

FREEDOM

anarchist fortnightly

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50p

US presidential election ...

A mighty pain in the butt

Millions of dollars have been spent, and record hot-air emissions have punched an ozone-hole the size of Canada. The nation's remotes have worked overtime to avoid the campaign ads. And next week – at last – the whole goddamn thing will be over. On Tuesday Americans get the chance to vote on a new boss for what they still call 'the greatest democracy on earth'.

'If we stop voting, will they go away?' Car bumper stickers have carried this desperate cry for months. To American readers we can only offer our condolences and the reassurance that in a week's time they won't pretend to care what you think any more. Normal service will be resumed.

And still the pundits can't figure it out. Less than a fifth of the electorate watched Bush and Gore in their last television debate. Less than half bothered

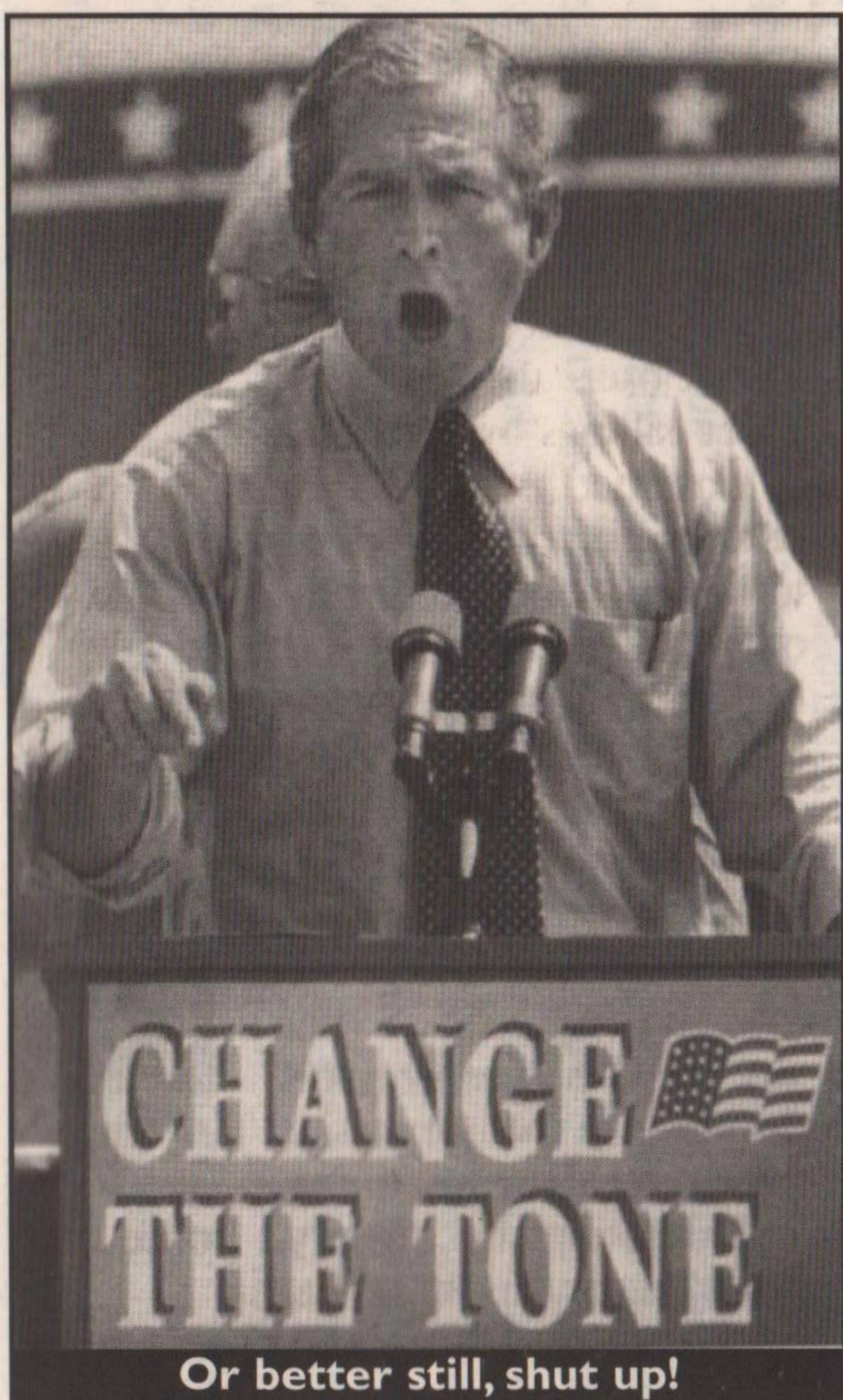
to vote in 1996. The public has never been so closely watched, monitored, consulted. Yet mistrust of politicians and disdain for all their works have never been higher. Academics call this the 'legitimacy paradox'. We call it plain common sense. The pound of butter our grandparents bought at the dairy, quite possibly from the person who made it, is now manufactured far away and sold to us by huge marketing operations. The politics we are fed is just such a consumer product. It is marketed as something appealing to us though it's really designed for the benefit of the multinational machines that churn it out. George W. Bush has been described as "a corporation disguised as a human being", but they're all the same. The old idea (never more than a pleasing fancy) that our bosses are just like us is as much part of the past as the old dairies, and both vanished years ago. Bore and Gush are products we are expected to choose between.

The head of a big US bank was once asked whether the cash he had spent getting senators elected had influenced their behaviour. "I certainly hope so", he replied. A favoured Republican soundbite this year, to go alongside 'Compassionate Conservatism' and 'Hang 'em High' (okay, we made that one up), was 'Renewing America's Purpose'. This was strangely honest, because what is America's purpose if not business? Business has bankrolled the election, business will call in its debts. Bush has raised over \$300 million, Gore \$252 million; and a hint for the future comes from Bush's successful campaign to become Texan governor in 1994. To overthrow the incumbent needed big money, and the pharmaceutical industry gave it. In return, the powers of ordinary people to

sue the medicine-makers were severely reduced. Expect a Bush White House to press for new caps on litigation against the manufacturers of tobacco, guns and oil as well. Gore has pocketed tidy sums from lawyers, so expect him to make litigation easier. Who says there's nothing at stake in this election? If you're a rich businessman there's a lot. No wonder over 80% of people have woken up to the fact that "government is pretty much run by a few big interests looking out for themselves".

So why, even last time round, did 49% of them still turn out to support these clowns? Why do 90% of them still insist that the American democratic system is all done in the best possible taste? And here's the problem. Pain in the butt though it is to sit through this lunacy, it's a bearable pain if only the bosses followed the ancient advice to 'do no harm'. But harm to other people is the boss's calling card. It's not their fault, they're puppets of a machine that's bigger than them. And it's not inevitable. While voter-turnout and membership of political parties has plummeted, political participation throughout the west has actually increased (they didn't tell you that, did they?). More than ever people protest, join boycotts, try to take power away from politicians. So let the clowns have their circus this time round while we build links between the disjointed areas of our political lives and learn new ways of living for ourselves, without bosses. Being cynical is only a start. "Government is not the solution to our problems; government is the problem". The speaker was Ronald Reagan, the place his 1980 inauguration as president. Empty words from his mouth maybe, but true words nevertheless. Let's get rid of government.

RSG



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Freedom

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The armed fist



An armed officer patrols in Nottingham

On Monday 16th October the biennial British Crime Survey was published. It revealed that crime rates have fallen by 10% overall in the last two years. Burglaries were down by 21%; car theft and violent crime had fallen also. Moreover, contra the furore whipped up by Hague and Widdecombe on behalf of the Norfolk farmer Tony Martin (a furore that revealed that, for some members of our 'inclusive' society, it's okay to blast working class kids in the back with a shotgun at close range, as they try and run away from you – makes a change from foxes and hares after all) rural areas in England and Wales experienced the lowest levels of most recorded crimes. Only two forms of crime were 'up': 'stranger' violence – where victim and attacker don't know each other – was up by 29%; robbery was up by 14%. The statistics here are significant. Crime has fallen away generally because of increases in home and car security – at least crime in nice leafy middle class areas and in town centre car parks has. The only crime significantly on the up – stranger violence – is primarily linked to drink related assaults, and occurs predominantly between working class males. Nor is it the case that property crime has fallen in working class areas. It is simply that crime – particularly property crime – has fallen in commercial areas and

middle class suburbs due to a combination of greater knowledge of personal security, CCTV, and increased visible police presence. Crime has become now something the poor do to each other – and hence not of concern to the likes of Jack Straw. Working class crime is generally unreported – hence the phenomenon that occurred of crime rates falling while fear of crime rose (a related BCS survey revealed one third of those surveyed believed that crime rates had risen between 1997 and 1999 and that one in ten were so concerned about crime that it affected their quality of life). Fear of crime is, in part, an irrational fear – one happily manipulated by our dear Home Secretary (a man so right wing that, as Paddy Ashdown's diaries reveal, the Liberal Democrats refused to sanction a possible coalition government if Straw were to be Home Secretary) to increase social atomisation by having us all afraid of each other, and hence believing that our only protection from each other is the state – but a fear also that reflects levels of unreported crime. The BCS survey results as regards robbery were, we were told, not to be taken all that seriously. According to Paul Wiles, research director at the Home Office, robbery is relatively rare. The apparent rise has been driven by reports from fifteen teenagers. "The 14% increase would be reduced to 2% without [their] contribution. While these incidents might be viewed as bullying, they do meet the legal criteria of robbery." So there you have it. From the horse's mouth, so to speak. Robbery – like a politician's candour and rocking horse manure – is rare. Worth remembering the next time some grey-suited and grey-faced Home Office minion tries to stir up a racist panic (and justify police swamping of inner city areas) by making hysterical and inaccurate comments about mugging and street crime.

Somewhat inconveniently, less than a week later it was revealed that foot patrols in the St Ann's and Meadows Estates in Nottingham were routinely (and openly) armed with Walther P900 pistols, ostensibly in response to a "boom in gun related crime" in the area. The *Guardian* crime team, particularly slavish adherents of the Home Office/Scotland Yard line, dutifully tried to whip up a 'shooting spree' to justify this, but, not surprisingly (crime rates have – as we've just worked out – fallen) could only come up with nine incidents across the whole of England and Wales (and only one in Nottingham) that fitted the bill, which might suggest that the armed patrols in Nottingham, and the mobile equivalents in Manchester, Liverpool, Harlesden *et al*, might have some other explanation. Here then, is a suggestion as to what that might be.

Up to the mid 1970s, the capitalist class's politics revolved around a strategy of exploitation by consent. With the strike wave which hit the Heath government, its subsequent electoral defeat, and the level of working class desubordination (to quote Ralph Milliband) which hit the Wilson and Callaghan governments which followed (and particularly the

refusal of incomes policies and the level of unofficial strike action) the bosses decided to abandon consent in favour of coercion – via mass unemployment and strong arm policing of industrial disputes. Consequent upon a policy of mass unemployment and deliberate (disciplining) immiseration, was the creation of a 'surplus population' of unemployed. A House of Lords Select Committee in 1982 observed that: "We believe unemployment to be among the causes of ill-health, mortality, crime and civil disorder". From Bristol in 1980, through London, Liverpool, Manchester and elsewhere in 1981 and 1985, Cardiff, Tyneside and Oxford in 1991, and Bradford in 1995, the creation of social apartheid through a combination of deliberate disadvantage and paramilitary policing was violently rejected by large numbers of black, white and Asian youth. Rioting became, as perceived by the ruling class, a form of class struggle outside the workplace. The issue for the state therefore was that if poverty and alienation were unlikely to be alleviated – and if poverty was in fact seen as a necessary incentive to low paid work – how to introduce the discipline of the workplace within the workless community? One method can be seen in the steady growth of the UK prison population, currently increasing at a rate of a thousand per month, with a new prison required every fortnight and the prison population at an all time high of 64,000. Moreover, from the introduction of the 1982 Criminal Justice Act – undermining the provisions of the Children's and Young Persons Act 1969 – there has been a push to commit people to prison, or youth custody, at a younger age, and, under New Labour, to rush them through the juvenile courts more quickly. Combined with this has come greater display – and use (a study by Jacobs

and Britt in 1979 examined police-caused homicides from 1961 to 1970 in each American state and computed the population at risk per year. They found that the "most important conclusion was that the unequal states were most likely to have the largest number of police caused homicides". For similar info in the UK see my article 'Shooting to Kill' in *Black Flag* no. 219) – of police force in working class communities, such that for some communities the police appear as an occupying force. There is in all this, as in so many other aspects of working class life over the past twenty years, a return to the brutal class rule of an earlier era. As the sociologists Bordua and Reiss put it, "the paramilitary form of early police bureaucracy was a response not only or even primarily to crime *per se*, but to the possibility of riotous disorder. Not crime and danger but the 'criminal' and 'dangerous classes' as part of the urban social structure led to the formation of uniformed and military organised police" (Bordua and Reiss in *The Police*, Wiley and Co., 1967). What goes around comes around. The presence of armed police routinely on the streets of the inner cities bears no relation to crime rates but to a recognition by the New Labour establishment that those communities who've gained nothing under the bipartisan anti-working class politics of the Thatcher/Major/Blair years yet require the discipline of force. For those of us who recognise that, as Alexander Berkman put it, that "the armed fist of government is always at the service of the masters, and that fist gets into action the moment capital feels its profit threatened" the task ahead of us is to work to make the worst fears the likes of Blair and Branson harbour of the 'dangerous classes' a permanent reality.

Nick S.

Mad cows or mad system?



Burning the corpses of cattle infected with BSE

At a cost of £27 million, the Phillips report into the BSE scandal which was published last week had to be thick to justify the expenditure, and it was. Sixteen fat volumes recorded the testimony of 333 witnesses and 630 written statements. The report into the spread of 'mad cow

disease' to human beings, which has so far killed 80 people (and which will continue to kill in unknown numbers) personally criticised 28 ministers, civil servants and assorted experts, for negligence or for misleading the enquiry. In particular, Kenneth (continued on page 2)

US election special

He said it!

"This is a world of uncertainty. It's a dangerous world. It's a world full of madmen, terror and missiles ..."

George W. Bush

(continued from page 1)

Clarke (who was in charge of the Department of Health when the crisis began) apparently misremembered his own role in the affair (how much consideration did he actually give it at the time? Not as much as he claimed).

But more to blame, according to the report, was a culture of secrecy, delay and incompetence. The whole Whitehall machine, politicians and civil servants together, kept consumers in the dark about the potential health risks which arose from feeding beef

products to cows until 1996, when they finally had to admit that BSE could jump the species barrier to become new variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (vCJD). Until then, "officials and ministers followed an approach whose object was sedation", to the extent of imposing a news blackout when cattle began to die in large numbers. There was, after all, "the possible effect on exports and the political implications" to consider. Ho hum. And so it was that the public were repeatedly reassured that beef was safe, with Secretary of State for Agriculture John Gummer notoriously forcefeeding his four-year old daughter beefburgers for the press cameras' benefit. So it was that the ban on cattle being fed other bits of cattle was made but not enforced.

Despite all this, however, the judge who wrote the report maintains that in this "national tragedy", there were "no scapegoats or villains". Lord Phillips, besides agreeing to the present government's suggestion that he shouldn't examine any material relating to the years after 1996 (which might implicate the current Labour government as well as the last Tory one) simply cannot believe that "in their heart of hearts" the people he criticises really believed that BSE was a threat to human health. Unfortunately, there isn't space in his 16 fat volumes to explain why he decided to take such a charitable view of their behaviour. Nor does he go very far into examining why renderers, slaughterers and farmers decided to turn herbivores into cannibalistic carnivores in the first place. Obviously his

lordship might say that an examination of the profit system and how it works against the interests of all of us who have to live within it was outside his terms of reference. More likely, being a very senior judge and QC, he wouldn't understand what we were getting at even if we did ask him to make such an examination.

So, ultimately, what has that £27 million achieved? Nothing will bring back the past and future victims of this terrible disease, and many people will suspect that nothing will be any different next time, when a new crisis arises in a different department. As one relative of a sufferer said after the report was released, "there have been several theories about the BSE epidemic, but to the families there are only two theories – cock-up and conspiracy". The Phillips report tended to the first view. More likely is that it was both, a monumental cock-up covered up by a considerable conspiracy. As another relative said, "the government people at the enquiry – I've never seen such a bunch of arrogant people in my life. The way they conducted themselves in front of us had to be seen to be believed". And the whole conspiracy, of bosses covering up for each other, continues. Nor is it a respecter of political party. Labour Agriculture Secretary Nick Brown was quick to join Phillips in assuring doubters that the Tory government "did not lie to the public about BSE". Presumably he will also support the judge's protests that "I don't believe this report is a whitewash". Well they would say that, wouldn't they? But that doesn't mean we have to believe them.



'Please, Cordelia darling ... eat it for daddy'

Marxism and 'Anarchism': a reply to the SWP

— Part Three —

The SWP in their article 'Marxism and Anarchism' (*Socialist Worker*, 16th September 2000) argue that: "So there is always a battle of ideas within the working class. That is why political organisation is crucial. Socialists seek to build a revolutionary party not only to try to spread the lessons from one struggle to another. They also want to organise those people who most clearly reject capitalism into a force that can fight for their ideas inside the working class as a whole. Such a party is democratic because its members constantly debate what is happening in today's struggles and the lessons that can be applied from past ones."

That, in itself, is something most anarchists would agree with. That is why they build specific anarchist organisations which discuss and debate politics, current struggles, past struggles and revolutions and so on. In Britain there are three national anarchist federations (the Anarchist Federation, the Solidarity Federation and the Class War Federation) as well as numerous local groups and regional federations.

However, an organisation is not democratic because it debates. It is democratic only if the membership actually decides the policy of the organisation. That the SWP fail to mention this is significant and places doubt on whether their organisation is democratic in fact. The reason why democracy in the SWP may not be all that it should be can be found in their comment that: "It is also centralised, as it arrives at decisions which everyone acts on."

However, this is not centralisation. Centralisation is when the centre decides everything and the membership follow those orders. That the membership may be in a position to elect those at the centre does not change the fact that the membership is simply expected to follow orders. It is the organisational principle of the army or police, not of a free society. That this is

the principle of Leninism can be seen from Trotsky's comment that the "statues [of the party] should express the leadership's organised distrust of the members, a distrust manifesting itself in vigilant control from above over the Party" (quoted by M. Brinton in *The Bolsheviks and Workers' Control*, page xi). Thus the centre controls the membership, not vice versa.

In *What is to be Done?* Lenin discussed "the confusion of ideas concerning the meaning of democracy." He dismisses the idea of self-management as 'Primitive Democracy'. He uses the example of the early British unions, where workers "thought that it was an indispensable sign of democracy for all the members to do all the work of managing the unions; not only were all questions decided by the vote of all the members, but all the official duties were fulfilled by all the members in turn." He considered "such a conception of democracy" as "absurd" and saw it as historical necessity that it was replaced by 'representative institutions' and 'full-time officials'. In other words, the Leninist tradition rejects self-management in favour of hierarchical structures in which power is centralised in the hands of 'full-time officials' and 'representative institutions'. In contrast, Bakunin argued that trade unions which ended 'primitive democracy' and replaced it with representative institutions became bureaucratic and "simply left all decision-making to their committees ... In this manner power gravitated to the committees, and by a species of fiction characteristic of all governments the committees substituted their own will and their own ideas for that of the membership." Who was right can quickly be seen from radical and pro-active nature of the British TUC leadership. Ironically, the SWP always bemoan trade union bureaucracies betraying workers in struggle yet promote an organisational structure that ensures that power

flows to the centre and into the hands of bureaucrats.

At best, Leninism reduces 'democracy' to mean that the majority designates its rulers, copied from the model of bourgeois parliamentary democracy. In practice it is drained of any real meaning and quickly becomes a veil thrown over the unlimited power of the rulers. The base does not run the organisation just because once a year it elects delegates who designate the central committee, no more than the people are sovereign in a parliamentary-type republic because they periodically elect deputies who designate the government. That the central committee is designated by a 'democratically elected' congress makes no difference once it is elected, it is de facto and de jure the absolute ruler of the organisation. It has complete (statutory) control over the body of the Party (and can dissolve the base organisations, kick out militants, etc.).

Therefore it is ironic that the SWP promote themselves as supporters of democracy as it is anarchists who support the 'primitive democracy' (self-management) contemptuously dismissed by Lenin. With their calls for centralisation, it is clear that SWP still follow Lenin, wishing to place decision-making at the centre of the organisation, in the hands of leaders, in the same way the police, army and bureaucratic trade unions do. Anarchists reject this vision as non-socialist and instead argue for the fullest participation in decision making by those subject to those decisions. Only in this way can government – inequality in power – be eliminated from society.

Just to stress the point, anarchists are not opposed to people making decisions and everyone who took part in making the decision acting on them. Such a system is not 'centralised', however, when the decisions flow from the bottom-up and are made by mandated

delegates, accountable to the people who mandated them. It is centralised when it is decided upon by the leadership and imposed upon the membership. Thus the issue is not whether we organise or not organise, nor whether we co-ordinate joint activity or not, it is a question of how we organise and co-ordinate – from the bottom up or from the top down.

The SWP argue that 'unity' is essential: "Without unity around decisions there would be no democracy – minorities would simply ignore majority decisions."

Anarchists are in favour of free agreement and so argue that minorities should, in general, go along with the majority decisions of the groups and federations they are members of. That is, after all, the point behind federalism – to co-ordinate activity. Minorities can, after all, leave an association. However, we do not make a fetish of this, recognising that, in certain circumstances, the minority must and should ignore majority decisions. For example, if the majority of an organisation decide on a policy which the minority thinks is disastrous then why should they follow the majority? For example, in 1914, the representatives of the German Social Democratic Party voted for war credits. The anti-war minority of that group went along with the majority in the name of 'democracy'. Would the SWP argue that they were right to do so? Similarly, if a majority of a community decided, say, that homosexuals were to be arrested, would the SWP argue that minorities must not ignore that decision? We hope not.

In practice, of course, the SWP know that the majority of an organisation cannot be consulted on every issue and so what they actually mean is that the decisions of the central committee (or government) should be followed at all times.

In other words, the decisions of a minority (the

(continued on page 4)

Prague: the Manchester inquest

On 4th October about 150 people gathered at Manchester's Friends Meeting House to discuss the Prague protests by anti-capitalists the week before. There were two speakers – one seemed to represent the libertarian wing, the other was from the state socialist wing. The chair was one of the regulars at the Manchester Riotous Assembly.

It was claimed by the chair that the Prague protests had been a success, because the action on Tuesday 26th September had forced an early finish on the World Bank/IMF summit. Not only was business curtailed at the conference, and some delegates failed to turn up on the Wednesday, but

the opera planned for the delegates and statesman had to be cancelled.

The libertarian speaker spoke in detailed terms, giving an eye-witness account of events he witnessed on the Tuesday and Wednesday. Carol, the state socialist speaker, tried to make out that the world had moved, not only for her but for all of humanity. The libertarian tried to give a factual account, limited by the obvious practical problems during such actions of not being able to be everywhere at once. The state socialist, by contrast, was all-knowing, addressing us in grand generalities about the enthusiasm of ordinary people everywhere for the cause of anti-capitalism – from Chile and Argentina to Market Street, just off Piccadilly, she would have us believe folk are frothing at the mouth to lend their support to the aims of anti-capitalism. Such oratory: I've never seen owt like it.

Witness accounts

Of course some of the smaller trot groups were more in tune with the practicalities – Workers Power and the Revolutionary Communist Group for example. One spokesperson from the Workers Power Group explained how his members worked with German and Czech anarchists to break through the police lines, and he complained that not enough had gone to Prague from Manchester.

It was noted that one of the coloured 'blocks' (I think it was pink) did breach the police lines and that two people got inside the congress centre. The

yellow march had fought the police for two hours over control of a bridge. This group contained the Italian contingent 'Basta' (enough).

There seems to have been 10,000 protesters and about 11,000 police. Some 600 demonstrators were arrested, mostly Czechs and Germans. A leaflet issued afterwards claimed that "protesters against the World Bank/IMF summit in Prague this week are being beaten, tear-gassed, tied up for hours on end and sexually harassed in prison cells in the Czech Republic, following two days of severe police brutality on the streets of the city". The leaflet also claimed that around twenty from the UK are among those detained.

One of the activists, who had been among those delegated to speak to the World Bank officers during the protests, urged us not to participate in future dialogues if these are proposed. She claimed the dialogues with the authorities were

not helpful.

Wanted: guides for the gullible

To my mind the most cutting comment came from a well-known local activist who had been in Prague for about a week. She was distressed that too many groups had turned up in Prague and "expected to be told what to do". These herd-like political protesters wanted to be given instructions, she said.

This sheep culture is clearly ingrained in the body politic of state socialist parties. Seemingly they can't tramp around, clap or even cheer without some form of direction or orchestration from their party commissars.

Such comical commissars were evident at the Manchester meeting. Middle-aged, mostly balding and pleasingly plump, such figures delude their followers with grandiloquence.

BB

Lay off



Anne's home

Camden Council in north London will decide in the next few weeks whether Anne Smith, who has lived in an old Ford Consul in the same Chiswick street for over ten years, should be moved on. Her neighbours have leapt to her defence, describing how she cleans up rubbish and recycles their empty bottles for them. "She is fiercely independent. She does not even ask for our indulgence. And why should she? She was here before us and her car is her home", one told the *Guardian* (21st October 2000). Quite right. She's harming no-one, just living her own life in her own way. Camden Council, lay off.

Johnny M.

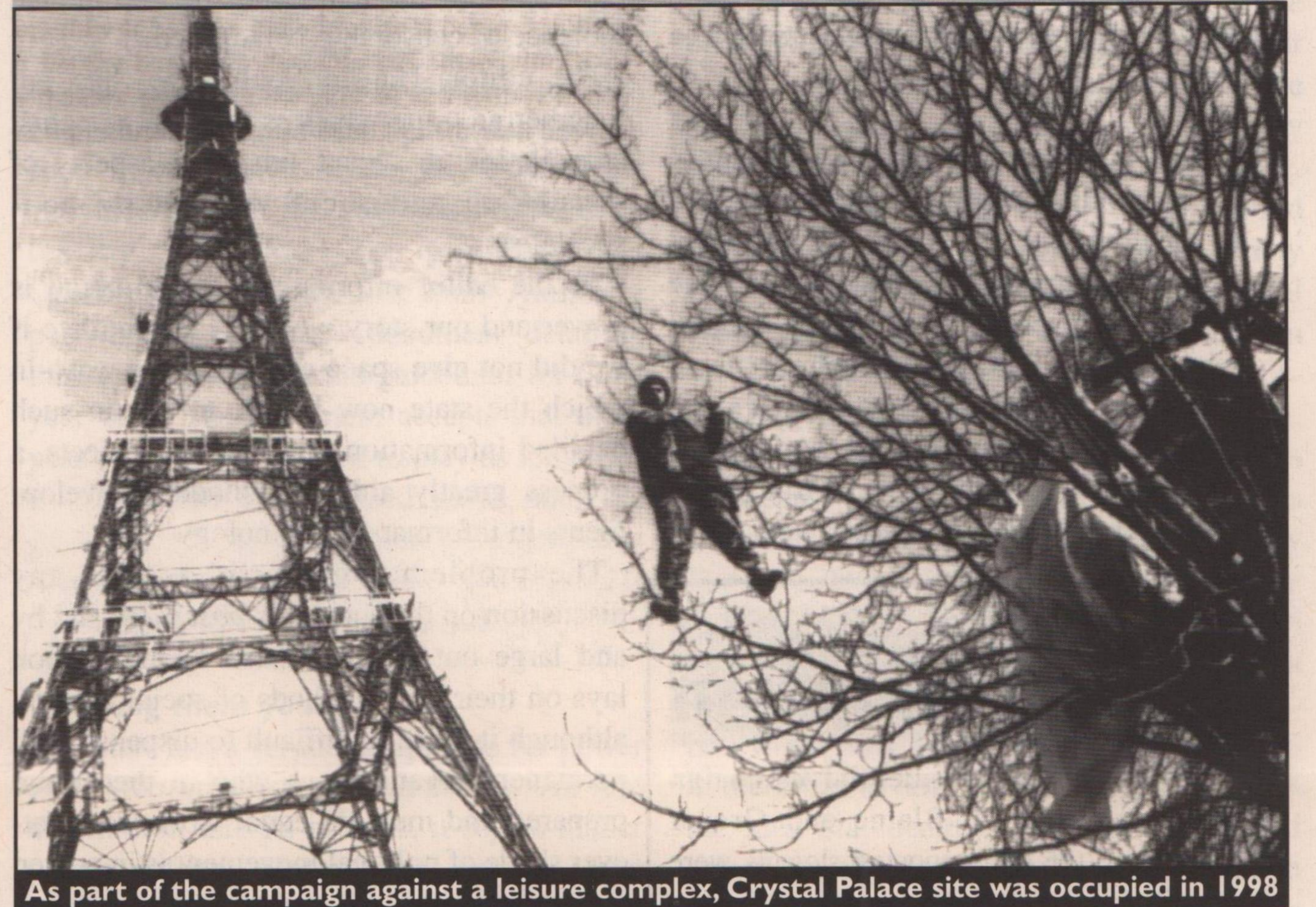
Murder

James Hanratty was killed by the state in 1962, after conviction for what had become known as the A6 murder. There have been strong reasons ever since for thinking that police got the wrong man, and the court of appeal has ordered that his body be exhumed for DNA tests.

The family don't want it, campaigners say it will prove nothing, but some law lord insists that "if someone has been executed for an offence for which he is not guilty, that is a matter of very great public concern". No, your worshipfulness, we beg to differ. If (as seems likely) an innocent man was hanged, you should be ashamed. But it is certain that a man was executed, whatever he did or didn't do. You and all the rest of your kind should find enough cause for shame in that simple fact, why look any further?

Johnny M.

Park plan to go ahead



As part of the campaign against a leisure complex, Crystal Palace site was occupied in 1998

To the surprise of nobody at all, Bromley Borough Council in South London last month gave the final go-ahead to plans to build a multi-million pound leisure and retail complex over the site of the old Crystal Palace. For two years, widespread protest within the community (including the occupation of the site) has held the development up, and it will continue when work starts. "The development is expected to provide

more than three hundred jobs", said Stuart Macmillan, chief planner at the council, "as well as affordable leisure opportunities for local people". What's it going to provide for the council though, Stuart, and for councillors? How kind of you to be so concerned for 'local people', even though they overwhelmingly oppose this attack on their historic park. But local people still say no thanks.

TC



COPY DEADLINE
The next issue of Freedom will be dated 18th November, and the last day for copy intended for this issue will be first post on Thursday 9th November. 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).

Censorship and Social Control



The Raven number 41 on *Censorship and Social Control*, Freedom Press, £3 (post free worldwide)

This is a very thoughtful and thought-provoking compilation, but before dealing with the individual contributions I must commend to you the cover of the magazine incorporating a most sinister drawing by Arthur Moysé, which is one of his best compositions with its stealthy figures and hands over mouths and censorious fingers pointing upwards. It was a true stroke of genius to have chosen this drawing for it

US election special Negative campaign

In the 1884 US presidential campaign between James G. Blaine and Grover Cleveland, the two opposing slogans were 'Blaine, Blaine, James G. Blaine, the continental liar from the state of Maine' and 'Ma, Ma, where's my Pa? Gone to the White House, ha ha ha' (President Cleveland had an illegitimate child). Government has always been a dirty game, and will remain so as long as we continue allowing government to happen.

RSG

(continued from page 2)

leaders) should be obeyed by the majority. Very 'democratic'.

Moreover, those, like the SWP, who are part of the Bolshevik tradition have no problem with minorities ignoring majority decisions – as long as the minority in question is the leadership of the vanguard party. For example, the Bolsheviks usually overthrew the results of provincial soviet elections that went against them (Samuel Farber, *Before Stalinism*, pages 22-24). They abolished by decree soldiers' councils and the election of officers in the Red Army. They replaced self-managed factory committees with appointed, autocratic managers (M. Brinton, *The Bolsheviks and Workers Control*). All this before the start of the Russian Civil War. Similarly, Lenin and Trotsky happily replaced the democratically elected leaders of trade unions with their followers when it suited them.

As Trotsky argued, you cannot place 'the workers' right to elect representatives above the party. As if the Party were not entitled to assert its dictatorship even if that dictatorship clashed with the passing moods of the workers' democracy!' He continued by stating the "Party is obliged to maintain its dictatorship ... regardless of temporary vacillations even in the working class ... The dictatorship does not base itself at every moment on the formal principle of a workers' democracy."

Of course, such a position follows naturally

represents all the murk and fog and hidden violence of censorship personified.

The editor, Harold Sculthorpe, has put together an issue which is the first anarchist compilation in recent times on aspects of censorship and social control by non-specialists.

As the editor informs us: "Information is power and our story would be incomplete if we did not give space equally to the ways in which the state now is able to obtain such detailed information on all of its subjects, a process greatly aided by modern developments in information technology."

The problem, of course, is that any discussion on the subject is *post facto* and by and large out of date. Each administration lays on their own methods of social control, although it must be difficult to dispense with permanent organisations who in theory are prepared and must do equal work for whatever shade of political movement is in power.

Anarchists are, of course, opposed to all forms of secretive attempts to control either the individual or society. This newspaper used to be 'surveyed' extensively in the past. In the '60s copies of this paper were intercepted as a routine measure.

The problem is that every bit of information can be used against the individual. We do not

from Lenin's theory from *What is to be Done?* that "the working class, exclusively by their own effort, is able to develop only trade union consciousness ... The theory of socialism [i.e. Marxism], however, grew out of the philosophic, historical and economic theories that were elaborated by the educated representatives of the propertied classes, the intellectuals ... the theoretical doctrine of Social-Democracy arose quite independently of the spontaneous growth of the labour movement; it arose as a natural and inevitable outcome of ideas among the revolutionary socialist intelligentsia." This meant that "Social Democratic [i.e. socialist] consciousness ... could only be brought to them from without."

For Leninists, if the workers act in ways opposed to by the party, then the party has the right to repress the workers – they simply do not (indeed, cannot) understand what is required of them. They cannot reach 'socialist consciousness' by their own efforts. Leninism contains within itself the justification for eliminating democracy within the revolution. In other words, the SWP's 'Battle of Ideas' becomes, once the vanguard is in power, just a battle: "Without revolutionary coercion directed against the avowed enemies of the workers and peasants, it is impossible to break down the resistance of these exploiters. On the other hand, revolutionary coercion is bound to be employed towards the wavering and unstable elements among the masses themselves"

live in an anarchist society, people make a living the best way they can and if those in power, or in control of pockets of real or illusory power, wish to curtail a person's ability to make a living and who is put on a 'black list' because of activities or minority opinions or even in anarchist terms 'minus one' opinions then clearly that is injustice and is ruinous to the individual or the social group.

Although Roger Scruton's division, referred to in this *Raven* of 'Primitive Censorship' and 'Punitive Censorship' is adequate but only looking from the State's point of view, there is a third category the unofficial (non-governmental) censorship exercised by business firms and even by individuals or all three, combined. This could include a big corporation withholding or falsifying information on matters of great public interest to the more trivial but just as irritating, such as the recorded (and ungrammatical) sentence on your telephone that you were called at a certain time but the caller withheld their (sic) number.

Although this last example probably contains all the essence of censorship and social control at its simplest level. Somebody knows who you are and where you can be found without your knowing who that person is, this implies a threat of sorts and is underwritten by a telephone company which should not be partial in the least.

As for the electronic curtailment the issue is far from clear. One interesting fact is mentioned by Frank Fisher that if the censor will have its way and their 'filtering' methods succeed important archives will become inaccessible as one server after another buckles under. In Fisher's words "Even Apple, famed for their 'Think Different' advertising campaign, knuckled under; their National Grid for Learning services page is headed: Secure, fast and filtered."

Key words encountered by the filtering system cause it to make the section 'disappear'. An amusing story is quoted as told by Heather Couper about a schoolboy

who cannot access her astronomy site as the filtering software of his school blocks it, because she talks about 'naked eye observations' of the night sky.

In another important article Lisa Forrell refers to the important civil liberties issue where centuries old tradition is now threatened by quoting the "classic case of *Entick v Carrington* in 1765" which condemned warrants authorising intrusion into property by a secretary of state. "Back in 1765, Mr Entick's eloquent lawyer pleaded: 'If they [the search warrants] have been granted by the minister, then it is high time to put an end to them; for if they are held to be legal, the liberty of the country is at an end. Ransacking a man's secret drawers and boxes to come at evidence against him is like racking a body to come at his secret thoughts'."

The volume is full of information of this kind on many different topics. Might is right can only explain the principle of how a spying operation which is conducted on Menwith Hill is allowed to continue run by the United States National Security Agency without even a valid lease. Just imagine how quickly the bailiffs would move in if it was just an ordinary squat. The lease to the US government has finally expired in 1997, yet the "base continues to expand, without approval ... nobody knows on what legal grounds it now functions".

There are articles on various topics by Arthur Moysé whose ghastly aunt gave one and all 'the mouth'; by Rufus Segar whose marvellous covers for *Anarchy* disappeared from the bound volumes; by Mary Naylor reminding us of religious taboos; a remarkable poem by Pat Arrowsmith in response to a statement in 1985 that an MI5 agent had been submitting regular reports on her; and a short story by John Moore who does for the circus what Ray Bradbury did in *Fahrenheit 451* for our beloved firemen. The editor has done a marvellous job. I hope that *The Raven* number 41 will have the widest possible circulation in this country and abroad.

John Rety

(Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 24, page 170).

Significantly, of the 17,000 camp detainees on whom statistical information was available on 1st November 1920, peasants and workers constituted the largest groups, at 39% and 34% respectively. Similarly, of the 40 913 prisoners held in December 1921 (of whom 44% had been committed by the Cheka) nearly 84% were illiterate or minimally educated, clearly, therefore, either peasants or workers (George Leggett, *The Cheka: Lenin's Political Police*, page 178). Needless to say, Lenin failed to mention this aspect of his system in *The State and Revolution*.

It is hard to combine these facts and the SWP's comments with the claim that the "workers' state" is an instrument of class rule – after all, Lenin is acknowledging that coercion will be exercised against members of the working class as well. The question of course arises – who decides what a 'wavering' or 'unstable' element is? Given their comments on the role of the party and the need for the party to assume power, it will mean in practice whoever rejects the government's decisions (for example, strikers, local soviets who reject central decrees and instructions, workers who vote for anarchists or parties other than the Bolshevik party in elections to soviets, unions and so on, socialists and anarchists, etc.). Given a hierarchical system, Lenin's comment is simply a justification for state repression of its enemies (including elements within, or even the

whole of, the working class).

It could be argued, however, that workers could use the soviets to recall the government. However, this fails for two reasons.

Firstly, the Leninist state will be highly centralised, with power flowing from the top down. This means that in order to revoke the government, all the soviets in all parts of the country must, at the same time, recall their delegates and organise a national congress of soviets (which, we note, is not in permanent session). The local soviets are bound to carry out the commands of the central government (to quote the Soviet constitution of 1918 – they are to "carry out all orders of the respective higher organs of the soviet power"). Any independence on their part would be considered 'wavering' or an expression of 'unstable' natures and so subject to 'revolutionary coercion'. In a highly centralised system, the means of accountability is reduced to the usual bourgeois level – vote in the general election every few years (which, in any case, can be annulled by the government if it dislikes the 'passing moods' expressed by them).

Secondly, 'revolutionary coercion' against 'wavering' elements does not happen in isolation. It will encourage critical workers to keep quiet in case they, too, are deemed 'unstable' and become subject to 'revolutionary' coercion. As a government policy it can have no other effect than deterring democracy.

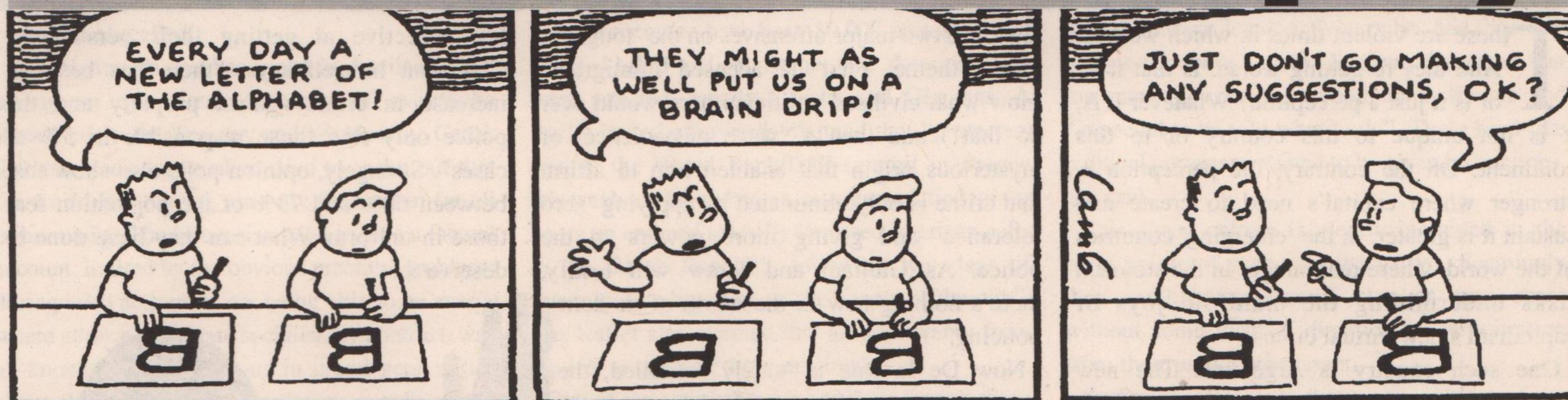
(continued on page 5)

New Labour, like all governments, doesn't like play. Proper plays in proper theatres are okay, but not the anarchic play of children and fun-loving adults. They consider play, self-indulgent, purposeless and trivial. They are determined to drive it out of schools and put in its place "structured learning activities with identifiable learning goals". They control the schools, they control the curriculum and they control the teachers and increasingly they are controlling very young children's lives.

'Play is out, early learning is in ...'

Was the *Guardian's* headline summary of government policy as revealed by education minister, Margaret Hodge and chief inspector, Chris Woodhead (23rd June 1999). The nature of government is to extend its control until it meets resistance. Young children have little power in this society and increasingly their lives are subject to government controls. The state is stealthily extending downwards the years children spend trapped in formal schooling. In most European countries formal schooling starts at six or seven. Here school used to begin at five but over the last decade the number of four-year-olds in Britain's schools has increased by 40%. Now Margaret Hodge has pledged that by 2002 two-thirds of three-year-olds will be attending nursery schools. Because schools are financed according to the number of bums they can attract onto seats they are pulling in kids from an ever younger age. Consequently neighbourhood playgroups, which encourage social play rather than individualised, directed learning are losing out. With younger and younger kids crammed into schools, two thousand playgroups have been forced to close since 1997 (*Independent*, 30th March 2000). Anxious parents are keen to shove their kids onto the formal learning ladder as early as possible, hoping for a head start in the examination race. In the words of Ms Hodge: "Many parents see reception classes as good preparation for school by encouraging discipline and developing early literacy and numeracy skills" (*ibid*). So school is preparation for work and infancy is preparation for school. There is no place in the New Labour vision for children to be

Freedom is Childsplay



encouraged to create and enjoy their own activities, to formulate their own goals and ideals. Learning must be directed, controlled, tested, assessed and graded, otherwise there might be anarchy.

'The Devil makes work for idle hands'

The assumption shared by government, most parents and teachers and adults in general is that if individuals, especially children are not directed they will at best waste their time and at worst be destructive. This is the very essence of authority. Without space to dream and imagine, to play, we monotonously trudge the same lonely furrow, cut off from each other, from creative activity and even from our own real selves. The teacher's true role is to stimulate the student's imagination not to teach. We learn our own lessons, learning is not something someone can do to you. Play is a whole bundle of creative activities which can take the child to entirely unpredictable destinations. The very absence of imposed structure in play allows children to fully respond to their own unresolved impulses, desires ideas and feelings. The inability of politicians and educationalists to appreciate this speaks volumes for the poverty of their imaginations and the limits of their empathy. They feel safe in their furrows, so straight and so predictable.

To comply is to learn

Once kids enter formal schools they are subject to government dictat and testing. Teachers are compelled by contract to execute the directives of the government's

National Curriculum. Indeed many are willing executioners. The National Curriculum was designed to drive child inspired learning out of schools and replace it by government controlled training. Schools are not only told what to teach but how to teach it. Every infant who started school in September was compulsorily tested before half-term in a range of subjects and skills. As the test results must be made available to parents, inspectors, etc., pressure is put onto kids as soon as they enter school to restrict their activities to what the government insists on testing. Last May the government's Qualifications and Curriculum Authority published a 128-page document detailing their approved goals and guidelines for three year olds! The document accepts that three year olds can be allowed to play as long as it is "structured and focused play", and the government helpfully details the appropriate structure and focus. Behold a new "foundation stage of the National Curriculum".

Catching them young

The State has a voracious appetite for power and is too impatient to wait until it can lure all children into its schools, it spies tender young infants. Determined not to leave babies in the first two years of their life to "unstructured and unfocused", self-indulgent time-wasting the government is, as I write, planning for a tiny-tots curriculum. Under the headline, "Baby Classes to Come" the *Times Educational Supplement* (6th October 2000) announced that education minister Margaret Hodge will soon be plugging that little gap: "(Although) we have very little for nought to two-year olds. We want to set up an infrastructure of nursery provision ... which will complement the Sure Start programme." Even kids outside state-run schools and nurseries will soon be subject to government edict. From September 2001 all 25,000 private nurseries and 80,000 childminders will be brought under the inspectorial regime of the government's educational thought-police, OFSTED.

Pioneering insight

Friedrich Froebel knew the score almost two centuries ago, "Play is the highest level of child development. It is the spontaneous expression of thought and feeling - an expression which his inner life requires ... at this age, play is never trivial; it is serious and deeply significant. It needs to be cherished and encouraged" (*The Education of Man*). A.S. Neill's chapter on play in his 1962 compilation, *Summerhill* included some outrageous sexism but much insight, "Childhood is playhood, how do we adults react to this fact? We ignore it. We forget all about it - because play to us, is a waste of time. Hence we erect a large city school with many rooms and expensive apparatus for teaching; but more often than not, all we offer to the play instinct is a small concrete space." And "Parents who have forgotten the yearnings of their childhood - forgotten how to play and how to fantasy - make poor parents. When a child has lost the ability to play, he is

psychically dead and a danger to any child who comes in contact with him."

Playing for freedom

Vergniaud and Tom Paine rightly warned that revolutions tend to devour their own children. We prefer the kiss of the vampire; our society sucks out the life-force, but the child lives on. In the child's early years their imagination, wishes, hopes and dreams are slowly deflated, crushed and pushed aside by reasonable, logical, structured learning. Children who continue to enjoy play beyond the limited time approved by adult society face sarcasm, ridicule and psychological investigation. A child at play is anarchy in action. It is not chaos, pointless or time-wasting. It only seems so to the impatient, insensitive, authoritarian adult. It only seems so because it is not directed by any obvious authority, it is not aimed towards goals set by any authority and it is not clearly under the control of or within bounds set or approved of by any obvious authority. Authoritarian society values the individual for their utilitarian value, play does nothing for society and is therefore trivial. Anarchism grows out of the idea that healthy, free individuals will create healthy free societies. Free children will formalise their play into more obviously structured activity when it seems right for them. Once upon a time teachers used to talk about 'reading readiness', and children wouldn't be introduced to book reading until they wanted to read stories for themselves instead of just being read to. Teachers are no longer permitted to wait until the child requests an introduction to reading, kids are subjected to an arranged marriage with government selected books as soon as they're big enough to hold a pamphlet. Reading, writing and maths are not the basics. Formalised, adult created skills are a comparatively superficial gloss on the really deep inspiring lessons the child learns for themselves during play, whole new worlds are created and transformed in an instant. If only adults maintained that ability it would not be so difficult to convince others of the possibility of a better society.

Christopher Draper

(continued from page 4)

Thus Trotskyist politics provides the rationale for eliminating even the limited role of soviets for electing the government they hold in that ideology.

The SWP continue: "Centralism is needed above all because the capitalist state is centralised. The police, media moguls, employers, the state bureaucracy and governments act in a concerted way to protect the system."

Very true. However, the SWP fail to analyse why the state is centralised. Simply put, the state is centralised to exclude the mass of people from taking part in the decision making processes within society. This is to be expected as social structures do not evolve by chance - rather they develop to meet specific needs and requirements. The specific need of the ruling class is to rule and that means marginalising the bulk of the population. Its requirement is for minority power and this is transformed into the structure of the state and capitalist company. The SWP assume that centralisation is simply a tool without content. Rather, it is a tool that has been fashioned to do a specific job, namely to exclude the bulk of the population from the decision making process. It is designed that way and can have no other result. For that reason anarchists reject centralisation. As the justly famous Sonvillier Circular argued: "How could one expect an egalitarian society to emerge out of an authoritarian organisation? It is impossible."

Just as the capitalist state cannot be utilised by the working class for its own ends, capitalist/statist organisational principles such as appointment, autocratic management, centralisation and delegation of power and so on cannot be utilised for social liberation. They are not designed to be used for that purpose (and, indeed, they were developed in the first place to stop it and enforce minority rule!).

In addition, we must point out the central fallacy of the SWP's argument. Essentially they are arguing you need to fight fire with fire. They capitalist class is centralised, so must we be in order to defeat them. Unfortunately for the SWP, you do not put a fire out with fire, you put fire out with water. Therefore, to defeat centralised system you need decentralised social organisation. Such decentralisation is required to include the bulk of the population in the revolutionary struggle and does not imply isolation. A decentralised movement does not preclude co-ordination or co-operation but that co-ordination must come from below, based on federal structures, and not imposed from above.

Therefore, if we want a revolution which is more than just a change in who the boss is, we must create new forms of organisation and struggle which do not reproduce the traits of the world we are fighting. To put out the fire of class society, we need the water of a classless society and so we should organise in a libertarian way, building the new world in the shell of the old.

(to be continued in our next issue)



Argentina: heavy trading in insecurities

These are violent times in which we live. And they're getting worse. Is that true, or is it just a perception? Whatever it is, it is not unique to this country or to this continent. On the contrary, the perception is stronger where capital's need to create and sustain it is greater: in the 'emerging' countries of the world, where real hunger in the stomach risks undermining the manifold joys of capitalism's new virtual circus.

One such country is Argentina. The new Alianza government of Fernando De la Rúa is 'virtually' indistinguishable from the previous one of Carlos Menem, humbly obeying the

"You are afraid of god and the devil, of the priest and the neighbour, of your employer and boss, of the politician and policeman, of the judge and the jailer, of the law and the government. All your life is a long chain of fears ..."

Alexander Berkman (from *What is Anarchist Communism?*, 1929)

dictates of the IMF and the foreign multinationals as did its predecessor. Following the standard formulas of the SAPs to the letter, they are raising taxes to pay off the external debt while cutting jobs, slashing pensions, selling off everything but the very air, causing desperation.

The gap between rich and poor is growing at an alarming rate, and people are afraid; as they were back at the time of the electoral campaign last year, when De la Rúa was depicted in one of his television ads striding confidently towards the future, surrounded by a mysterious gang of leather-clad machine-gun-toting henchmen. He was gonna clean up this country! Politicians need to be macho in Latin America today, as Chavez in his army fatigues and Fujimori the hostage-taker-killer will testify.

For his part, Menem, when president,

launched two major offensives on the 'tough on crime' theme. First he accused immigrants (now what civilised politician here would ever do that?) and then a 'wave of violence' of mysterious origin that enabled him to affirm that crime is only eliminated by applying 'zero tolerance' and giving more powers to the police. As Giuliani and Straw will testify, there's nothing new in the world of modern policing.

Now De la Rúa is 'safely' installed, the honeymoon period is over, and fear eats the soul once more as before. The fear is of being a victim of crime. Official statistics differ as to the extent of the problem: according to the Ministry of the Interior, in 1998 – the most recent year for which records are available – 960,000 crimes were recorded (one per minute) in Buenos Aires and its suburbs. The government of Buenos Aires gives the figure as 138,200 (one every four minutes). For the Federal Police – answerable to the Ministry of the Interior – the number of crimes for that year was 199,148 (one every 2.5 minutes). They can't agree how much crime is being committed, but they don't deny there's a lot of it about.

For Marcelo Ciafardini, director of Crime Policy during Menem's government, however, "the general sensation of insecurity is always higher than the actual crime rate. What happens

"Without the use of violence there would be no state"

Max Weber (*Essays in Sociology*, OUP, 1958)

to others has a rebound effect, and the point is reached where 90% of the population are afraid of being attacked, though this doesn't mean that they actually will be."

Despite their undoubted knowledge of repressive techniques, the police seem to be far

less effective at getting their person. As Ciafardini himself says, "there has been an increase in crime against property and the police only find those responsible in 5% of cases". Strangely, opinion polls also show that between 68% and 73% of the population fear those in uniform. What can they have done to deserve that?



De la Rúa says 'trust me'

The result of all this has been the privatisation of security. There are 1,286 surveillance companies in Argentina, almost all run by former soldiers and police chiefs who served the last dictatorship; between them they have an army of 90,100 men, all armed, and last year they had a turnover of US\$986 million. Muscles and guns are closely followed by CCTVs; there are 63 companies solely devoted to electronic and satellite surveillance.

Of course, the wealthiest sectors of the population, those with most reason to fear popular discontent, have the luxury of being able to hide away from it in their enclaves: closed-off neighbourhoods with high perimeter fences, CCTVs and armed private security guards. In total, there are 412 of these enclaves in the suburbs of Buenos Aires, with a further

87 under construction, and in the capital itself there are 68.

All this is out of the range of the less wealthy, but they can content themselves with all the off-the-shelf serenity-inducing goods on offer from the security industry: alarm systems at a cost of \$1,500, tempered or laminated glass windows (\$120 per square metre), reinforced doors (\$2,500), special locks (\$220), iron grilles (\$50 per square metre), electrocutors (\$65) and paralysing gas aerosols (\$9).

And of course we all sleep more soundly with a gun under our pillow: according to Gregorio Pomar, head of the National Weapons Register – a body run by the Army – there are 1.4 million authorised weapons registered by civilians. Coincidentally, there have been repeated cases of people taking justice into their own hands. Between 28th April last year and 15th March this, sixteen killings were recorded in presumed self-defence. And the perpetrators are still out walking the streets. Tony Martin take note.

Yet this doesn't mean the prisons are empty. In the process of being privatised, needless to say, they are full to overflowing, and 77% of the prison population is composed of 'first-time offenders', people without a previous record, forced by desperation into minor acts of theft.

But it couldn't happen here, could it? Don't be so sure; you never know what people might be forced to do if their petrol starts to run out.

Elroy Debrise

(statistics and quotations from *Noticias Aliadas*, 24th July 2000)

Nix Da 2000 Karavene goes to Prague

The following is an account of the Karavene from Hannover as it approached the Czech border and then proceeded to Prague. It includes information about the various protests leading up to the 26th and 27th of September against the IMF and World Bank. Hopefully it will be of interest to *Freedom* readers.

The Nix Da Karavene finally arrived at the Czech 'border' late on Wednesday 20th September. We had been warned in advance that the border police would try to divert the Karavene away from the main road to the border controls. There was some confusion as to where exactly we would be checked but we were determined to blockade the road should the police attempt to interfere with our route. The police blocked the main road a mile before the checkpoint and after a short stand-off the Karavene turned off the main road and onto the construction site of the new checkpoint a few metres to the right. This was a mistake on our part because we were no longer in a position to block the traffic.

It soon became apparent that we were trapped and a lengthy meeting failed to produce a solution. There was only one thing to do, the sound system was switched on and we had a party. But we still had to get across the border and our position was complicated by the arrival of some Italians and an activist from the US who had been refused entrance twice already that day. In solidarity with them the Karavene decided to put pressure on the border police, though this failed to materialise and it became clear that the police were prepared to play a waiting game (either the Karavene would proceed as they determined or we would all freeze to death).

Our situation became truly surreal. The Czech police 'created' a small square of Czech Republic no bigger than a tennis court on the construction

site by cordoning it off with red plastic tape. The Karavene and a handful of Czech police were in the Czech Republic but completely surrounded by German territory and a small army of German police. It was raining and very cold and absolutely no shelter. There was only one thing to do: party games. These involved running around our newly created piece of Czech Rep very fast chasing each other and 'accidentally' running into the police vans, police, police dogs, police red tape – you get the idea.

The German police were happy for us to travel right across Germany with a tractor, two trucks and three trailers but the Czech cops recognised the revolutionary potential of such vehicles and refused the tractor and the trailers. This was a calculated move by the Czech police (one of the trailers was a food wagon and would have been used to provide food for the demonstrators at the Convergence centre in Prague; one of the other wagons had a PA and sound system). So the 100 or so cyclists and two trucks proceeded to Treplice without them.

The Karavene arrived in Prague late Friday 22nd September and camped outside the city in Volkovice.

On Saturday there was an anti-fascist march and the following day a march against global capitalism. Both were attended by about a thousand demonstrators and the police presence was minimal. Most of the planning for the demonstrations on the 26th were held at the Convergence Centre in Palmova. This was a huge disused warehouse and acted as a general meeting place. Unfortunately the acoustics were terrible. Please note: large empty warehouses are *not* good places to hold meetings. All planning strategies were open, smaller affinity groups were encouraged to plan their own actions. Four major routes were decided in an attempt to

split police resources (though with a rumoured 11,000 strong police presence in Prague this was unlikely to stretch them too much). And all marches were to meet at Nemesti Miru church just up from the museum at the top of Vaclav Havel Street.

On the 26th all demonstrators met at the church. The mood was jubilant and optimistic. We all felt that we could get to the conference centre, especially when the Italian contingent from the Global Express train arrived in their familiar white overalls. These were the Y basta and generally regarded as 'kick-ass' activists. As it turned out they proved to be more 'ass' than 'kick' when they left the yellow procession early to catch the train home! I joined the blue procession as did most of the anarchists. There were many black flags and an inspiring musical band complete with gas masks. When the march confronted the police the band played on straight into the CS gas, a brave action.

Again the police presence was minimal until we reached the narrow road leading up to the conference center. Fully armoured riot police, two armoured cars and two water cannons completely blocked the road. Those at the front charged the police for about two hours but without gaining significant ground. The police fired CS gas at the crowds and constantly hosed them with jets of water before slowly advancing down the street and away from the conference center. There then followed a running battle with the police as hastily-erected barricades were overrun. At one point demonstrators had to cross a busy railway to escape the police. This was blocked by a goods train and thus police and demonstrators exchanged bricks and gas canisters over passing trains and trams. A number of demonstrators received minor electrical burns crossing the railway lines. The police

eventually took control of the streets and there were reports of many arrests.

Later that evening the Opera House next to the museum was blockaded by protestors, and IMF/WTO delegates were prevented from attending their planned evening of entertainment there. At about 9.00pm demonstrators made their way up Vaclav Havel street towards the museum. A number of stores and banks were attacked and windows were smashed. The Czech police chased us up towards the museum and up various side streets. Arrests continued throughout the night, including one mass arrest by plain clothes police who jumped on everyone walking down one street off Vaclav Havel street. It was clear that spotters had been operating within the marches and were targeting specific individuals. The metro stations were closed that evening and the safest exit from the city was by taxi. Back at the Karavene camp site the scale of arrests gradually became clear as reports came through via mobile phone and from eye witnesses. The police were targeting Czech nationals and these made up the majority of arrests. Non-Czech demonstrators were held and deported, Czech demonstrators can expect more severe treatment.

The question asked most often by reporters is whether the protests were a success. The answer depends on what the protests set out to achieve. The conference went ahead and in that respect the protests were unsuccessful. But the protests went ahead also and in a country which is not noted for its tolerance of political action. The point remains that thousands of people from many, many countries were prepared to exert huge amounts of energy organising and standing up to a repressive state and an even more hostile and unaccountable economic system. This is the success of the protests against the IMF, the WTO and World Bank, and those faceless, men and women of money who are directly responsible for so much misery.

Direct democracy and law

Dear *Freedom*,

Amorey Gethin (letters, 21st October 2000) appears to have missed the point of my argument about Paulsgrove and 'taking the law into our own hands'. Let's start with the facts about Paulsgrove itself. The majority of protesters were, as I pointed out at the time, working class women. Their concern? That Paulsgrove estate was being used as a dumping ground for sex offenders, without consultation or concern for the safety of children on the estate. The fact that appears to have escaped the attention of all those who rushed to condemnation was, simply, that the women on the estate were right – their community was being so used. Easy to condemn the 'mob law' that, we're told, took place, but I didn't see any of the 'enlightened' classes rushing to offer to have the seventeen convicted paedophiles who had been relocated to Paulsgrove housed next door to *them*. Isn't it strange that those who are so concerned with the 'reintegration' of sex offenders, drug dealers and rapists into the community always mean poor working class communities. They never, for instance, suggest that such 'reintegration' might be better served by locating such offenders in a leafy avenue in Wilmslow, or rush to offer to accommodate them in their spare fourth bedroom in Grantchester or Onslow. The point that Amorey misses is that the main aim of policing strategy since the late '70s has been to confine the working classes, and, in the process confine crime to working class

communities. If those communities begin to resort to direct action against criminal activity on their estates – as, for instance, when communities on estates in Dublin march to the homes of known drug dealers to force them to leave – such self-organisation is based on a realisation that the state has abandoned them to their fate (and moreover has deliberately hastened that fate) and, therefore, resistance, both to the state, and those elements who seek to undermine communities from within, is the only option left. This is a politics we should endorse, not condemn.

Amorey says that such politics can take an ugly right wing direction. Indeed it can – especially if those of us who purport to believe that we can "only gain liberation from (our) masters by (our) own efforts" (Emma Goldman) sideline ourselves rather than actively intervene to argue for a liberatory, solidaristic solution to the decay of our communities. But then, here's the root of it, for many self-proclaimed anarchists now, they're not 'our communities'. A politics that began, for Proudhon, "in the revolutionary practice" of the labour associations of Paris and Lyon; that Kropotkin saw as realised in "the strikingly independent, freely federated activity of the 'Sections' of Paris" during the French Revolution, now means little or nothing to most working class people and has no real presence in working class communities. The anarchist movement is happy to espouse an 'anti-capitalist' politics that neither concerns itself with the

issues that directly affect those of us who are most obviously subject to the 'terrible bondage' of capitalism, nor sees the "abolition of exploitation and oppression of man by man" (Malatesta) as a project of working class self-emancipation. Anarchism has become reduced to a middle class eccentricity. What's so disturbing is that a large number of our movement are quite content with this.

Amorey says that the fuel protests recently led to an increase in support for the Tories. The situation is more complex than that. Most people are profoundly disillusioned with New Labour, and – if you look at the numbers who don't vote – with politics generally. The Tories surged ahead in the opinion polls temporarily, then fell back again. No-one really believes in William Hague any more than they do Tony Blair. Should a brief glimmer of a Tory resurgence really frighten us that much? Is New Labour (which has increased poverty in its first term, and given us the Terrorism Act, the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act, flogged arms to Indonesia, Zimbabwe, pocketed the cash of Bernie Ecclestone, etc.) for Amorey still a lesser evil? We live in a time that presents us with real opportunities.

Disillusion with the charade of parliamentary politics is ever-increasing. More and more people see direct action as the only way they can make their voices heard at all. What's so disturbing is that time and again we fail to find an anarchist politics that can relate to this, and end up bemoaning the opportunities the situation offers to the far right (and hence, in effect, giving an alibi to New Labour) rather than seeing that the opportunities were there for us also if we'd contested the terrain. The truth is though that the likes of the BNP capitalise on working class disenchantment because they take the idea of having a presence in working class communities seriously, while our movement (which should be the property of such communities if the ideas of anarchism – 'voluntary socialism' as Joseph Labadie called it – are ever to be realised) is content to talk to itself. After the Paulsgrove actions Paul Barker, a research fellow at the Institute of Community Studies, wrote in London's *Evening Standard* "I sometimes think that no-one terrifies the chattering classes so much as the white working class". I sometimes think that's true for some anarchists too.

Nick S.

Reclaim your lives!

Dear Friends,

Your editorials are becoming quite indistinguishable from some small class war comic around about the 1930s. The dark satanic mills were never loved by the people working on the shop floor. Maybe our southern friends should try it sometime. But, more to the point, we refuse to be categorised by employers, media or so-called friends on the left.

What do you think Critical Mass (direct action by cyclists) and Reclaim the Streets are about? Do we really think asthma has some class recognition sensor on board? Do we consider lorries thundering through our neighbourhoods okay because it's driven by a class-conscious comrade? Do we approve of the trashing of Nigeria and the murder of its most able spokes by Shell okay? Who elected Nick S. to perpetuate this ossified view of struggle? Where did he suddenly appear from?

Farmers some of you might remember gave us BSE, no hedgerows and factories in the countryside – all paid by the tax paying public. Some of you might remember that whilst enjoying quiet walks in the country we quite often come across some aggressive individual (an anarch maybe) telling you to 'get off my land'. Are any of you aware how much money is being paid to compensate the farmers over BSE. We are literally talking billions of tax payers money? Are we happy that we pay them subsidies to grow food and then we pay them compensation when they poison us, or is it that were too thick to see beyond the hype and the noise on the street?

Our lives inside and outside the factories are pre-determined by corporate interests, stop doing them favours by demanding the status quo. At least present alternative visions and dreams to the great unwashed. Be really revolutionary and share your seeds around.

Mike Hamilton

Business as usual

Dear *Freedom*,

Nick S.'s mention of Richard Dawkins in the editorial in *Freedom* (7th October) prompted me to find the original *Observer* article (24th September) that had prompted Nick S. to mention him.

Nick S. described Dawkins as "that figure-head of scientific objectivity and reason (if, that is, you associate corporate cash with reason)".

Having now read the original Dawkins article referred to in the editorial, which I thought was quite sensible as it was arguing that both good and bad could arise from genetic modification, I think that Nick S.'s comment on the connection between corporate cash and reason implies that:

a) Richard Dawkins is merely the mouth-piece for corporate interests and that his views are not his own; and/or

b) anyone who is not totally opposed to GM must be in the pay of pro-GM corporations.

If it is inferred that all his views are the result of his being in the pay of corporations, then who is paying for his constant attacks on religion or for his condemnation of the "hysterical caterwauling over the 'People's Princess'"?

If it is a crime to maintain an open mind over things that one doesn't totally understand, for instance GM foods, then I am proud to plead guilty.

Bill Runacre

New-fangled anarchism

Dear *Freedom*,

Mil Rai is right to challenge my own glib generalisations on 'new-fangled anarchism'. Journalism is a low and disreputable profession – however, as he knows, leader-writing on a fortnightly paper is written on the hoof and cannot achieve a claim to philosophical perfection. It is a kind of snapshot analysis of a social process which is in motion. The activist and the commentator on contemporaneous events has to shoot from the hip.

On reflection I think it fair to describe the official British trade union movement as 'conservative', and I would continue to characterise English rank-and-file workers as beset with "conservatism and legalistic attitudes". What is, I think, open to argument is whether these features are on the increase. What I think is undeniable is that the unions, as represented by the TUC, are now more passive and compliant than at any time perhaps since their collaboration after the General Strike.

It could be claimed that they have always been conservative, or at least since the Second World War. It is generally recognised that the unions have never satisfactorily answered the question put to them by George Woodcock, the TUC General Secretary in the 1950s: "Where are we going?"

In the 1950s, '60s and '70s it would have been correct to identify most of the British labour movement as militantly conservative as opposed to the passive conservatism we now have. At that time most political and social decisions for improvement were delegated to the Parliamentary Labour Party, while the trade unions got on with their collective bargaining over wages and conditions. Demarcation disputes ensued between different unions and sectional interests were pursued.

In the engineering factory where I served my apprenticeship, the tinsmiths and tool fitters were the lords of labour. These groups would always resist attempts by other workers to outbid them during wage negotiations. Jealousy and snobbery between trades was even worse in the print industry. Ultimately the Royal Commission on Trade Unions and Employment Associations (1965-68) was produced in an attempt to introduce a bit of order to bargaining. During

this period industrial anarchists and others on the left supported strikes which had 'conservative' and sectional interest; perhaps we imagined that by so doing we would gain some influence over the participants.

I don't think it is wrong to characterise that period of trade unionism as one of 'militant conservatism' or this one as 'passive conservatism'. Even the miners' strike could be labelled conservative in so far as (as the academic Huy Benyon pointed out at the time) the strikes sought to uphold the status quo. My dictionary declares 'conservative' to be "tending to favour the preservation of the existing order".

I think Mil Rai is right to say that some aspects of the miners' strike in 1984-85 were pre-runners to more recent dynamic actions on the dockers' dispute (a lock-out in fact, not a strike as Mil Rai says). Writers on the libertarian left, like Dave Douglass, have documented this – even at one stage the motorways were blocked by miners' cars. Oh yes, a few operated with imagination, but these were minor, marginal endeavours in a dispute which ran its course with the symmetry of an assembly line.

Dave Douglass, as I recall, complained about the futile pitched battles with the police that Scargill commanded. It was also noticeable that the miners, the Liverpool dockers and the Tameside careworkers only became more dynamic, flexible and imaginative once defeat was staring them in the face.

Let me try to outline the problem which has confronted the likes of myself, Derek Pattison and other industrial anarchists in the last few decades in this country. When you work on the shopfloor or close to it in working class communities, it feels like being immersed in the mechanisms of an awesome engine – the grim consequences of our own industrial revolution.

We suffer from the mechanisms of our own history, of being first in the field with the industrial revolution. How do we break out of the narrow parochial horizons of working class life in England without replacing it with something worse? Many working class people in the north admired the 'solidarity' of the fuel protesters when they gave New Labour a bloody nose in September.

Brian Bamford

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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 —

3rd November Guy Fawkes Remembered
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. For more information see: LAF@anarchic.co.uk or www.trak.to/LAF

Steve Ash
for London Anarchist Forum

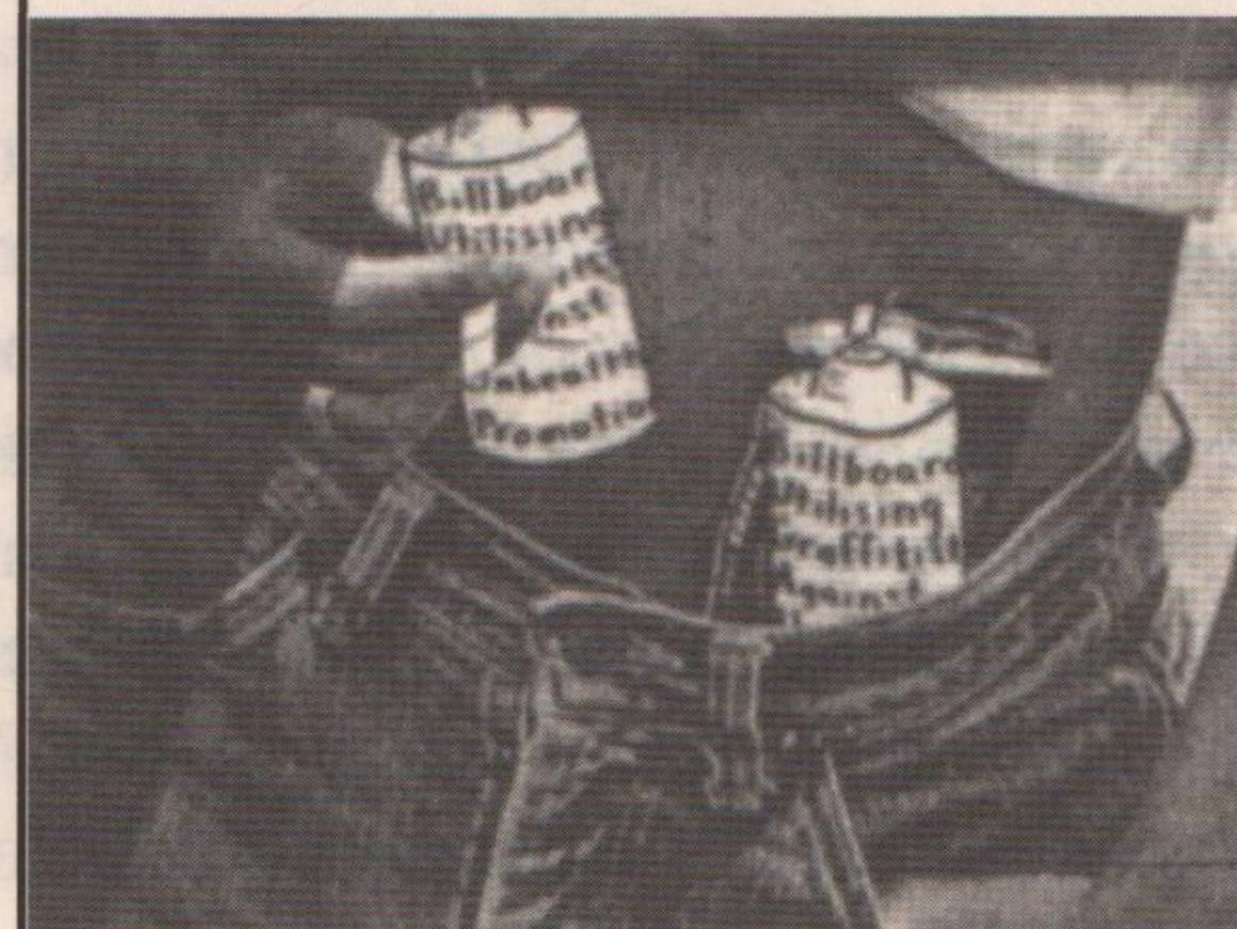
Gene Genie

touring art/science exhibition about
genetic engineering
7th-11th November from 1pm-7pm
Events

- Art** Tuesday 7th November at 7.30pm
Talk by artist Emily Johns on imagery in the exhibition
- Science** Wednesday 8th November at 7.30pm
'GM Democracy: Genetic Engineering and Public Decision Making' talk by Angela Ryan, molecular biologist, Open University
- Storytelling** Friday 10th November at 7.30pm (£4/£2)
'The Two Headed Axe' an evening of grown up stories with gifted teller Ariane Hadjilias
- Film** Saturday 11th November at 6pm (£5/£3 + 50p)
A double bill of genetically engineered celluloid
Exhibition and all events at
Torriano Meeting House, 99 Torriano Avenue,
Kentish Town, London NW5
• contact: Emily Johns 0845 458 9571 or
criticalmass@newscientist.net

**Protest and
Survive**

the current exhibition at the
**Whitechapel
Art Gallery**



until 12th November
open Tuesdays to Sundays
11am to 5pm (until 8pm Wednesdays)
Admission free

**Nonviolent Action at the
US Embassy**
against the economic sanctions
on Iraq
Saturday 25th November

meet 1pm in the garden in
Grosvenor Square
(nearest tube Bond Street)
Please join us in opposing this US-British
government policy, by your supportive
presence or by participation in this
nonviolent sit-down protest.
There will be a nonviolence workshop and
legal briefing on Friday 24th November
from 7.30 to 9.30pm at Conway Hall, Red
Lion Square, Holborn.
For more info contact voices in the
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