist' gangs.

Orwell insisted that all these literary schools "write mentally dishonest propaganda and degrade literary criticism to mutual arse-licking". In Alex Comfort's case Orwell wrote: "Mr Comfort himself wrote one poem I value greatly [*The Atoll in the Mind*] and I wish he would write more of them instead of lifeless propaganda tracts dressed up as novels".

Scientific pretension is as disgusting, and perhaps more dangerous, than literary pretension. Political explanation dressed up as science is something anarchists should be wary of. The marxists may do it, but I should have thought that Mr Tony Gibson ought to know better. We can respect the 'exact sciences' as long as they are rigorous and don't overstretch themselves. For science to demonstrate a case for anarchism, it seems to me, must involve a degree of 'dressing up', perhaps by inferring some underlying principles and laws, or a history of development.

Brian Bamford

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London Anarchist Forum

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(nearest tube Holborn). Admission is free
but a collection is made to cover the cost of
the room.

— PROGRAMME 2000 —

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
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21st July General discussion

Anyone interested in giving a talk or
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Peter Neville for London Anarchist Forum

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**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
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