

FREEEDOM

anarchist fortnightly

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50p

While capitalism lasts ...

Don't plan: Panic!

He regrets it now, but he did say it. And George W. Bush was right. "My plans? I don't worry about those things. I kinda figure life is going to work its way out somehow". It's rare for a politician to admit that life in capitalism is full of surprises, for our bosses as well as us. Even rarer would be an admission that frequently, no, it doesn't work its way out, at least not in the way we'd like. Living in an insane system, what's the use of plans? As panic-buying of petrol quickly spread across the UK early last week, there must've been a few members of the government asking themselves that question.

When oil prices sank below \$10 a barrel in 1998, nobody predicted that within 18 months they would more than triple, to last week's \$35. Nobody expected the oil-producing states of OPEC to collaborate again in keeping their incomes high. But they have. And

together with our old friend, economic growth, they've created global capitalism's latest crisis. Naturally, OPEC blames high taxes and international finance, not themselves, and with some justification. Most of the cost of fuel goes on state duties. Oil really is better value for money, relatively, than coca-cola or perrier water. The greed lies on all sides. But greed alone isn't the whole story.

Some of the taxes hauliers complain of are environmental measures, designed to give the impression governments take pollution seriously. Several OPEC members desperately need hard currency – Nigeria to pay interest on its debts, Indonesia to kick-start recovery from its slump and to stop its implosion in the maelstrom of civil war. The real power behind the rebirth of the cartel as a major force is the Venezuelan boss, Chavez, whose state relies on oil for 70% of its exports.

"Lower prices would like passing a death sentence on ourselves and our people", he said recently, and he will lobby hard to retain tight quotas when OPEC heads of state meet for the first time in 25 years in the Venezuelan capital next week. And demand for oil continues to grow. 71 million barrels a day now, maybe 100 million by 2020.

Who doesn't gain from any of this? The first answer, as always, is the world's poor. Globalisation is not in their

interests, whatever the IMF's current propaganda offensive in Prague says ('Voices of the Poor' and 'The Quality of Growth' are typical seminar titles from the last few days). The inhabitants of the Niger delta remain brutalised and sick while their elected boss and western banks cream profits from the land they live on. As a Venezuelan newspaper commented, "oil rises to \$35 a barrel and poverty reaches 81%". Who else doesn't gain from any of this? The second answer is, all the rest of us. Pleasing though it is to see high prices force a few lorries off the road, a few fumes less pumped into the air (and remember it was the hauliers above all who broke the pickets of the miners' strike), ultimately an oil price hike which led to global economic slump would only make human beings unhappier than they already are. Every postwar recession has been heralded by a jump in the price of oil. All the talk of a 'new economy' shouldn't obscure the experience of the Asian 'tigers' in the last decade: even economies run just the way the IMF ordered can crash too. It's a sobering thought that pundits in early 1973 forecast a future in which everyone got richer and richer for ever. Just like now.

We're all part of global economic system. The system relies on energy, and in capitalism that means oil. Increasingly it's clear we can't go on like this. The only country to raise its output last week in response to pressure was Saudi Arabia, because only they have capacity to spare. The economic growth our leaders are so keen to promote in Prague will demand much more energy than the earth can currently provide, and the environmental costs are too high. Clean alternatives aren't developed because it's not profitable to do so. Capitalism puts profits before people and it poisons the planet. It is the economics of the madhouse. It can't be controlled and it can't be tamed. That's why capitalism has to go. **RSG**



She thinks capitalism's great – but she's a donkey

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Freedom

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Unacceptable remedies

In a recent interview with the *Sunday Times*, Jack Straw pondered whether he would be celebrated in history as a great 'reforming' Home Secretary, on a par with, say, Roy Jenkins. A difficult question, given Jenkins' masterminding of the Prevention of Terrorism Act in 1974 ("a draconian act unprecedented in peacetime" as he described it to Parliament at the time) and the purchase in 1976 of Heckler and Koch HK33 carbines for the purpose of arming the police, behind the back of the Cabinet, Parliament and the Prime Minister, James Callaghan. 'Dirty Jack', though, is more than holding his own, with an Immigration and Asylum Act worse than anything Michael Howard dared attempt, a 'freedom of information' bill which increases official secrecy in the name of access, prison numbers at a record high (along with prison suicides) and the privatisation of the penal system and consequent development of a US style prison-industrial gulag. To ensure the likes of the Corrections Corporation of America and Wackenhut are sated, the Criminal Justice (Mode of Trial) Bill is moving through Parliament, designed to restrict access to trial by jury. The chances of robust defence from a team of solicitors chosen because of their defence expertise are to be reduced through the use of legal aid contracting, and, ultimately, the creation of a tame Public Defenders Office. Straw's best example of the kind of 'joined-up government' New Labour claims to represent though, is manifest in his introduction onto the legislative agenda of the Human Rights Act and the Terrorism Act at the same time without anyone realising the nature of his agenda.

This paper has already considered at length the content and purpose of the new Terrorism bill, particularly its widening of the definition of 'terrorism' to encompass the "use or threat of action ... designed to influence the government or to intimidate the public or a section of the public" where "the use or threat is made for the purpose of advancing a political, religious or ideological cause" and where 'action' (or the threat of action) involves "serious violence against a person" or "serious damage to property". That this new definition brings all the police powers of the Prevention of Terrorism Act to bear against the direct action movement, militant anti-fascism – indeed any and all effective protest – appears obvious on any reading. It is an indictment of the bred-in-the-bone reformism of so much of the left that it has barely noticed the new Act, nor concerned itself with the likely purpose of its introduction. On amendment, the Bill now extends the definition of 'terrorism' to include "interference with or serious disruption of an electronic system" (hacking). Moreover, the use or threat of action involving serious violence or damage to property will automatically be classified as terrorism if it involves "firearms or explosives" regardless of whether the "use or threat" is designed to influence the government or intimidate a section of the public. Of course, a prosecution under the Act will only arise if the "use or threat" is made for political, religious or ideological ends, but, logically, this means that

for any incident involving anything from CS gas to a starting pistol to an AK47 the police can arrest under the Terrorism Act to investigate the 'ideological' circumstances, thus allowing the police to dispense with the limited post-arrest safeguards of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act for any firearms offence.

What ought to be at issue, though, is the timing – why bring in such an obviously draconian piece of legislation at the same time as the Human Rights Act, an Act which, according to *Statewatch* magazine (March-May 2000, vol. 10, no. 2), provides a "real opportunity to change the culture of deference and opacity" which is the essence of parliamentary democracy in the UK? The answer ought to be obvious. No European Convention rights (the 1998 Human Rights Act incorporates the European Convention on Human Rights into UK law) are absolute. Rights can be interfered with to the extent "necessary in democratic society in the interests of national security or public safety, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others." (The rights to be free from torture and inhuman and degrading treatment

and from slavery cannot be so curtailed, but it is worth considering the ruling in *Ireland v United Kingdom*, 18th January 1978 (no. 25) EHRR 25, in which it was found after examination of sixteen "illustrative cases" that interrogation techniques used by the British state against Republicans between 1971 and 1975, alongside the adoption of "extra judicial powers of arrest, detention and internment", while constituting inhuman and degrading treatment, did not "occasion suffering of the particular intensity and cruelty implied by the word torture." The techniques involved wall standing forcing the detainees to remain for periods of some hours in a "stress position" i.e. spread-eagled against the wall; hooding – putting a hood over detainees' heads during interrogation; subjection to noise; deprivation of sleep; deprivation of food and drink. To date the Court has not found any challenged to constitute torture.) Under the new Act judges will have to decide whether interference with a protected right was "necessary in a democratic society". Reading the Terrorism Act and the Human Rights Act off against each other allows the government and judiciary to perform a sleight-of-hand whereby the definition of

terrorism is so-expanded that almost any non-trivial interference with Convention rights could be deemed to be 'necessary'. We should note at this point that the Act does not protect Convention rights which the UK has not ratified. Complaints of expulsion or restriction of freedom of movement (Protocol 4) cannot be heard in the UK, as the protocol has never been ratified. Originally the non-ratification was necessary to protect the operation of exclusion orders under the Prevention of Terrorism Act – now it means simply that the Human Rights Act cannot be read against public order restrictions on freedom of movement. Moreover (and see also the article 'Gifts of the State' in *Freedom*, 9th September 2000) a state may secure relief from its duties under the Convention by exercising the right to derogate under Article 15, whereby "in time of war or other emergency threatening the life of the nation" a state may lodge a derogation. Such derogation must, according to Article 15 (1) be "only to the extent strictly required by the exigencies of the situation" but, as the European Court made clear, in the ruling in *Lawless v Republic of Ireland* (no. 3) (1st July 1961, 1 EHRR 15), "it

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Prague and the petrol pump ...

Notions of new-fangled anarchism

As I write fuel protesters are promising a 'new winter of discontent' and petrol pumps are already beginning to run dry as lorries block roads and oil refineries. At the end of this month simultaneous anti-globalisation protests are planned in thirty countries including Britain, the USA, France, Germany, etc., and up to twenty thousand protesters are anticipated in Prague itself as the annual summit of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank takes place.

The actions of self-employed lorry drivers and farmers in carrying out effective direct action is embarrassing for the trade union movement in that these small-scale organisations and individuals are operating a seemingly effective form of industrial campaign such as this country has not seen in donkey's years. The TUC is naturally not involved, and its secretary John Monks has condemned the actions – given their current mindset it is unlikely the almighty TUC with all its paid officers and committees could launch such an effective protest as this.

Referring to the protests in Prague a libertarian publication in Manchester, *The Loombreaker*, claims that: "In the face of the expected commotion, Czech police have announced that streets will be evacuated, schools closed and 30,000 residents moved out to give the 20,000 delegates a 'protective ring' of 11,000 police". But the paper goes on to say that "recent history in the Czech Republic weighs against the government authorising a crackdown on protesters".

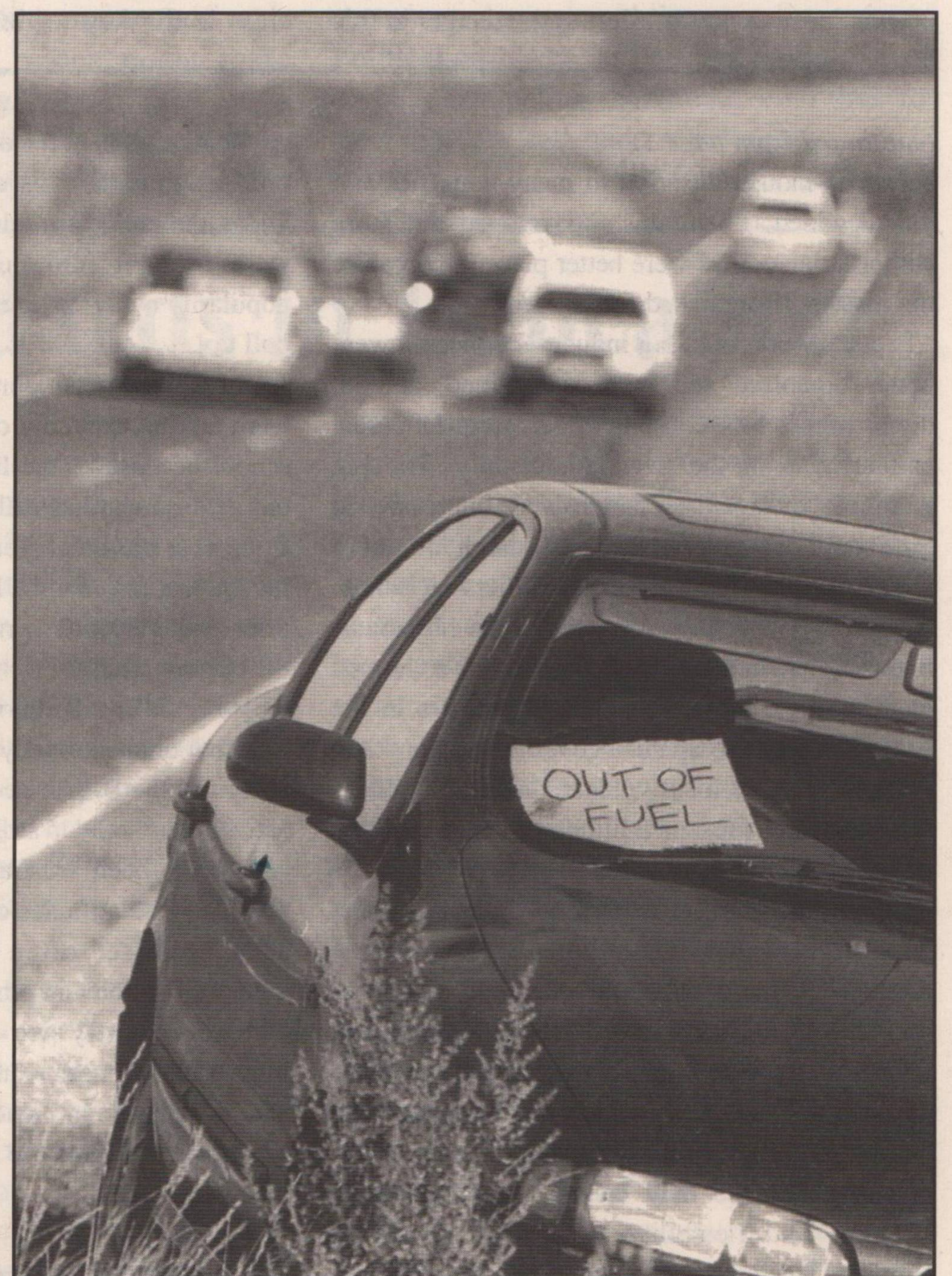
Direct action has now been taken up as a weapon by consumer groups, environmentalists, small organisations and individuals, at a time when the broad labour movement and the organised trade

unions seem to have more or less given up. Except, of course, in the case of the hole-in-the-corner disputes like that of the Liverpool dockers and the Tameside care-workers. The consumers have become most radical at a time when the producers in their trade unions have become increasingly conservative.

Reflections on anarchism

I have just been reading an essay entitled 'Reflections on Anarchism' by Professor Eric Hobsbawm. He opens by saying: "The present revival of interest in anarchism is a curious and at first sight unexpected phenomenon. Even ten years ago it would have seemed in the highest degree unlikely."

That was an essay that Hobsbawm, the Marxist historian, wrote in 1969, soon after the spectacular French events of May 1968. Up to then, Hobsbawm claimed, as "a movement [anarchism] it seemed to belong to the pre-industrial period, and in any case to the era before the First World War and the October



Revolution". Except in Spain, where a huge urban anarchist movement existed until the Civil War, anarchism seemed to peak with vast support among peasants and artisans during the early

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falls in the first place to each Contracting State, with its responsibility for the 'life of its nation', to determine whether that life is threatened by a 'public emergency', and, if so, how far it is necessary to go in attempting to overcome that emergency." Widening the definition of terrorism facilitates the widening of the definition of an 'emergency'. (It is worth noting in this context the decision of the Commission in *Kelly v United Kingdom* (Application no. 17579/90) in relation to Article 2 of the Convention-right to life – which reads "deprivation of life shall not be regarded as inflicted in contravention of this Article when it results from the use of force which is no more than absolutely necessary a) in defence of any person from unlawful violence; b) in order to effect a lawful arrest or to prevent the escape of a person lawfully detained; c) in action lawfully taken for the purpose of quelling a riot or insurrection). In *Kelly*, the Commission declared that soldiers opening fire on a carload of joyriders, killing one, did not act in breach of Article 2, because they were attempting to effect a lawful arrest. In *Stewart v United Kingdom* (1982, 7 EHRR 409) an application brought to the Court by the family of a 13 year old boy killed by a plastic bullet, the Court found that the use of plastic bullets amounted to no more force than had been absolutely necessary for the purpose of quelling a riot.) Derogation of Convention obligations such as the right to liberty and security has allowed the Court to turn a blind eye to the increased powers of arrest and detention afforded the state via the PTA, simply on the basis of suspicion of involvement in terrorist activities. In *McVeigh et al v United Kingdom* (1981, 5 EHRR 71) the European Commission stated: "The existence of organised terrorism is a feature of modern life whose emergence since the Convention was drafted cannot be ignored any more than the changes in social conditions and moral opinion which have taken place in the same period. It faces democratic governments with a problem of serious organised crime which they must cope with in order to preserve the fundamental rights of their citizens. The measures they take must comply with the Convention and the Convention organs must always be alert to the danger in this

sphere averted to by the Court of "undermining or even destroying democracy on the ground of defending it... However... some compromises between the requirements for defending democratic society and individual rights is inherent in the system of the Convention, specific requirements of the situation facing the society in question must be taken into account." Bluntly then, extending the scope of the Prevention of Terrorism Act allows the state to defend 'democratic society' through riding roughshod over the Convention rights incorporated via the Human Rights Act. The HRA is intended to regulate the trivia of state affairs – the day to day administration of civil society. The real business of government – the management of force – falls under the auspices of the Terrorism Act. Rights, then, are there for all, so long as we choose not to exercise them against the business of government. The Human Rights Act and the Terrorism Act are to be read together to determine the limits of legitimate protest to be sanctioned in Blair's Britain.

The left has struggled to comprehend the New Labour agenda. It looks desperately for some reforming intent, some means by which it can seek to justify hanging onto the coat tails of social democracy. The social democratic project though, is dead and buried. The upsurge in labour militancy of the 1960s and 1970s was met by the ruling class's 'politics of crisis' – the drive to smash organised labour by force, drive down wages and restore profitability that was the consensus of government in the final decades of the twentieth century. New Labour represents precisely a new politics – a post-crisis project designed to ensure that the years of 'desubordination' of the '70s never occur again. Hence, the essence of the project is the maintenance of social inequality and profitability but by new means – the restructuring of a post-welfare low wage, low unemployment economy – with the New Deal and the minimum wage as essential tools in driving the formerly unemployed into low wage work. Gordon Brown told the TUC conference that Britain can have full employment for a generation if productivity is forced up and an "anti-inflation culture of stability" is maintained. 'Wage restraint and responsibility' for the working class is the key to delivering the rewards for

'boardroom greed', to New Labour's friends in business. Blair and co know also that if you refuse any agency of mediation (and the TUC have been locked out of effective participation in government for the duration of Blair's first term) social protest inevitably takes an unmediated form. Hence the redrafting of the Prevention of Terrorism Act in a form that can apply to everyone from striking miners to anti-fascists to anti-capitalist demonstrators. Capitalism under New Labour is capitalism-as-lockdown – no dissent will be tolerated.

The fuel blockades currently bringing the country to a halt give the game away as to a number of participants in the 'great game' of British democracy. Most of the left have always been keen to decry small farmers and lorry drivers as somehow middle class – even though the majority of lorry drivers are self employed and have no managerial authority at all. (It's an interesting definition of working class that includes sections of white collar management but excludes long distance lorry drivers simply because they're self employed – by that definition so are brickies, chippies and every other worker in the lump labour force currently getting screwed in the latest building boom). The suicide rate amongst small farmers and farm workers is twice that of the general population. Small farmers have been bankrupted by BSE and carved out by agribusiness. Statistics available in 1995 showed that 40% of farmers were eligible to draw income support. The situation has worsened considerably since then. The farmers, lorry drivers and taxi drivers ought to have our full support (not least because petrol tax is a form of indirect taxation on the poor and low paid – big business can easily absorb rising fuel costs, whereas a single parent driving her kids to school, or a lorry driver who has to drive well over the European working limit to make ends meet, cannot. Petrol taxes don't put cars off the road. If you need to drive, you'll still drive – it'll just cost you more). As Francis Wheen noted, the blockades challenge "the idea that politics is the exclusive preserve of ministers, and that a citizens only legitimate involvement in the process is to turn out and vote every five years" (*Guardian*, 13th September 2000). Watching the blockades organise assemblies to decide after debate what

should and should not constitute 'emergency supplies' allows us a glimpse of direct democracy in action. The fact that many of those involved are former Tory supporters ought to remind us both of the extent to which people are politicised by struggle and the extent to which the Labour Party has alienated vast sections of both its former and new constituencies.

It is the use of the tactics of direct action which is crucial. For weeks now the bourgeois press has crowed that the militancy which has been the hallmark of French workers since 1995 has 'no place here'. John Prescott has said that the blockades "challenge the proper force of government". TGWU boss Bill Morris has claimed that the methods employed are "not the acceptable remedy in a democracy" (we can only hope that rank and file trade unionists look at these unacceptable methods and decide they constitute a safer bet than the TUC's strategy of begging Gordon Brown to embrace the Euro and asking international capital to invest in the low paid workforce they've helped New Labour engineer). Darren Johnson of the Green Party and London mayor Ken Livingstone have called for the strongest action to be taken against the blockades – giving a hint of the authoritarian edge that exists below the surface of the would-be libertarian Greens, who appear to believe that sacked car workers and desperate lorry drivers should be frog-marched towards the Green Utopia of public transport for all, with bicycles for everyone and cars in the scrapyard. The problem? The Utopia we're expected to march to doesn't exist. The main point though – and the one most relevant to the debate around the Human Rights Act/Terrorism Act interface – is the speed at which Blair, Straw *et al* rushed to invoke emergency powers, through the convening of the cabinet's emergency contingency committee. The reason is simple. Post-crisis capital has no room for manoeuvre. The fuel blockade has shown how quickly Bill Gates' 'friction-free' capitalism, where distance is supposedly eliminated by technology, can grind to a halt. Post-crisis capital may have deterritorialised itself, but at the cost of an increased vulnerability. Capital is fuelled by debt-cheques drawn against future exploitation. For all the talk of the elimination of the barriers of time and space, of virtual communities, presence-at-a-distance, profits cannot be realised in the incorporeal world. The real world therefore, will be more rigorously policed than before. But however vigilant, however draconian, capital can still be brought to a halt.

The legal theorist William E. Scheurman has noted that with the "compression of space and time" which is the hallmark of the process of globalisation, "virtually everywhere in the advanced liberal world, legislative and parliamentary power has experienced a decline, whereas executive and administrative institutions have tended to gain poorly defined grants of substantial legislative power... Liberal democracy has increasingly blurred the dividing line between 'normal' and 'exceptional' or emergency powers" ('Globalisation and Exceptional Powers' in *Radical Philosophy*, 93, January 1999). Democracy, as Scheurman suggests, is becoming a luxury capitalism can ill afford. The Terrorism Act can be set within this trend. The fuel blockades, though, tell a different story. They suggest that what Cornelius Castoriadis called "the project of autonomy" is far from over and that the "unacceptable remedies" of direct action which have become the weapons of French unemployed and English farmers bear witness to our "capacity to bring about the emergence of what is not given – of making be other forms of social and individual existence" (Castoriadis, 'Anthropology, Philosophy, Politics' in *Thesis 11*, 1997, no. 49).

Nick S.

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stages of industrialisation in many countries and then declined as big industry developed, and more authoritarian parties were better placed to organise the masses of organised factory workers.

Factory workers in big industrial concerns were better organised and more disciplined, and no doubt more class conscious than farm labourers and artisans in the twentieth century. The big battalions of organised labour were impressive in their day – watching workers march out of a factory almost like a troop of soldiers on parade was always uplifting. Arguably some historians, like Hobsbawm and Gerald Brenan, have claimed that "a single strike of [socialist] miners in the Asturias shook the Spanish government more than seventy years of massive anarchist revolutionary activity, which presented little more than a routine police problem".

Others, like the Italian novelist Ignazio Silone, have argued that the culture of the factory produced a kind of robotic worker who lacked the initiative of the anarchist peasants, students and artisans of a previous era. In the end, of course, we now know that governments could smash the predictable solid strikes of militant trade unions precisely because they lacked the imagination, initiative and flexibility of smaller groups of activists. This is what happened with the miners in 1984-85 when their strike was defeated: pure syndicalism died then.

This week the TUC Conference has been sidelined by small groups of activists – self-employed hauliers and farmers – taking skillful direct action

on the roads and at the oil refineries. Not since the poll tax riots has this country seen such action. Today the police are reluctant to act because they were brought into public disrepute and lost popularity owing to their actions at the time of the poll tax.

As I walked down our street last night, children were talking excitedly of not being able to get to school because of the lack of petrol. Meanwhile our government has called a meeting of the Privy Council at Balmoral presided over by Her Majesty the Queen, and Tony Blair has abandoned all his prior engagements to rush to London to resolve the current crisis.

By her defeat of the miners in 1985, Margaret Thatcher unintentionally accelerated the Europeanisation of the British people. Those of us who are active industrially in strikes and other actions have constantly been frustrated by the conservatism and legalistic attitudes of workers in this country. This mind-set often generally undermined industrial action and other forms of direct action.

More recently we have noted a gradual improvement: more workers are showing initiative and more bottle in breaching former conventions. We must wait and see the full consequences of this.

The aroma of direct action

The excitement and aroma of direct action is all around us and is taking the London-based politicians by surprise. It is a form of new-fangled anarchism: a populist anarchism.

There is the international scene which would

include protests like Seattle, Washington and shortly Prague. Locally, last month in Manchester the Riotous Assembly held a small demo in Peterloo Square which was peaceful but at which the police presence was massive. Even the Tameside careworkers' dispute was accompanied by direct action which was essentially anarchist in inspiration. The current campaign of hauliers, farmers and taxi drivers, whatever we think of its objectives, is part of this.

Hobsbawm wrote in 1969: "Anarchism has valuable lessons to teach, because it has – in practice rather than theory – been unusually sensitive to the spontaneous elements in mass movements". Of course any big disciplined organisation can order a strike or demo, and if it's big enough it can look good. But, argues Hobsbawm, "there is all the difference between the CGT's token general strike of 13th May 1968 and the ten millions who occupied their places of work a few days later without a national directive".

At that time, in 1969, Hobsbawm thought the vogue for anarchism was caused by the crisis in the world communist movement after Stalin's death and the rise in discontent among students and intellectuals. Today it is probably caused by the crisis of the traditional and marxist left, and the realisation among many people that direct action offers a better bet than the party politics of the ballot box. These are issues down for discussion at the Northern Anarchist Festival and Conference in Bury on 30th September.

Brian Bamford

Protest and Survive



Photo: Jen Kathrens

The bespectacled artist Thomas Hirschhorn and an assistant working on the temporary bridge connecting the Whitechapel Art Gallery and Freedom Press Bookshop as part of the *Protest and Survive* exhibition

Protest and Survive
The Whitechapel Art Gallery
 15th September to 12th November 2000
 (open Tuesday to Sunday from 11am to 5pm, Wednesdays to 8pm)

Freedom Press Bookshop is open as usual, but also, for the time being, incorporated into a piece of installation art. Two meticulous carpenters took ten days to build a firm wooden bridge across Angel Alley, from a window in the cafe of The Whitechapel, as the art gallery styles itself, to a window in the bookshop. Thomas Hirschhorn, the Swiss installation artist whose idea it was, then spent one day covering the bridge in cardboard and plastic bags.

Visitors to the *Protest and Survive* exhibition may cross the bridge into the bookshop. There, they will be given leaflets explaining what anarchism is really about, and invited to buy our literature. Visitors to the bookshop may cross in the opposite direction, except on Mondays when the art gallery is closed.

For the duration of the exhibition, the bookshop will open on Sundays, and stay open on Wednesdays until 8pm, to fit Gallery opening times (but will be closed on Saturday 14th October, when we shall all be at the Anarchist Bookfair).

The Whitechapel has been a good neighbour of Freedom Press, since our arrival in Angel

Alley in 1968. When our toilet exploded in an arson attack, in 1993, the Whitechapel kept their side door open so that we could use the toilet in their basement.

The Whitechapel has no permanent exhibition, but temporary exhibitions at the forefront of what the art critic Brian Sewell calls "the Serota tendency", after Nicholas Serota, the current Director of the Tate Gallery. Some works first shown at the Whitechapel have indeed been taken into the permanent collection of the Tate Modern.

The 'Serota tendency' may be defined,

roughly, as the art movement which values original ideas above all else, and cares little for traditional artistic skills, or aesthetics. The curators of the present exhibition, Matthew Higgs and Paul Noble, write in the catalogue: "*Protest and Survive* seeks to feed culture back into life. It aims to encourage a promiscuous curiosity in the viewer. We feel that the

imaginative life has been bought out too cheaply. We are ultimately interested in an inquisitive art that is forever contemporary. Our protest is for the survival of ideas."

Forty artists of different generations and motivations are represented, their works dealing with gender, race, class, identity, sexuality, politics, idealism, passion, resistance, boredom, frustration and pleasure. The exhibition is free.

Donald Room

Police not really a coercive force

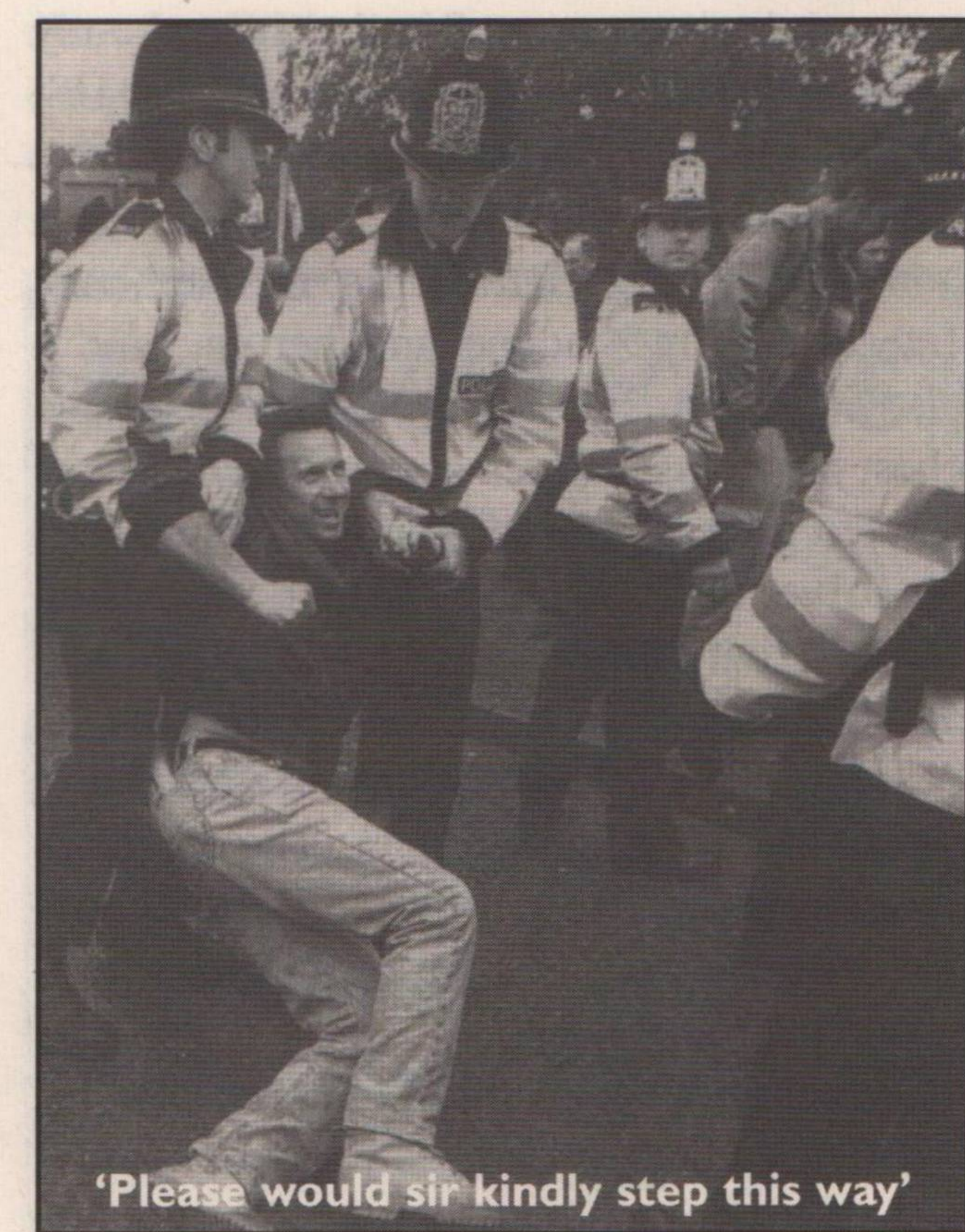
You couldn't make it up. The Police Complaints Authority (who try to police the police) has told the plods to be nicer. "It really is a case of brushing up on the pleases and thank yous", deputy chair Molly Meacher said (*Daily Mail*, 11th September 2000). "Police are trained to assert themselves and gain control using batons and force, but they sometimes forget it's just as good being polite".

We suggest the following for the New Plods' Handbook. Other ideas welcome.

- "I'm sorry, Sir, you seem to have fallen on something."
- "Please would Sir kindly step this way."
- "Going anywhere nice on your hols this year, Madam?"
- "Take that, me old beauty."
- "You're nicked, mate."
- "You've got a long stretch in front of you unless you wise up and cooperate, you little scrote."

As the Association of Chief Police Officers confirmed, "being polite is high on the police training agenda". That's a relief then.

Johnny M.



'Please would sir kindly step this way'

Manchester's 'riotous' tea party

On 17th August the libertarian umbrella organisation, Riotous Assembly, put on a small demonstration in St Peter's Square, Manchester, protesting against the Prevention of Terrorism Bill. About a hundred turned up to challenge the Bill and to celebrate the anniversary of the Peterloo massacre. The occasion was dubbed 'The Mad Hatter's Tea Party'.

Though the demo was tiny the police took it very seriously. Throughout the area around St Peter's Square there was a massive police

presence. Police video footage was taken, there were mounted police behind the Midland Hotel and near the Town Hall, elsewhere dogs were spotted. A police wagon was parked in front of the McDonalds branch on Oxford Street.

The nervousness of the police is probably justified by earlier actions by these campaigners, such as the massive Mayday action and a demo last year in which Mancunian Way was closed for a time, not to mention the effective squats at the Hacienda club.



COPY DEADLINE
 The next issue of Freedom will be dated 7th October, and the last day for copy intended for this issue will be first post on Thursday 28th September. 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).

'Honey We Drugged the Kids!'

Attention all teachers and parents. Are your kids a bit of a pain, they won't sit still and they always answer back? Children should be seen and not heard and now this can be effortlessly achieved. Disruptive behaviour will be a thing of the past when you give your kids easy-to-use Ritalin, the new wonder drug. Brought to you by Novartis, the company that modified your food can now modify your kids! Two million American families can't be wrong!

Subjective diagnosis

Sadly this is no joke. The use of the powerful psychotropic drug methylphenidate, commonly known as Ritalin, has already reached epidemic proportions in the US, whilst in Britain 200,000 children a year have their behaviour chemically modified. As a controlled drug, Ritalin is in the same category as methadone and heroin, and is also addictive. Side-effects include heart and chest problems, hallucinations, psychosis and stunted growth. The 'problem' it is supposed to solve is known as 'Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder' (ADHD). The child is claimed to be medically incapable of devoting the desired amount of attention to an appropriate subject or task. The diagnosis is extremely subjective and the whole syndrome is little more than a socio-historical construct.

Children in western societies are bombarded with an endless stream of noisy, colourful, fast-moving images to hook their attention and catch their pockets and then confined to dull, increasingly regimented schools. Parents seldom spare time for their kids and many homes are more like motorway service stations, with individuals dropping in and out to service their individual rather than collective needs. Kids' lives are fractured and trivialised. Surely much of the perceived 'hyperactivity' is no more than learned behaviour from a trivially hyperactive society. The limited but meaningful relationships and experiences of past social life have been supplanted by a far greater number and variety of experiences and relationships between people but each almost inevitably of a much more transitory and superficial nature. The sins of the father are being visited on the son. Where grown-ups don't like the sort of hyped-up kids they have produced our chemical friend is there to help ...

Underlying Problems

Ritalin does nothing to address any underlying problems. Its effects are pharmacologically almost indistinguishable from cocaine, far from calming children it actually provides them with a chemically-induced backdrop of stimulation which meets their craving and so diverts them from disrupting the lives of the adults around them. A mixture of wishful thinking and vested interest leads the advocates of Ritalin to believe that its use improves children's academic, athletic or

social skills but research indicates that it produces no significant, positive long-term effects (see *Ritalin Nation* by R. De Grandpre, published by Norton).

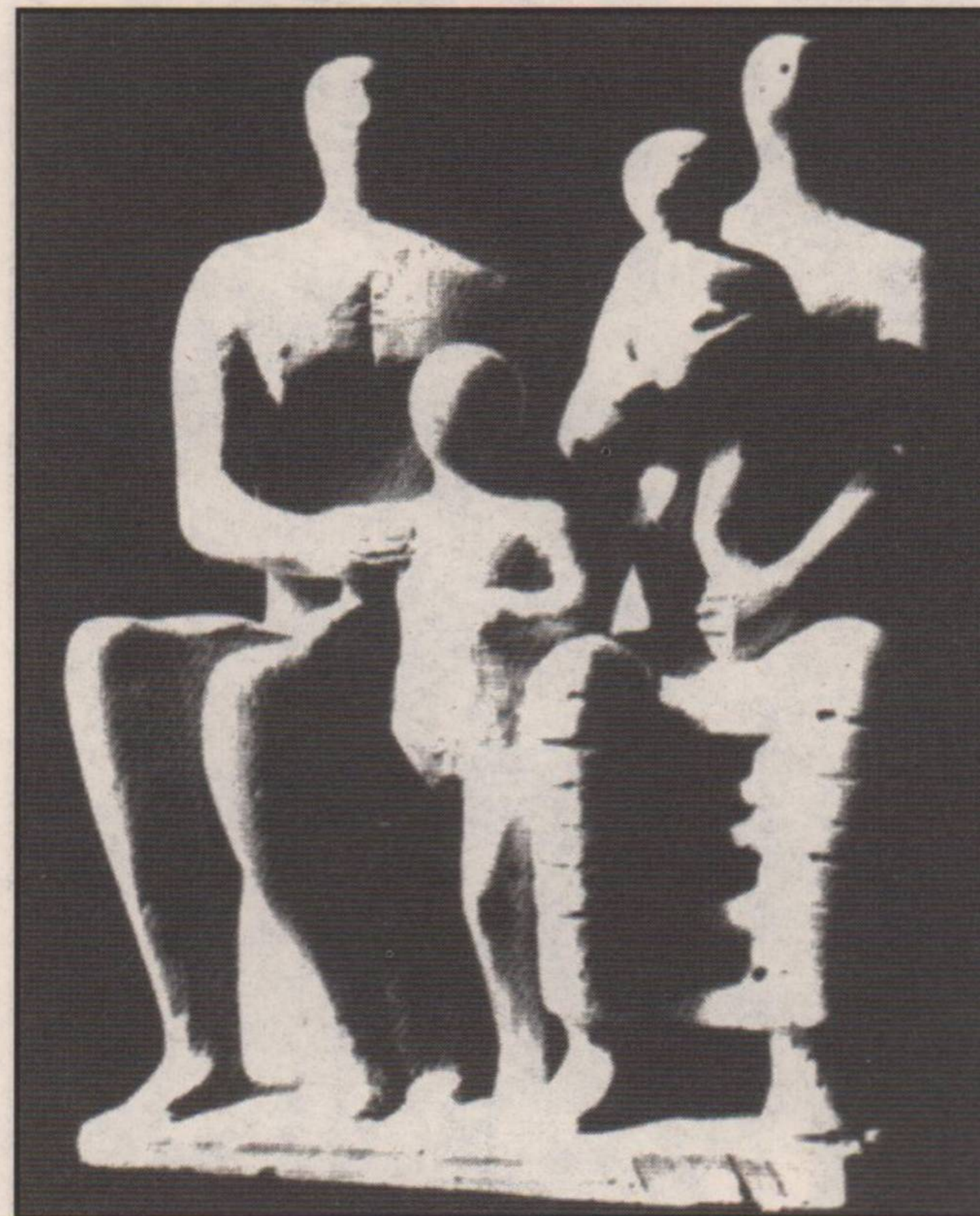
When kids seem a handful parents often welcome a diagnosis of ADHD and a prescription for Ritalin because they feel they have been offered a solution to their problem that doesn't probe their culpability. Schools react in the same way and so the net around children's lives tighten. Safe physical space for children to play and develop is increasingly restricted by adults' selfish devotion to the use of their motor cars whilst children's psychological and emotional space is constantly invaded by adults' commercial concerns and academic obsessions.

The kid gets it!

When children do not fit snugly into the boxes that our families, schools and societies have created for them they face a powerful latent coalition of vested interests that all want to pin the fault on the child. When you add lucrative rewards for the drug company, career advancement for ambitious clinicians and a government that seeks technical fixes and eschews political change it's not hard to see it's the kid that gets it! The truth is that the very powerlessness imposed on children by our society creates anxiety, stress and an inability to get to grips with their own lives. When quiet, peaceful attempts to express oneself are ignored one either gets stropky or dies inside.

Researches at Teeside University claim that the dramatic rise in Ritalin prescriptions

amounts to a "major public health scandal". Steve Baldwin, Professor of Psychology at Teeside has stated that: "Children as young as three are being given class B drugs for a condition whose very existence is questioned" and he believes that teachers and educational psychologists are too ready to label children as hyperactive. Health officials in North Staffordshire admit that mis-



diagnosis of hyperactivity and inappropriate prescription of Ritalin has taken place in their region and have launched an inquiry into the running of their specialist centre for hyperactive children.

According to an Office for National Statistics (ONS) report, released in March, in Britain one in ten children aged between five and fifteen suffers from a mental disorder, yet there is little attempt to identify why our

society makes children mentally ill. Instead the government proposes to forcibly treat the symptoms. Mental health charities believe the government aims to strengthen the 1983 Mental Health Act to give doctors power to prescribe drugs to those who have "any disability or disorder of the mind or brain, whether permanent or temporary, which results in an impairment or disturbance of mental functioning." This would invite wholesale chemical modification of children's inconvenient behaviours. Professor Goodman, who compiled the ONS report, warns against ignoring the social, political and family factors responsible for children's mental ill health and the danger of the medicalisation of the problem. Meanwhile the advance of Ritalin continues unchecked with the number of prescriptions dispensed currently doubling each year.

Sacrificing Children

Our society is shocked at the barbarity of ancient cultures that occasionally sacrificed children to the gods. We are more systematic and worship different gods. From an early age our children are dedicated to serve our economic system, schooled in the national credo and their natural curiosity, creativity and exuberance controlled. In childhood we destroy their dreams and in doing so destroy our own dreams of a better society. Parental smacking, teachers' sarcasm and the chemical cosh all help contain protest whilst many children experience lives of quiet desperation. Daniel Oldfield was twelve when he hanged himself after a school report said he had the attention span of a goldfish (*TES*, 21st April 2000). A more modern, caring school would have been to give him a dose of Ritalin.

Christopher Draper

Time's Gardens

The other day I found myself in Bedford. Walking from the railway station towards the town centre I was surprised to see a succession of communal buildings for an amazing number of different language users, with their extraordinary skill in creating subtle variations on the same theme of tribalism.

There was an Italian church and mission, a Polish club, a West Indian cultural centre, and a mosque all within fifty yards of each other.

You had to walk to the riverside to find the discreet plaque on a bridge to realise that this place has a history of perpetuating the same old dirge to similar themes.

Poor old Bunyan. He is well and truly forgotten now. The Town and its Frau, they have other bridges to cross.

Even the advertisements in the town hall window play the same tune. This time however they are looking for "interpreters proficient in the Albanian language".

It is easy enough to understand why refugees have come to Bedford in their numbers. It is a very pleasant town still, a county town on the river Ouse, with many fine bridges.

On one of the bridges there is a very small but elegant bronze plaque with an inscription written by a loving and cultured hand:

"On the shallow East of the 3rd Pier
of the Bridge
stood the 'Stone-House'
wherein BUNYAN imprisoned
1675-1676
wrote the first part of the
Pilgrim's Progress
'As I slept I dreamed a dream'."

Bedford is a veritable *rus in urbe*. As it happens not too little *rus* and not too much *urbs*. Swans on the river and wild ducks. On a blazing sunny day it was pleasant to take the air by the riverside, going over the arched bridges to the small islands.

The children scamper across Butterfly Bridge. They seem to spend the entire afternoon running backwards and forwards across it. I try it once. Standing at the top you spend so much time looking at the silvery lances of the water ripples that you forget which way you were going in the first place.

That is how I ended up in Time Gardens. I swear to you comrades on the black flag of Anarchy that I intended to go the other way.

But as it happens it was a good thing that I did. Readers have no doubt been informed that Freedom Press is very much involved in the present *Protest and Survive* exhibition at the next door Whitechapel Art Gallery and on 22nd October yours truly will hold forth on his views on 'Art and Anarchism'. What better preparation could chance have sent me on that sunny afternoon.

Was it a bridge or was it a supreme work of art, I still cannot decide. But then crossing the road I suddenly found myself in Time

Gardens. There I stood looking at another plaque which in crude summary said:

"Celebrating 100 years of Russell Park: Bedford Time Gardens. There are three gardens joined in a sequence. The first garden is to illustrate the Art Nouveau period with its flowing lines and broad drifts, the second garden is Modernist composed in pure geometry with block of horizontals contrasting with diverse upright shrubs. A square lawn is bounded by red blue and yellow concrete paths and is inspired by the work of Piet Mondrian (1920-1930). The third garden is dedicated to the present naturalistic movement where the 'garden' finds its own natural balance and anarchy".

Perhaps now that overnight I have become an art expert I should give you here my two ha'pence worth.

I instinctively felt that the modern garden was far the most successful of the three, there was something clear-headed about the whole thing and a proper tribute to Mondrian. The Art Nouveau arrangement could not evoke the original concept but it was nevertheless a brave attempt and a gentle joke to tangle up again the untangled knots.

The third garden was the one which ideologically I should champion most, for the unknown placquetteer very reasonably identified the Kropotkin anarchism of the present day community gardeners, where and in whose creations both plants and visitors are meant to find their 'own balance'. However, artistically or due to time's interference it was more like the palette of the painter, once lush but now dried to its ground.

That the whole century expressed in time's garden should pay tribute to anarchist gardeners was, however, a very reassuring find with such unexpected vigour in Bunyan's old town.

John Rety

A funny joke

In 1969 the North Koreans shot down an American spy plane. The US president was livid and ordered a tactical nuclear strike. He was also drunk at the time. Luckily, some very important generals agreed not to follow orders until Nixon had sobered up.

"If the president had his way there would be a nuclear war each week!" cracked Henry Kissinger, Secretary of State. Ha ha. He should've gone on the stage.

Johnny M.

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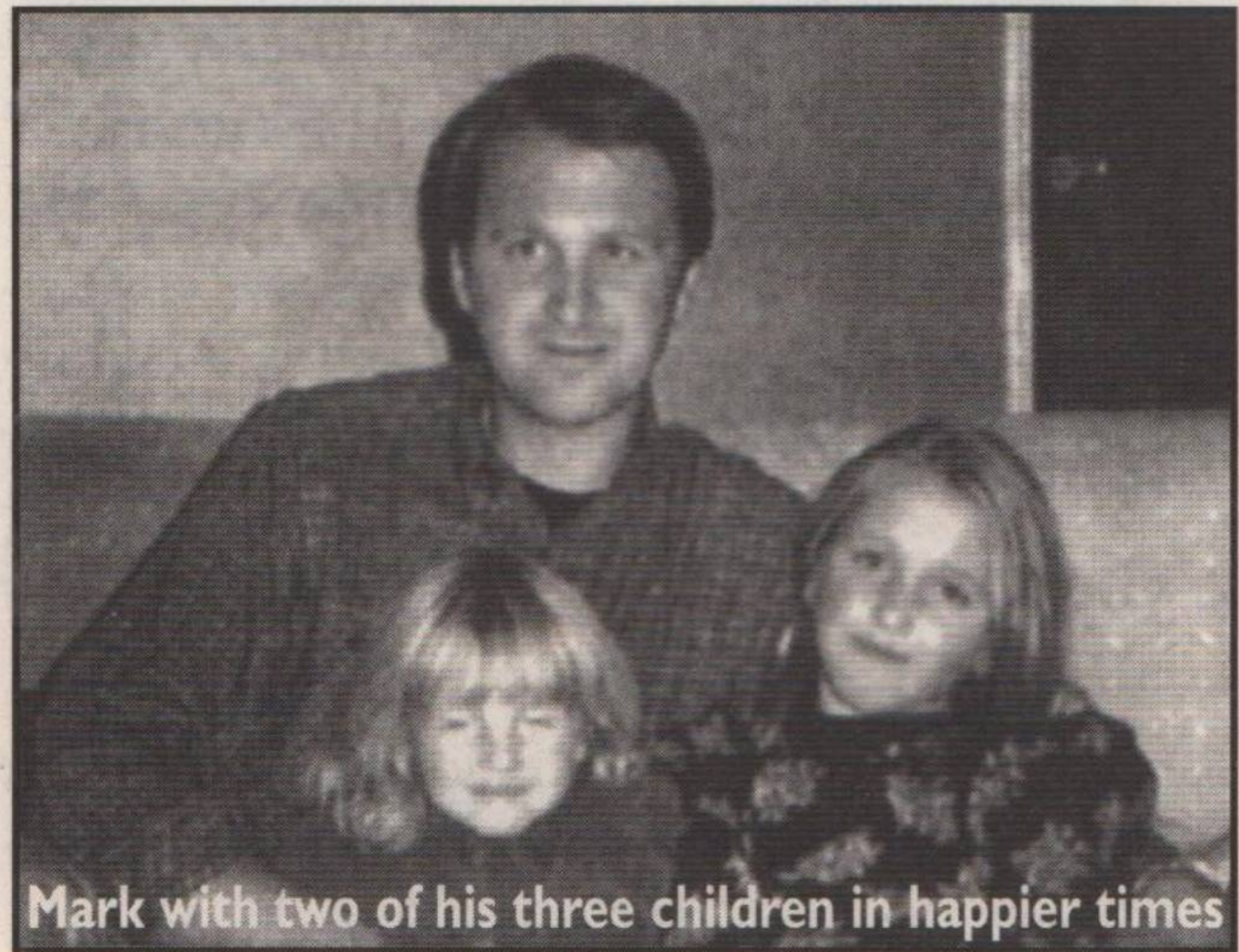
Social Control

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Mark Barnsley: Beaten up, Fitted up, Locked up

Beaten up, Fitted up, Locked up
pamphlet produced by the Justice for Mark Barnsley Campaign, 145-149 Cardigan Road, Leeds LS6 1LJ (£2.00, direct from publisher)

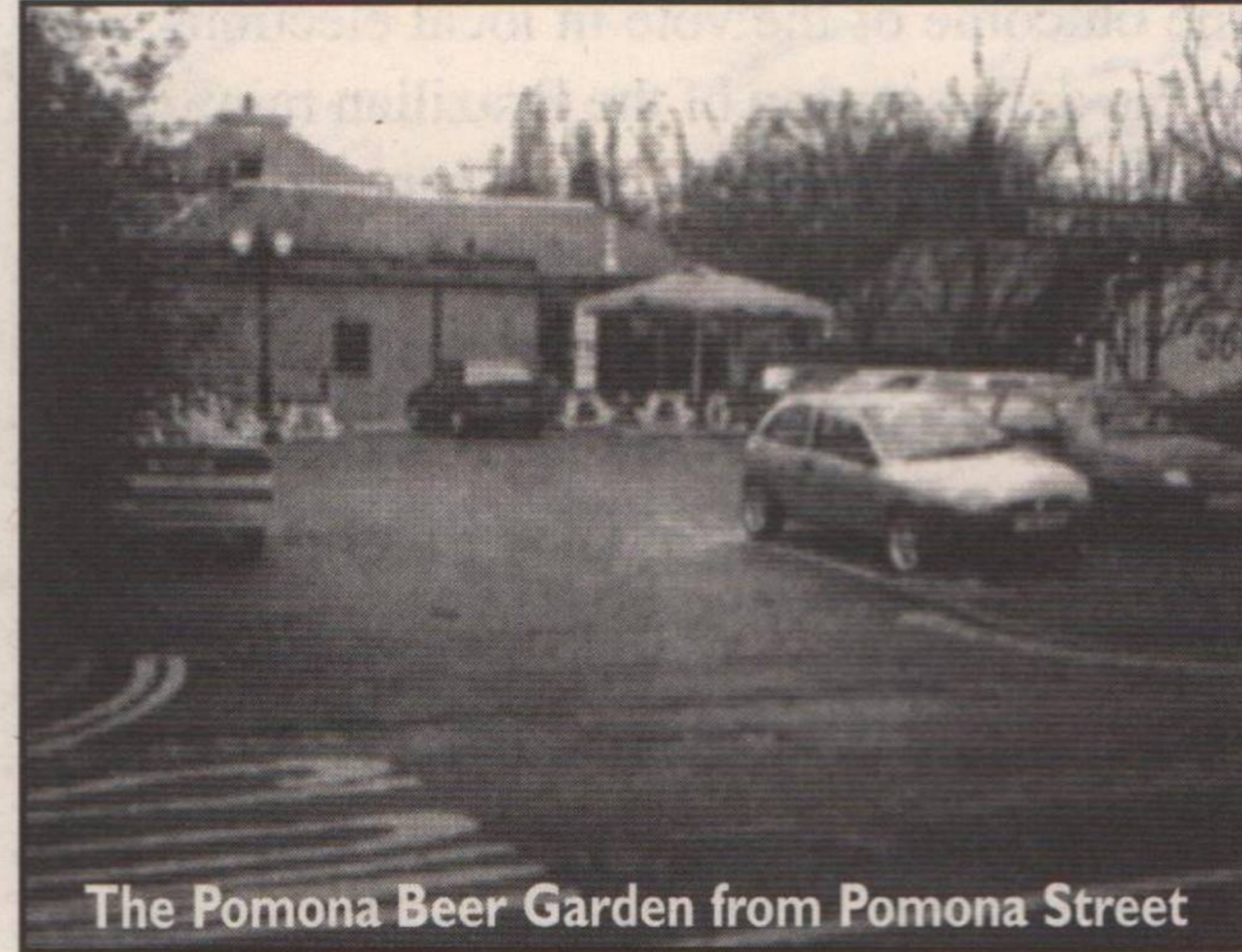
The facts of Mark Barnsley's case ought to be familiar to most *Freedom* readers by now. On 8th June 1994 Mark Barnsley, a 33 year old writer from Sheffield, went out for a walk with his baby daughter and a friend, Jane Leathborough. They stopped for a drink at the Pomona, a pub near their home. While waiting for Mark to collect their drinks from the bar, Jane was verbally abused by a group of drunken students. The abuse continued when Mark and



Mark with two of his three children in happier times

Jane got up to leave, and when Mark went over to question the students about their behaviour he was hit over the head with a bottle or heavy glass and beaten up by several

of the group. In the early stages of the attack, one of the students produced a knife, which Mark managed to get hold of. Mark was



The Pomona Beer Garden from Pomona Street

chased and brought to the ground three times, over a distance of 150 yards, receiving injuries to his head and body, including broken ribs, a broken nose and several head wounds. In the ferocity of their attack, some of the students received minor accidental knife wounds. All independent witness evidence confirmed that it was Mark who was being attacked, but it was Mark who was arrested and, subsequently, charged with five counts of GBH.

At his trial, the student witnesses admitted assaulting Mark, one conceding that he went 'apeshit' and had been 'affected' by the amount of alcohol he'd drunk. The students lied about having also smoked cannabis, but were bailed out by the trial judge who

refused to admit forensic evidence to the contrary because it would affect the jury's "opinion of the students' credibility" (which amounts to saying that no effective defence was to be allowed on the basis that the students' credibility was worth more than that of a working class local man). Despite the best efforts of Judge Baker, the local CPS, who withheld evidence as to criminal convictions, etc., of the student witnesses, copies of notes taken during interviews, etc.; copy of the Search Register, the original handwritten statements, etc., and the *Star* newspaper which acted as a mouthpiece for South Yorkshire police throughout, the jury convicted on only two of the original five charges, indicating they did not accept Mark had instigated the violence. Judge Baker allowed the CPS to substitute lesser charges when the trial was almost over, for which Mark was then convicted. Following adjournment for reports, which recommended probation, Baker handed down a sentence of twelve years imprisonment! The pamphlet notes that: "The police fit up working class people everyday, but in Mark's case his political history gave them an extra incentive to really pull out all the stops. Mark had a high Special Branch profile for many years and suffered police harassment, violence and attempts to fit him up in the past. The 'Pomona incident' provided them with an opportunity to rid themselves of someone who had previously been a long standing thorn in their sides."

All those of us who claim to use Alexander Berkman's words, that "law and government uphold and protect the biggest crime of all, the mother of all crimes", and who claim thus to oppose that 'lawful crime', have a duty to Mark Barnsley, and for two reasons. Firstly, we have a duty to fight for justice for Mark - a working class political activist fitted up by the police and the CPS. Moreover, the new Prevention of Terrorism Act will make the criminalisation of political activists that much easier, and the variety of measures introduced in the last decade, from the curtailment of the right to silence and the end of the duty of full disclosure of

on newspapers skews his perspective towards both mainstream media-friendly campaigners and the frankly sensational (or sensationalised) - despite his own caveat (page 146) that "the news is extremely 'managed'". Stories and the characters who participate in them are very rapidly put in a narrowly defined slot."

Other written sources, and his choice of interviewees, have also caused bias. I read his chapters on Twyford Down and the M11 Link Road first, as those were two campaigns with which I was intimately involved over a long period, and whilst what he writes is mostly accurate it also leaves out many important events and characters. His account of Twyford Down is heavily dependent on (former Winchester Conservative Councillor) Barbara Bryant's excellent 1996 history of the campaign, but also - although he romanticises and eulogises the Dongas Tribe - contains an unwarranted character assassination of Dr Chris Gillham, and fails to mention many other key players.

Although generally this book is well put together, the chapter 'From Wanstonia to Nimbyshire' is so appallingly chronologically muddled that I was even beginning to wonder whether my own memory was jumbled up!

In my view, the latter part of the book also concentrates too heavily on the Reclaim the Streets group. RTS has clearly run its course and anyway always lacked real focus, political or otherwise, other than a vaguely green/anarchist underlying philosophy.

Car Wars seems to be aimed at an apolitical, 'Middle England' readership - the sort of people Mosey writes for in the *Observer* I suppose, yet somehow I doubt it will appeal to them. However, for anyone who has been involved or interested in the anti-road protests of the 1990s this is a very interesting and sometimes illuminating read, and a worthy effort considering the author's lack of personal involvement in a movement for which he clearly has much sympathy and understanding.

KA

Car Wars

Car Wars: Battles on the Road to Nowhere
by Chris Mosey
published by Vision Paperbacks, London, £9.99
<<http://www.visionpaperbacks.demon.co.uk>>

Car Wars is well worth reading, and a good chronicle of the anti-roads movement that characterised youth protest for about five years in the middle 1990s. It is also unfortunately seriously flawed in a number of respects which are very apparent to the reader.

Chris Mosey is a journalist, mostly writing as a foreign correspondent for the *Times* and *Observer* newspapers. Luckily, this book doesn't read like a newspaper article. It's thoughtful, mostly well-written, well-researched (with certain limitations) and has a sense of humour. It is also sympathetic, albeit from an outsider's point of view, to the anti-car movement.

Car Wars begins badly and ends badly with an ill-judged SF-style 'what if?' philosophising jaunt. The people who most ought to read this book and be convinced by its basic arguments will probably be as put off by this gimmick as I was.

However, if you skip the introduction and foreword (which I strongly advise) the real substance begins in chapter one, a good but patchy history of the development and rise of the motor car. This is followed by a somewhat more fragmentary view - very much from the John Tyme perspective - of the subsequent anti-road and anti-car movements.

The main problem I found with this book is that it's a 'desk study'. The writer wasn't present at the events or in the campaigns he describes, and his information is therefore entirely second-hand. Worse, most of it is gleaned from newspapers, which means not only are Mosey's sources limited, but he inevitably repeats errors made by the original journalists covering the 'stories'. The reliance

prosecution evidence as direct responses to the exposure of miscarriages of justice such as the Birmingham Six and Guildford Four cases, to the proposals for restrictions regarding mode of trial under New Labour, are designed to make the fitting up of working class people a matter of routine again. In joining the fight for justice for Mark Barnsley, therefore, we are also beginning to defend ourselves.

The pamphlet focuses on the contrast between Mark's sentence and that of three middle class students, Andrew Groom, David Vodden and David Willey, who while drunk attacked Eric Cobourne, a frail 56 year old ex-docker, who died two weeks after the attack. The students were convicted of wounding with intent to cause grievous bodily harm, criminal damage and violent disorder. Willey was sentenced to eighteen months, Vodden and Groom to two years. One law for them, as we've always known.

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Spiral Bound

Spiral Bound: an anthology of poetry and songs of genes and their engineering
edited by Emily Johns

published by Hearing Eye, 99 Torriano Avenue, London NW5 2RX (£4.00 + 50p p&p, direct from publisher)

This is an anthology of twenty essays in verse, twelve of them polemics against biotechnology (the editor tells me in a personal letter that she "couldn't find any poets with a full on pro-GM stance").

Polemic verse is often doggerel, or prose cut into lines of unequal length. Not so this



collection, which includes such quotable passages as: "Your simple formula's a cop-out / to conformity. It masquerades as fact / a point of view which hides philosophy, / for



judgement's what this is about" from a 64-line poem against Dawkins, and a 76-line song against cloning which ends with the rousing: "We shall not cease from our research / Til we can resurrect the toss / Of the Fuehrer whose idea it was!"

The work is decorated with robust little drawings, which at first glance resemble woodcut natural history illustrations, but prove on closer inspection to be monstrosities, such as butterflies with different patterns on the left and right wings.

Spiral Bound has been produced to accompany *Gene Genie: Making Choices About Genetic Engineering*, an art/science exhibition. Contact Critical Mass at the same address as the publisher (above).

Donald Room

LATIN AMERICAN ECHOES

ARGENTINA

As a means of putting pressure on the government to disengage from the policies dictated by the IMF, workers' organisations, human rights groups and student federations took part on 31st May in a large mobilisation throughout the country. Roads were cut off and there were marches and meetings involving some 70,000 people. On 9th June a General Strike was called which saw, according to reports, various actions including those aimed at commercial centres throughout the day.

Also of interest is the situation in the country's prisons as experienced by inmates on a daily basis with assassinations and torture. There have been denunciations coming from the Comision Interamericana de Derechos Humanos (CIDH) and there has been a prisoners' movement which has seen a hunger strike demanding the recognition of a constitutional right to a trial review. Over the past two years the means that the prisoners have employed to gain changes which recognise the obvious injustices in the system and force the hand of the government by means of petition have up until now fallen on deaf ears.

BOLIVIA

In the city of El Alto the Aymara community – immigrants from the disused mining areas of Oruro and Potosí – have been calling for a university campus on some land which was set aside for the project for some eleven years now.

On 1st May there was an occupation aimed at forcing through legislation which would approve the setting up of a public university, both free and secular, in the area. Students and university teachers organising themselves independently set up a strike committee bringing together all those concerned to protect the occupation and organise protest actions in the city. A group of students declared a hunger strike which resulted in some of them being hospitalised. The police are preparing themselves to clear the area. However, the city has recognised the movement as a legitimate social demand and there are peaceful protests in support of the action.

BRAZIL

There are continuing protests in the wake of the official celebrations to mark the 500th anniversary of the 'discovery' of America. The movement which was set up to oppose the celebrations was the victim of police repression which has also affected a number of people who during the month of May occupied unused land in order to set up farms and the like. A very heavy handed approach from the police saw the people moved on. Some received gunshot wounds and there were cases of torture. There were also occupations of government buildings and roads were cut off as part of a protest against the economic situation which is affecting the country.

Workers' organisations called thousands out onto the streets. This was part of strike action which mainly affected social services such as

education, customs officers and health workers. However, apart from wage increases of 12% (they had been asking for 20%) no great gains were made. Libertarian and autonomous movements viewed the action with suspicion as it was felt that the main aim was to simply affect the outcome of the vote in local elections.

The deforestation of the Brazilian rainforest is another important theme. There is a project underway seeking parliamentary approval which will see the destruction of half the rainforest by converting it into massive farms for existing landowners. A sizeable area has already suffered and today is a desert area. Once the plant life has been removed the acidity of the soil and the draining of it by the rain soon makes the land unusable. The wood which is extracted in the process is sold to the multinationals.

In order to gain some state control of the situation a number of media groups in community radio projects have seen their stations shut down. It is expected that 80% of the 5,000 stations in Sao Paulo will be shut down.

CHILE

A powerful campaign is being co-ordinated in order to bring to a halt the public relations project known as the Mesa de Diálogo. This project aims to draw a line under the crimes, torture and persecution which was the order of the day under the Pinochet regime. The aim is to give immunity from prosecution to the perpetrators by passing a law granting them

anonymity in any process of inquiry.

Another point of interest is the setting up of a dam to be built by ENDESA in Ralco. The Mapuche and Pewenche people have a culture which demands that they stay on the land where their ancestors lived. This is not being respected by the authorities who have embarked on re-location policies. The workers who are building the dam have been granted legal impunity if they attack anyone who comes near the construction site and who might compromise the work which is being carried out there.

COLOMBIA

Everything is now pointing towards the scenario of the USA becoming involved in an open war in the country. Various armaments companies are now negotiating contracts in the area. Under the pretext of preventing the drugs trade the Plan Colombia a number of measures are being taken which are far from being what they seem. Colombia is seeing a political and social conflict which is not exclusively concerned with drugs. The said plan is in reality a diktat which has been drawn up without consulting social organisations and will end up worsening the situation with regard to human rights. Claiming as its target illegal coca plantations – which are the only source of income for many farmers – the plan is to fumigate large areas with no thought of the fallout which will ensue and the effect on the ecosystem. The Plan Colombia does not address the question of governmental responsibility for the violation of human rights in the country. Armed intervention will not solve the problem, on the contrary the current scenario of general economic uncertainty will be aggravated.

ECUADOR

Some months after the popular uprising we are still seeing those who participated being arrested. The insurrection was supported by the Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas (CONAIE), various social movements, unions, students and some members of the military. The uprising sought to supplant the legislative, judicial and administrative system arguing that they were corrupt and responsible for economic maladministration which had brought about a deepening crisis. Amongst those detained were some of the military who had claimed they were going to hand power back to the people. Those social organisations who participated are now calling for the release of those detained.

MEXICO

On the eve of the presidential elections the situation in Chiapas continues to be one of the main problems confronting the country. From the Lacadona jungle we heard one of the first voices to be raised against so-called neoliberalism. After six years of conflict the government continues to pour military resources into the area. Currently it is estimated that there are 70,000 military personnel in the area and the risk of all out war is ever present. Paramilitary activities aim to provoke the zapatistas into taking action which would serve as a pretext for a military attack. The international network of groups who support the Indian uprising bring us up-to-date news of what is happening and organise international days of support.

The university strikes organised by UNAM have brought together a significant social opposition. The students' struggle has succeeded in putting a stop to rising quotas and has fed mobilisations in many other sections of society. Faced with the coming elections they have campaigned for people to abstain realising that the election is a fraud and their only achievements have come about thanks to direct action and strikes.

source: *Solidaridad Obrera*, June-July 2000

— OBITUARY —

Gérard Mélinand

Gérard Mélinand (Gégé) died suddenly of a heart attack at the age of 48 in the night of 21st to 22nd June. An important militant in the French libertarian movement, I remember him well from visits to Paris in the 1970s to meet comrades of the Organisation Revolutionnaire Anarchiste. His serious approach to politics was balanced by his wit. Gérard taught us visiting British anarchists to say 'Fuck Mao!' in Cantonese, which he had picked up from some Chinese anarchists then living in the Marais quarter of Paris.

His powers of free enquiry and intellectual curiosity made him question the chaplain of the Lycée Arago on the gospels, when he was barely out of childhood.

The same outlook made the lycéen (high school student) discover libertarian communism immediately after May '68. He joined the Organisation Revolutionnaire Anarchiste, the youngest libertarian organisation of this period. In the weeks and months after May '68 hundreds and perhaps thousands of young people chose to join the anarchist movement. This in spite of the still powerful influence of State communism, which dominated the youth via the Leninist groups and which still had a powerful influence via Stalinism over the working class.

Gérard was exceptionally active in the struggles of the neighbourhoods of Paris, where he attempted to introduce ideas of self-organisation and counter-information, in the 5th arrondissement with the news-sheet *Cri du Vie*, in the 13th arrondissement with the *Canard du XIIIe* and with the Maison pour Tous (House for Everyone) of the Rue Mouffetard. He took an active part in support for strikes in the banks, the post offices, at the newspaper *Parisien Libéré*, as well as support to the occupied watch factory of Lip and organising opposition within the unions. He took part in many activities against repression and for international solidarity, particularly with the

Spanish anarchist movement and the revolutionary movement in Italy. Alongside this as an ORA member from 1968-1976, and then in the Organisation Communiste Libertaire (OCL) from 1976-1982, he was involved in campaigns against militarism, for freedom to flypost, mass leafletting at sorting offices entrances, and mass flyposting. Without forgetting his involvement with the Parisian autonomist movement which emerged with the 'suicide' of the Baader-Meinhof prisoners in Germany, with resultant violent demonstrations in Paris and which reached its height at the metalworkers' march in March 1979.

Alongside this were the debates on being for or against the unions, on the Organisational Platform, on armed struggle, and the fierce polemics on a new political concept, long since forgotten, the anti-statist dictatorship of the proletariat.

It was in the period of '68 to '78 that militant class struggle anarchism re-emerged in France, and the most important nuclei of militants were established, who would go on to build the movement of today. Gérard threw himself heart and soul into militant action, in propaganda by spoken and written word, support and participation in workers' struggles, confrontations with the police and the various stewards' organisations of political parties who tried to bar the streets to the anarchists.

Gérard was also heavily involved in setting up printshops at the service of the movement. He ended up as manager of the printshop Expression, a commercial printshop which, despite a precarious financial position, offered cut-price rates to anarchists. He always searched for collective solutions to problems, for unity rather than division. For several years he was close to, and then joined, the Confederation National de Travail (CNT-Vignoles) the anarcho-syndicalist union which he saw develop into the strong

libertarian focus within a much larger social movement independent from the parties of the Left and extreme Left.

He wanted to create bridges between different sections of the social movement and wanted libertarians to be present in this process.

He had a key role on the organising committee of the week of events in Paris including debates, films, plays and exhibitions which led up to 1st May this year, organised by the CNT and drawing in other components of the anarchist movement. Thanks to this the CNT has a much higher visibility and the 4,000 who marched on May Day under the red and black flags, well, it was due a little bit to Gérard.

A generous person who supported comrades, especially refugees, with lodging, money, jobs and all sorts of aid, Gérard both loved life and wanted to change it. He loved living it up, the conviviality of meals with plenty of drink, opera and the benefits where he could sing Italian songs of the people that he knew by heart.

As he said: "The disappearance of the Soviet Union, the installation of so-called market socialism in the People's Republic of China, and the consequent collapse of Marxism-Leninism settles, quasi-definitely, the great controversy of the socialist movement: State socialism is dead."

"What lives today, as an idea, as a political and social doctrine of emancipation, faced with the different versions of liberalism, is libertarian communism or anarchism. Outside of that, everywhere that we know, in all the developed countries grows the aspiration to liberty, to direct democracy, to self-management; our contemporaries want to control their own lives more and more."

"We, the libertarians, must understand this new reality and adapt ourselves to this new feeling which is favourable for us. We must lose our minority reflexes; now is the hour for audacity and the constitution of mass movements, open and without sectarianism".

Gérard's life was dedicated to the development of the libertarian movement and the preparation of the social revolution.

Farewell comrade!

Nick Heath

More on Poor Marx ...

Dear *Freedom*,

An effective anarchist politics has to be able to both think against and act against the state. Too often our lack of concern with the former has crippled our capacity to act in a way which achieves any of the ends we set ourselves. A number of contributors to the last issue (9th September) provided examples of why this is the case.

In the article 'A Tale of Sub-Democracy', Blasco tells us, in relation to the levels of repression relative to the UK and Russia, that "I'd rather risk having my head pumped full of cobblers by spin doctors ... than have very nearly an armful of some strong sedative pumped into me as in Mother Russia." The problem is, though, that, if you raise your voice too loudly, the 'democratic' UK can seem as much of a 'roughneck regime' as the former Soviet Union. From the Dublin and Monaghan bombings and Bloody Sunday through to its shoot-to-kill policy and arming of Loyalist death squads, the British state gave up attempting to "lull and delude" (Blasco) the nationalist community and relied instead on force. Perhaps Blasco should ask the families of those members of the Black Panther Party and the American Indian Movement killed during the implementation of COINTELPRO what they think of democracy in the USA? The truth is that once the gloves are off, there's little to choose between Putin and Blair (or Stalin and Churchill) – the relative weakness of Russian capital just means it has less room for manoeuvre.

In his letter of the same issue, Larry

Gambone suggests I offer a "Marxist excuse" for the ascendancy of social democracy – which struck me as odd, given my correspondence had attempted to suggest, contra Nick Walter, that that ascendancy had been built on the temporary appeasement of working class militancy between 1945 and the late '60s, and far from being cast in stone (as both NW and a generation of Marxists who orientated entirely to the social democratic parties as if they were the working class, seemed to think) was abandoned by capital in the face of the wildcat resistance of the late '60s and '70s. I agree with Larry about the extent of the gains made by supposedly reformist workers – for most working class people, reformism is a pragmatic response to the balance of forces at a particular point in time. His suggestion (presumably wearing his new, post-modernist hat) that the problem with Marxism was its 'totalism' seems to me to miss the point, in one sense, Marx wasn't totalistic enough; his ambiguity about the possibility of the transformation (rather than destruction) of the capitalist state left the way open for the nationalist compromises of the Second International, and for the Bolsheviks to use the state as a weapon against the working class, in the class's own name.

I agree with most of the points made by Amorey Gethin in response to my 'Naming and Shaming' article, save that the contention that "the only people around on the side of decency were the police" appears to run foul of the point I made at the start of this letter. The only concern the police had (a concern shared by everyone from Blair to Hague to

the editors of the *News of the World* and the *Guardian*) was to make sure people "didn't take the law into their own hands". It seems to me that taking the law into our own hands is exactly what direct democracy is all about. The point is that, precisely because the anarchist movement is happy to talk to itself, the likes of the BNP have moved into constituencies which should be at the heart of any purported anti-capitalist project, and the targets for people's anger become not the real causes of their poverty but scapegoats provided to deflect them while the state catches its breath. The only way in which we can rebuild the solidarities whose collapse Amorey rightly pin-points as the cause of the ontological insecurity which has beset so many poor communities, is by employing the direct action methods of Seattle against targets that contribute closer to home to the immiseration of everyday life. People should be encouraged to take the law into their own hands. If we want to work with people to target those whose economic practices rip our communities apart, we have to be prepared to argue for our solutions where it matters, not where it's easiest. Stopping bailiffs firms from operating on working

class estates, for instance, would go some way to convincing people that:

- 1) it's possible to resist the logic of capital;
- 2) there are other ways of understanding the world than those provided by the *News of the World* or the BNP.

Nick S.

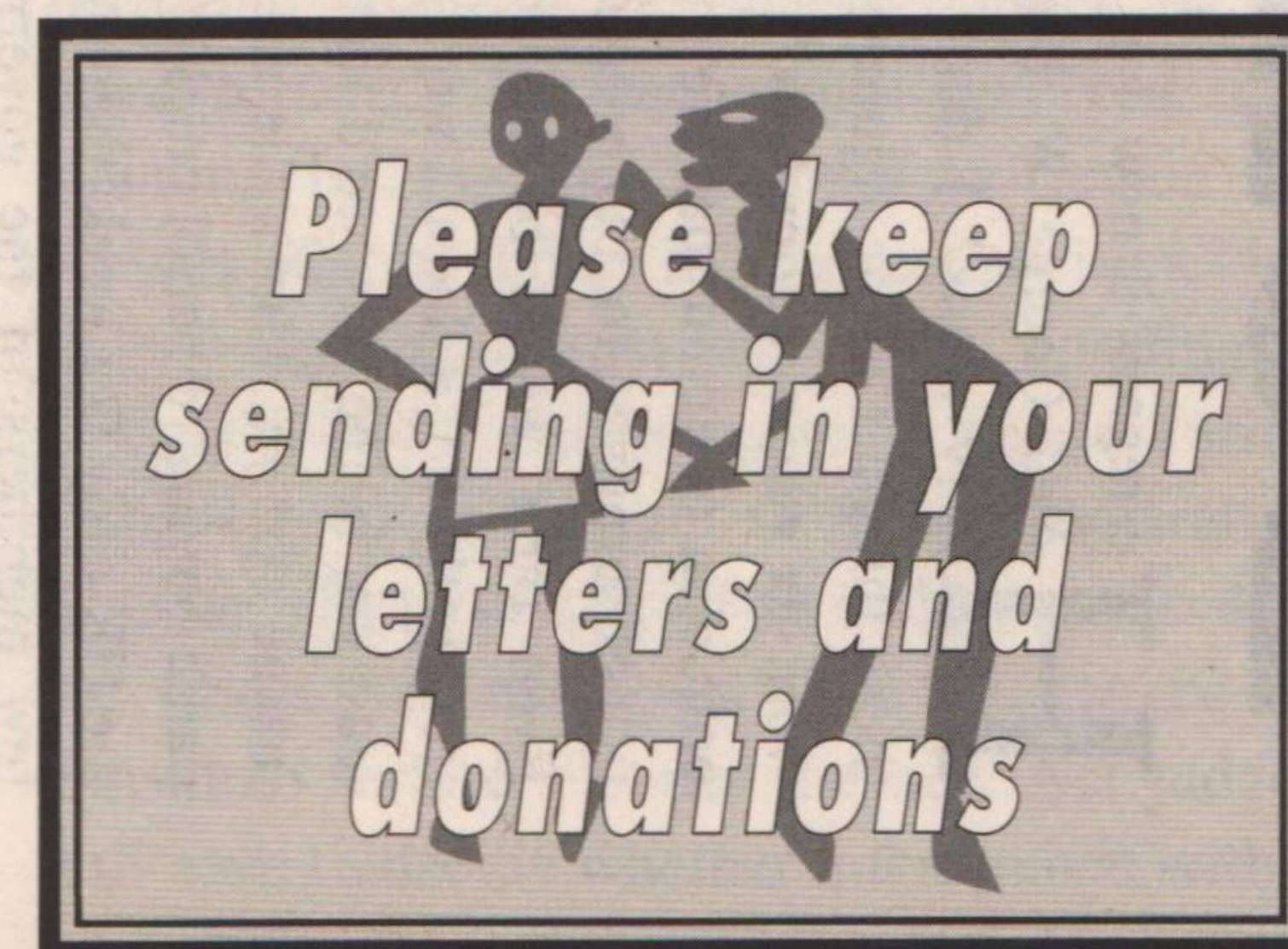


Dear *Freedom*,

I feel not a little put out by Nick S's assault on Nicolas in the current *Freedom*. Nick strikes me as an old fashioned class-struggle Marxist and a century out of date. Proudhon tried his best to relate constructively to Marx and all he got was a flea in his ear. He was forced to the conclusion that (and I quote): "Marx is the tape-worm of socialism." How right he was! Marx and Lenin destroyed socialism in the name of the vanguard party, of which, in different ways, they were both dictators with dogmas to sell.

The dogma of the class struggle is lethal to the cause of freedom. A study of every revolution – Dutch, English, American, French, Russian and Chinese – proves that *in all of them all classes were on both sides*. The critical elements were the goals they pursued, i.e. the defeat of tyranny or imperialism (much the same thing). The goals were therefore political, not economic. Marx could never see this because he was so wholly pre-occupied with economics. What people have yet to realise is that *Karl Marx never wrote a political theory*. This dawned on Lenin when he was in hiding outside St Petersburg in the summer of 1917. That is why, there and then, he wrote *State and Revolution*, to fill the gap.

Peter Cadogan



Revolution in the Psyche

Dear *Freedom*,

In regard to Francis Ellingham's letter (*Freedom*, 29th July) which I read with great interest, I feel compelled to respond to his invitation as to whether there are any anarchists, that like him, see the cause of human suffering being directly linked to the human psyche, and not the more commonly quoted social, political, or economic factors.

He also ends with, "if there are such like minded people out there, what might their solution be?"

Many anarchists find this a very irritating and unnecessary diversion, but I think he is right when he says the problem is in the human psyche.

The Swiss psychologist Alice Miller believes that the cause of all tyranny and suffering have its roots in the first few weeks and months of an infant's life. Her message is clear: "people whose integrity has not been damaged in childhood, will feel no need to harm another person or themselves".

Unless we take responsibility for our own personal burdens, we will make damn sure others will. For it is a tragic fact that parents beat their children in order to escape the emotions stemming from how they were treated by their own parents.

In regard to a solution, I feel the only way to move forward is by not forgetting the past but by embracing it and then letting it go. We hurt others because we too have been hurt. When we feel our hurt we let go of the desire for revenge and in the process learn empathy. I am a survivor of child sexual abuse.

My conscience was taken from me at a very early stage in my development, to re-claim it, was no easy process. But in doing so I learnt the skills to empathise and give birth to the desire for peace.

We systematically prevent ourselves from

this process by seeking targets for our projections of self hatred and loathing. Don't get me wrong, I am not trying to let the government off the hook here, or any other filthy rotten system that's upheld by the use of force, what I am saying is that unless we as individuals can take responsibility for 'our lot' we are likely to end up where we are headed.

One can break the pattern of society, but in that very breaking of it a new one is born which is the same thing in another form. The revolution has never come, because individuals have been too preoccupied in changing institutions and not themselves.

It was Dostoevsky that said that love in reality is a harsh and dreadful thing, compared to love in dreams. The path to peace and freedom is a painful road to travel on, it is one thing to talk of freedom and another thing to live it.

Chris Goodchild



Dear *Freedom*,

Peter Cadogan (letter, 12th August) observes that the human psyche and the human genome evolved during millennia of hunter gathering. But however true that may be, it has little bearing on the question of what needs to be done now.

His idea is that psychological problems such as greed and ambition can be solved, or avoided, by devising a social and political system based on 'the small group principle' of the hunter-gatherers. But the fact that one of the responsibilities of the male hunter-gatherer was to 'fight incursion' shows that the small group principle was not the answer.

Every society tries, through some system or other, to control or eliminate the antisocial tendencies of the human psyche, which stem

from the illusion of being a separate self with separate interests to promote and defend.

The attempt invariably fails, because every society is a projection of that same psyche. Thus all societies are continually disintegrating, empires rise and fall, and the tragic saga of man's attempt to control himself without understanding himself goes on.

Given self-understanding, it is conceivable that one day human beings might make decisions in small groups linked in a worldwide social network as envisioned by Peter Cadogan. But such a form of

organisation could only come into being after self-understanding had dispelled the illusion of separate selfhood. For as long as that illusion persists, self-centred competition will be the order of the day, generating all the evils of capitalism.

There cannot be a social or political solution of psychological problems. Solve the psychological problems, and social and political problems will disappear. But we are so busy competing that we have no time for the necessary self-understanding.

Francis Ellingham

Standards in Education

Dear *Freedom*,

Over the past fortnight there has been much ado over children as young as six years old passing GCSEs and thus being hailed as child prodigies which this country should be proud of. Yet whilst the success of the latest breed of laboratory rat is being constantly rammed down our throats, the other side of the coin is being largely ignored. Indeed, in view of such recent hysteria many questions need to be put to the government regarding the nature of setting 'standards' and tiering the education system. It seems that children are allegedly supposed to benefit from such intense scrutiny, and that these test even allow schools and education authorities to pursue a "from each according to his ability, to each according to his need" policy. So, such government intervention should therefore result in the perfectly healthy socialisation of every child – correct? Only it's funny, because in every county in the UK there appears to be a 'special' school, and it is worth considering to what extent these children have benefitted from such blatant segregation. Question: what is special? The right to be kept as far away from the public

eye as possible? Ask yourself where these human zoos are in your own city, and I guarantee that they will be tucked away neatly behind a huge field, or down a quaint country lane, failing that then in a completely underprivileged area of the city. And call be Ms Cynical, but I don't regard a bunch of patronising bastards forcing teenagers to draw completely irrelevant pictures for a pretty community display education, I call that mental torture. Yet if children fail to meet these government targets, then this is their fate. Ability and potential mean so much more than being capable of reciting multiplication and quotations parrot-style, yet the refusal to conform to this white middle class stereotype of intelligence condemns so many children to a life of constant alienation. Therefore this system which treats children like trained monkeys needs to be totally eradicated, which may upset those who like to parade their kids along with the pedigree dog, but for those who are consigned to being labelled 'mongers' for life, the end of such horrendous polarisation can only be a new beginning.

Sarah Crewe

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Meetings & Events

London Anarchist Forum

A non-factional, open discussion group for all anarchists, and those wanting to discuss anarchism, libertarian theory or related issues. The LAF is run on a collective basis, facilitated but unchaired and based on free speech and informal dialogue. Meets Fridays around 8pm to 10pm at Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL (nearest tube Holborn). Admission free but voluntary contribution is suggested to cover cost of room.

— MEETINGS FOR 2000 —

22nd September No meeting (due to John Zerzan talk)

29th September Prague/IMF debate: post-demo thoughts

6th October Monthly free dialogue

13th October General debate: anarchist bookfairs

14th October Anarchist Bookfair LAF debate: Wot Is Anarchy?

20th October 21st Century Revolution? (invited guests from ACF, SWP and SPGB)

27th October Anarchy and Counter Culture 2 - the great schism, Hippies versus Punks (speaker Steve Ash)

Anyone wanting to give a talk or facilitate a discussion should contact Steve Ash, or any other regular, at a meeting, giving topic and preferred dates. A contact address will be available soon. Monthly free dialogues may be cancelled at short notice and used for scheduled talks if necessary.

LAF@anarchic.co.uk www.trak.to/LAF
Steve Ash for London Anarchist Forum

Café Philosophique presents
Heaven on earth: is utopia possible?

an examination of two utopian communities -

A.S. Neill's Summerhill and Robert Owens's New Lanark

A talk by Bryn Purdy

at Scarthin Books Café, The Promenade,

Cromford, Derbyshire

on Saturday 30th September from 7.30pm

entrance fee of £2 includes refreshments

info: 01629 823272

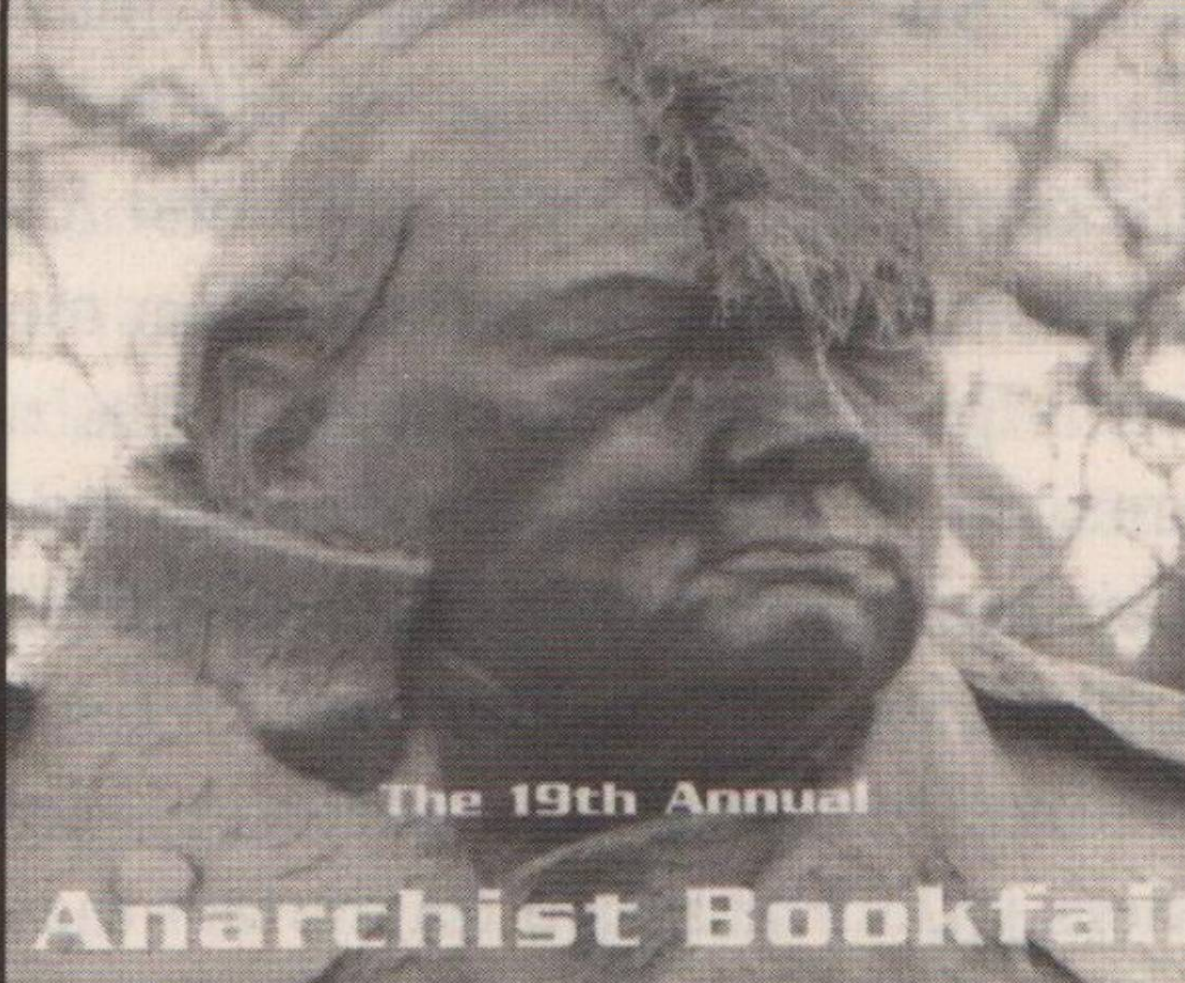
Northern Anarchist Network

Autumn Festival & Conference
Starting on 30th September at 10.30am
Bury Unemployed Centre,
12 Tithebarn Street (off The Rock)
contact: Martin on 0161 707 9652

**Introductory meeting and social for home
educating families and people interested in
alternative methods of education**

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at Friends Meeting House
St Helen's Street, Derby
contact Elaine on 01332 200655

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Saturday 14 October 2000
10am-6pm
Conway Hall, Red Lion Square,
London WC1 (Holborn tube)
Books, CDs, stalls, meetings, videos,
creche, food and loads more
http://freespace.virgin.net/anarchist.bookfair

A talk by John Zerzan

The author of *Future Primitive*, *Elements of Refusal* and *Against Civilization*, anarcho-primitivist writer/activist John Zerzan will be speaking about the green anarchist movement in the US, the recent anti-WTO protest in Seattle and the growing international opposition to the totality of civilisation.

Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London

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