

FREEFEDOM

anarchist fortnightly

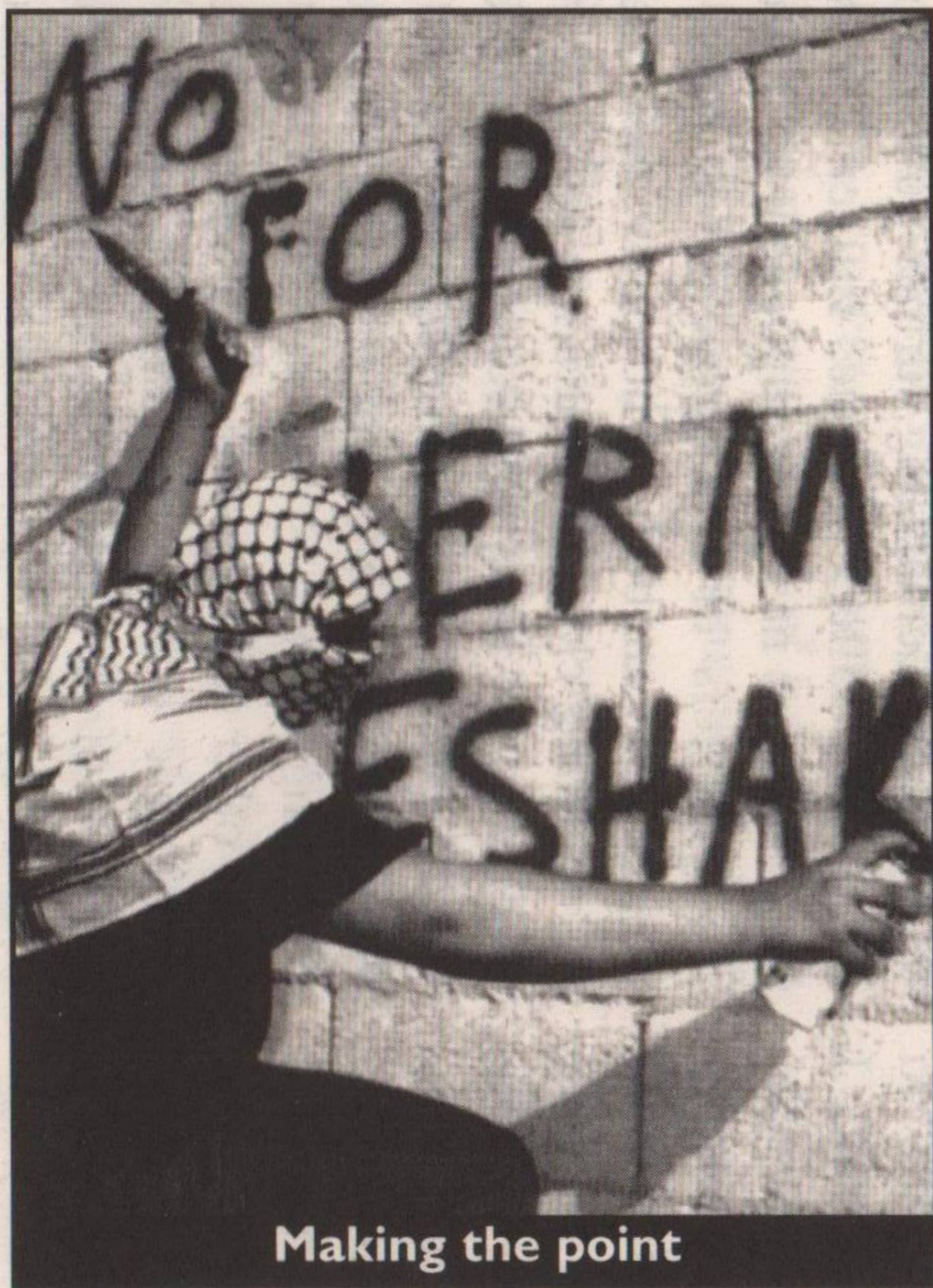
Vol. 61 No. 22

18th November 2000

50p

Western governments didn't like Milosevic doing it ...

Why's ethnic cleansing allowed now?



Making the point

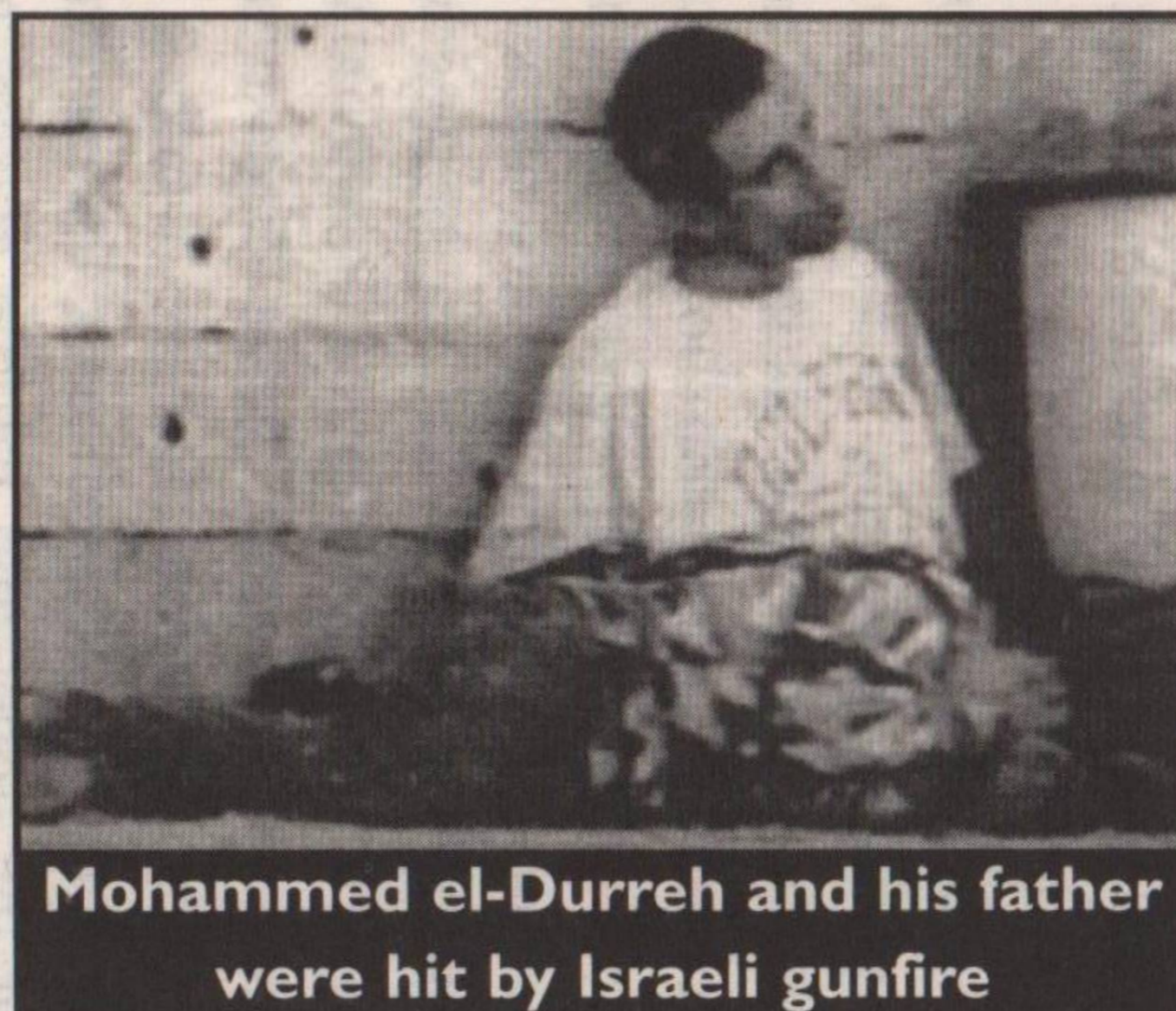
Sticks and stones break bones, but they're no match for missiles and helicopter gunships. The Palestinian rebellion has shaken Israel's (illegally) occupied territories for seven weeks, and the army has responded with what Amnesty International calls "a pattern of gross human rights violations that may well amount to war crimes". Politician Ariel Sharon was the spark, stomping over muslim shrines on 28th September. But Arab resistance will continue as long as Israeli oppression lasts. 'Since I am drowning, why should I fear getting wet?' says a Palestinian proverb. Being shot ain't so bad, when every hope you had for the future has gone.

Another drama is being played out too, not least amongst Israeli wannabes battling for power. Sharon is the nastiest villain of a nasty bunch, a man who spent the 1950s commanding a unit which torched Palestinian villages and massacred innocent civilians (ethnic cleansing, we call this now). Having made a name for himself as a general in the 1973 war and as the man who invaded Lebanon in 1982, he

now leads the opposition Likud party. And he's seen a chance to demolish the coalition government of prime minister Barak, another war hero.

On the Palestinian side, Arafat has exploited the 'al Aqsa intifada' for every drop of political advantage. He needs all the help he can get. Living standards in areas controlled by his Palestinian Authority have plummeted. The Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) always cemented its power by acting as a social welfare body, but the biggest source of its funds was the USSR. Other Arab states chipped in too, until Arafat supported Saddam in the Gulf War. Now they keep their money to themselves. Without the dosh, support for the chairman has dwindled. Nor have the blatant corruption and authoritarianism of his regime earned him popularity.

We know now that Jordan's King Hussain warned Israel of imminent attack from Egypt and Syria in 1973. Besides western support, the Israelis' biggest advantage has been the fact that bosses of Arab regimes always feared each other more than they feared Israel, and their own subjects most of all. Some posh Saudi prince has set up an 'intifada fund' to support families of its victims, but where was this help before? In 1993, Arab states promised huge aid to 'invigorate and massively expand the economies' of the occupied territories. It never came, and the



Mohammed el-Durreh and his father were hit by Israeli gunfire

Palestinians suffered. Even now, the Arab dictators desperately try to appear to do something (and appease their subjects) while actually doing nothing (to appease Israel and the US).

They've got every reason to fudge. The Gulf War showed the madness of trying to stand up to western interests in the middle east. The area contains two-thirds of the world's oil and it's the main communications route between east and west. Even before oil days, the region was a hotbed of squabbles between the 'great powers' of Britain, France and Germany. Palestine is at the heart of the middle east. The very existence of Israel there divides Arab leaders; Israel is 'safe' for western interests, unlike the Arab states and their pesky imams; it is an indestructible aircraft carrier for US power-projection – all excellent reasons why the west was happy to see Israel's birth as soon as Britain (the colonial power) threw in the towel. US aid is still billions of dollars a year, and the British government merrily sends off tanks, rockets and all the other goodies a modern repressive state needs. Wanna know why? Because Israeli interests are western interests.

We oppose the atrocities being carried out by Israeli forces. We understand the anger in Palestinian communities, and we support their resistance. But nationalism is not the answer. It is the tool our bosses always use to divide and rule us, its victims. Arab-Israeli unity would be America's nightmare. There are signs of a better answer than nationalism, if you look hard. The mixed community of Neve Shalom, near Jerusalem; the Israeli peace movement; the shielding of Jewish settlers from attack by Arab neighbours. After resistance to the immediate oppression, the roots of something better can grow from these seeds. They're small now. But they are, ultimately, the only path to a real peace.

Freedom

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How New Labour divides and rules ...

Fear is the key

New Labour has never been afraid of making people afraid. Whatever else can be said for or against the Blair government, its recognition that the only way it can command the loyalty of the mass of people is by making them fear the alternative has been the hallmark of its first term. The reasoning is clear enough. New Labour serves one master: capital. Since coming to office it has cut the rate of corporation tax to 30%, "the lowest rate in the history of corporation tax, the lowest rate of any major country in Europe and the lowest rate of any major industrialised country anywhere, including Japan and the United States" according to Gordon Brown. In March 2000 New Labour slashed capital gains tax for higher rate tax payers from 40% to 10%, and abolished 'withholding tax', at a cost to the Exchequer of £300 million. Yet, as George Monbiot has pointed out (in *The Captive State*, Macmillan, 2000) "while corporate taxes have withered, personal taxation in Britain ... rose by some eight pence in the pound during the first three years of Labour's term in office ... More mobile than ever before, big businesses can bully governments into relieving them of their responsibilities. If a state won't cut the taxes it levies, they threaten to dis-invest, and move to somewhere which will. The highly paid, like the corporations which employ them, can also play off one state against another, driving down the top rates of income tax. The tax burden, as a result, has shifted to those who can't get away: the poor and middle income."

The slashing of corporate taxation has been combined with a push to cut the cost of welfare by driving the workless into low paid work (the New Deal), with low pay guaranteed by the introduction of a minimum wage pinned at a level where it can only act as a drag anchor on wage levels more

generally. New projects in health, education and transport are increasingly linked to investment opportunities for private capital (the private finance initiative) with the slack from corporate hand-outs being taken up by stealth taxes such as the tax on fuel. The end result is that no one feels they've gained from New Labour, save for capital's big players.

Fear, therefore, has become New Labour's trump card. Not long after it was announced – with the publication of the British Crime Survey – that crime rates have fallen overall by 10% in the last two years, Peter Mandelson gave an interview in which he seized the BCS statistics that one-third of those surveyed believed crime rates had risen between 1997-99, and proclaimed that in a second term New Labour would do more to assuage our 'fear of crime' (with the prison population at an all time high, and up by over 40% since 1992, what that 'more' might be is almost too dreadful to contemplate). For most of New Labour's first term it has been the threat of a 'flood' of 'bogus refugees' which has been posed as that which only the Blair government can save us from. In her impressive new book *Open Borders* (Pluto, 2000) the anti-racist activist Teresa Hayter details the extent to which the Blair administration has revealed itself as "harsher in its treatment of asylum seekers than its predecessor was". Hayter notes the way in which Jack Straw and his junior Mike O'Brien exploited the debate leading up to the passing of the 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act and observes that "Straw's and Blair's attitude towards asylum seekers has many precedents in the behaviour of previous Labour governments ... Labour must demonstrate that it can be tougher towards them than the Tories were, and so remove one of the perceived electoral assets of the Tories". Hayter's book details the way in which the definition of 'refugee' is altered to

suit the political interests of the West (with, as an example, the US allowing free entry to Cubans whilst closing its borders to Haitians). She notes: "Who is considered to be a 'genuine' refugee, and who is not, is entirely within the discretion of governments. Governments can vary the numbers of people they accept for settlement without infringing the various conventions on refugees, since these theoretically guarantee the right to seek and enjoy asylum, but not the right to obtain it. The British and other governments' assertions that most asylum seekers are bogus is based simply on the fact that they turn down most of their claims." Since 1997 New Labour has engineered a panic over the cost of 'abuse' of asylum, and its attempts to 'stem the tide' of 'bogus' or 'fraudulent' asylum seekers, and undermine the 'asylum racketeers', simply to deflect attention away from the fact that its corporate handouts have been paid for by the rest of us, and in order to claim the authoritarian space vacated with the electoral collapse of the Tories who, so far as Straw was concerned, "had failed to make any proposals to deal with illegal immigration". In a letter to William Hague, Straw stated that "You can either support the views of our party colleagues in Westminster and back our moves to crack down on the problem of illegal immigration – or you can side with your front-bench colleague, Ann Widdecombe, and weaken control. It cannot be both."

Of course, the problem with the politics of fear is that it can blow up in your face. Whip up a panic over crime, and you risk the perception that you've failed to win the war you declared when you came into office. Sometimes you just get caught out by reality. New Labour is now being forced to retreat from its scare-mongering over immigration. As Hayter illustrates: "The United Nations Populations Division published a report in March 2000 entitled *Replacing Migration: Is It a Solution to Declining and Ageing Populations?* The report said that the populations of Europe and Japan were expected to decline as a result of declining birth rates in the next fifty years. The population of Italy, for example, is projected to decline from 57 million now to 41 million in 2050. The decline in working-age populations and in the ratio of people of working age to people over 65 will be even greater. For Europe, whereas there are now five people of working age for each person over 65, by 2050 the projected ratio is only two to one." Thus, whatever the short-term political gains from playing the race card, the reality is that Europe needs more immigrant workers, not less.

Luckily for New Labour, as one scapegoat loses its appeal another comes along. Recent weeks have seen New Labour manipulate the news agenda to attempt to whip up public fears over the social and economic costs of any resumption of the fuel protests. When panic buying began to leave the pumps dry,

Straw and Blair knew they'd found another card to play. The Italian marxist Antonio Gramsci once described the capitalist state as "hegemony protected by the armour of coercion" and, as the Terrorism Act ought to have shown, the New Labour project is, ultimately, coercive in intent. A story in *The Observer* on 5th November 2000 revealed that, after the initial fuel protests were called off, Straw presided over "one of the biggest undercover operations against non-terrorist targets in Britain for twenty years. Every local police force's Special Branch began to gather intelligence on the leaders of the protests ... Dossiers were compiled of activists' police records, finances and political views. Many were put under 'soft' surveillance". MI5 were ordered to infiltrate and seek to 'sow division' within the protest groups. If the first wave of protests had revealed the essential vulnerability of a capitalism which had sought to present itself as having broken free of the chains of space and time, the second round would serve as a demonstration of the force yet available to capital to defend its interests. After the miners strike, the British state began a re-tooling intended to make such confrontations impossible on such a scale again. From the 1986 Public Order Act's restrictions on the right to demonstrate, through the 1997 Police Act's definition of a serious crime as 'conduct by a large number of persons in pursuit of a common purpose', culminating in the Terrorism Act today, the unholy trinity of Thatcher-Major-Blair has actively sought the criminalisation of effective protest. In New Labour's first year in office (1997-98) the number of warrants issued in England and Wales for telephone tapping and mail opening was 1,763 – the highest since records began, and higher even than figures for the period of the Second World War (*Statewatch*, May-August 1999). New Labour has been gearing up for a show of force since its first day in power. Sadly, but not surprisingly, the response of the Labour left and Greens to the fuel protests (with everyone from Dennis Skinner through Bill Morris to the *Red Pepper* editorial board raising the spectre of fascism and seeking a crackdown on the protesters) has meant, as Francis Wheen put it (*Guardian*, 8th November), "the pass has been sold. These liberals and lefties will be in no position to complain when similar tactics are used against people who are protesting against the construction of a new bypass or the export of live veal calves".

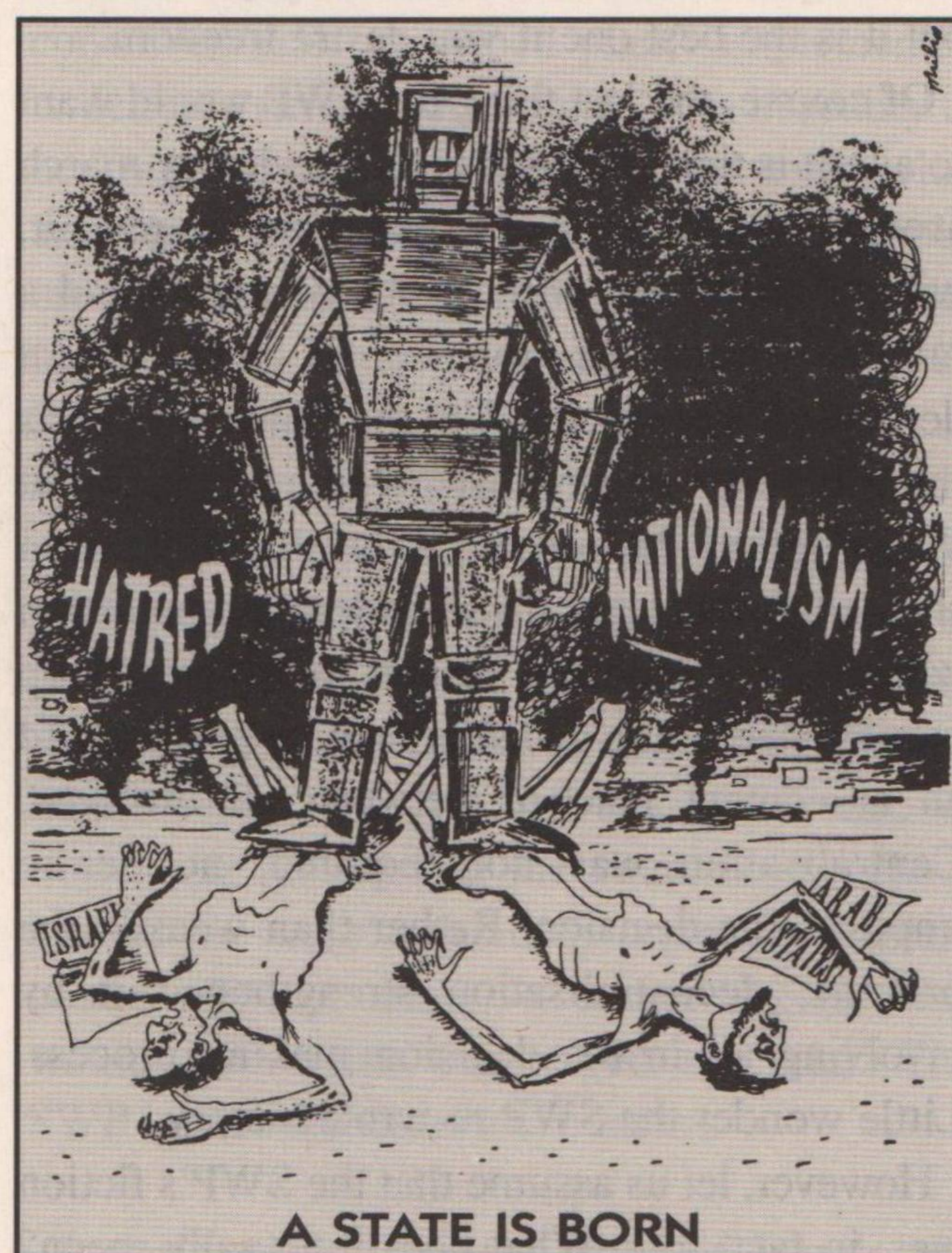
There is something bizarre about the spectacle presented by the fuel protests. It represents, in effect, the petit-bourgeoisie beginning to devour itself – with the immiseration of that section of the middle class which is closest to the habits and income of the working class leading it to seek to defy a government made up of that section of the middle class closest to the

(continued on page 2)

Middle East, 1946

Men and women in Palestine will never be free and materially secure while Imperial domination lasts. They will not secure freedom by exchanging the British Mandate for rule of Jewish capitalists and landlords or Arab capitalists and landlords. Our sympathy lies with the common people, Jewish or Arab, who suffer under whatever government is imposed upon them, and whose blood is shed either in mistaken adherence to their nationalist pretensions or in blind reprisals against such action. Peace will come to Palestine only when all existing ruling groups and all would-be rulers are rendered powerless and impotent.

Taken from *Freedom*, 10th August 1946 quoted in *British Imperialism and the Palestine Crisis* published by Freedom Press (£1.95 post free inland, overseas please add 15% for p&p)



(continued from page 1)

ruling class interests it seeks to serve. A coalition of farmers and hauliers at war with a government made up primarily of rich lawyers. There is, in all this, indeed a threat that the fuel protesters could take their anger and disillusion with the bankruptcy of parliamentary democracy to the right. What no one seems to have grasped – from the Socialist Party which has sought to recruit them, to the Green left which has rushed to denounce them – is that the best block against this is the existence of a militant, independent working class movement which, in embodying the prospect of the defeat of capital and its sham democracy, might provide an alternative vision rooted in that “liberation of man from economic exploitation and from intellectual, social and political oppression” of which Rudolf Rocker once wrote. Such a movement clearly does not at present exist, and it falls on us, given the bankruptcy of the statist left, to build it. (In embracing this task we should note briefly that those within the anarchist movement who deny the relevance of class are, in consigning those of us who do not profit from the social inequality which is the essence of capitalism to our fate, only echoing the prattle of the ruling class. “I think that class is largely an irrelevancy in contemporary British society. Some people may use it as an excuse for their own failures, but I think we have very largely a mobile society” – Norman St John Stevas in *The Listener*, 1980.)

There are, I’d contend, four areas within which it is both possible and necessary to pursue the independent interests of the working class:

1) *The defence of working class communities* – to seek to organise around the defence of working class communities means to organise within those communities for them to define themselves and their interests against the class which opposes them, i.e. as council tenants *against* the state. It means identifying how working class interests are threatened and how we might organise as a counter-power in our own defence. Such organisation therefore demands physical opposition to a named enemy as a part of the process of our regaining our identity as a class with interests separate from capital and the state. Community based organisations could be formed (as was done in the anti-poll tax struggle) around a set of self-defined interests (i.e. against debt enforcement and eviction) and employ the variety of methods of direct action to pursue their agreed ends, i.e. challenging the operation of bailiffs firms, solicitors firms which undertake possession proceedings, occupation of community facilities threatened with closure (as is currently taking place in Hackney) so that the process of immiseration through debt, eviction, withdrawal of benefits, withdrawal of services, is permanently contested.

2) *Building a rank and file movement* – while trade union numbers are rising, more and more of the most exploited members of the working class are in those sections of the industry least available to organisation by the labour movement. The workplace, though, is the primary site of exploitation under capital, and our organisation there is a question not of choice but necessity. We cannot therefore depend on the ever-more supine trade union bureaucracy to guarantee our interests. A re-

forged rank and file movement could seek to link to workplaces with the wider working class community, to organise the unorganised, to build links between workplaces and industries and to rebuild basic workplace organisation. A re-forged rank and file movement would be loyal to working class democracy and working class self-interests, not to the particular sectional interests of the trade union bureaucracy. Its purpose would be practical, not ideological, in that its purpose would be to defend working class living standards and health and safety through struggle, rather than, say, the building of a ‘broad left’. Rebuilding a rank and file movement would simply mean seeking to fight against closures and cuts, for more pay and less workload, for shorter hours – and to seek to support struggles within the wider working class community.

3) *Organising the unemployed* – the rebuilding of claimants unions to prevent the exploitation of claimants through the New Deal and the minimum wage by fighting for a social wage equivalent to the average working wage, as a means of defending working class living standards against New Labour’s plans to hold down wages through the conversion of the young unemployed into cheap labour.

4) *Against racism* – simply the refusal of the divide and rule agenda of the ruling class by setting loyalty to class against loyalty to race, and through the physical defence of minority communities against attack, detention, deportation. As the Slovenian philosopher and activist Slavoj Žižek has put it: “Confronted with ethnic hatred and violence,

one should thoroughly reject the standard multiculturalist idea that, against ethnic intolerance, one should learn to respect and live with the otherness of the other, to develop a tolerance for different lifestyles and so on – the way to fight ethnic hatred effectively is not through its immediate counterpart, ethnic tolerance. On the contrary, what we need is ... proper political hatred, hatred directed at the common political enemy (from *The Fragile Absolute*, Verso, 2000).

The political status quo is beginning to unravel. The ‘middle England’ courted by Blair has begun to fragment and declare war on itself. The authoritarianism of New Labour marks the last breath of the social democratic project. New Labour, if it is to survive, sees fear as its best option – to divide the forces which might come to oppose it. Indeed fear, as the pulp writer Alistair Maclean once put it, is the key. New Labour’s manipulation of popular fears hides its own fear of that ‘multitude’ over which it claims to govern. The one force not yet in the arena is the only force with the social power able to offer any prospect of the realisation of the desire for freedom – the working class. Either we commit ourselves to re-forging independent working class organisations, or we commit ourselves to the sidelines and defeat. As Murray Bookchin has put it: “It is the height of self-deception to suppose we can substitute personal militancy for organisation, or personal ‘insurrection’ for a consistent revolutionary practice” (*Anarchism, Marxist and the Future of the Left*, AK Press, 2000).

Nick S.

Marxism and ‘Anarchism’: a reply to the SWP

— Part Four —

The SWP in an article entitled ‘Marxism and Anarchism’, *Socialist Worker*, 16th September 2000) attacked anarchist ideas. In the process of this they discussed the benefits of centralisation. As an example of why Marxism is better than anarchism they give an example: “Protesters put up several roadblocks during the major anti-capitalist demonstration in Washington in April of this year. The police tried to clear them. The question arose of what the protesters should do. Some wanted to try to maintain the roadblocks. Others thought the best tactic was to reorganise the protests into one demonstration. Instead of coming to a clear decision and acting on it, the key organiser of the whole event told people at each roadblock to do what they thought was right. The resulting confusion weakened all the protests.”

Unfortunately for the SWP, they have the facts all wrong. The World Bank/IMF complex in Washington DC was extremely difficult to blockade. The police blocked over fifty blocks on the day of the demonstration to travel. DC has very wide streets. Many World Bank and IMF Delegates spent the night in those buildings, or came in early in the morning long before sunrise. This calls into question whether a blockade was the best strategy considering the logistic details involved (the Blockade strategy was abandoned for the Republican and Democratic Party Conference demonstrations). In addition to the blockades, there was an officially permitted rally blocks away from the action.

By early afternoon, the various affinity groups manning the blockades were informed that the blockades had failed, and enough delegates had made it inside that the meeting was continuing

inside with only a short delay. So the question came of what to do next? There were varying opinions. Some affinity groups favoured maintaining their blockades symbolically as an act of defiance and hoping to slow the dispersion of World Bank/IMF representatives as they left the meeting. Others wished to have a victory march around the area. Others wanted to join the rally. Some wanted to march on the World Bank and try for an occupation. There was no consensus. After much discussion between the affinity groups, a decision was reached.

The tactical process worked in practice like this. While there was an original plan agreed to by consensus at the beginning of the blockades by all affinity groups, with groups picking which intersection to occupy and which tactics to use, there was a great deal of flexibility as well. There were several flying columns that moved from intersection to intersection reinforcing barricades and increasing numbers where it looked like police might charge. The largest of these was the Revolutionary Anti-Capitalist Bloc (‘the Black Bloc’) made up mostly of class-struggle anarchists but included a number of other left libertarians (such as council communists and autonomists). The RACB officially maintained its autonomy within the demonstration and worked with others when and where it could. The affinity groups of the RACB would come to quick decisions on what to do. Often, they would quickly respond to the situation; usually their appearance was enough for the cops to fall back after a few tense moments.

The RACB was divided between two choices – either join with the rally or march on the Bank. There was a lot of negotiation back and forth. A compromise was reached. The RACB would move to each blockade in order and

provide cover for those locked down to unlock and safely merge with the grown march so that attempts could be made the next day to blockade. The march continued to swell as it made its way along the route, eventually merging with the crowd at the permitted demonstration.

A decision was made. Perhaps it wasn’t the most militant. Perhaps it did not foresee that the next day would lack the numbers to even attempt a successful blockade. But arrests on the demonstration were kept to a minimum, a large show of strength was put on and strong feelings of solidarity and camaraderie grew. The cops could only control a few square blocks, the rest of the city was ours. And it was a decision that everyone had a part in making, and one that everyone could live with. It’s called self-management, perhaps it isn’t always the most efficient method of making decisions, but it is the best one if you desire freedom.

Of course, the last thing the SWP would want to admit is that anarchists led the victory march around Washington DC without a permit, without marshals, without many arrests and a minimal amount of violence! Of all the recent demonstrations in the US the black bloc was the largest and most well received at Washington. Moreover, that demonstration showed that decentralised, federal organisation worked in practice. Each affinity group participated in the decision making process and an agreement reached between all involved. Centralisation was not required, no centre imposed the decision. Rather than weaken the protests, decentralisation strengthened it by involving all in the decision making process. Little wonder the SWP re-wrote history.

However, let us assume that the SWP’s fiction was, in fact, true. What does it actually mean?

We must point out its interesting logic. They argue that the protests had a ‘key organiser’ which means they were centralised. They argue that the protestors looked to that person for direction. Unfortunately that person could not come to a ‘clear decision’ and instead handed back decision making to each roadblock. In other words, centralisation failed, not federalism. Moreover, the state would have had a simple means to destroy the demonstration – arrest the ‘key organiser’. In a centralised system, without a centre, the whole structure collapses – without someone giving orders, nothing is done.

In a federal structure each roadblock would have sent a delegate to a council to co-ordinate struggle (which, we stress, was what actually did happen). To quote Bakunin, “there will be a federation of the standing barricades and a Revolutionary Communal Council will operate on the basis of one or two delegates from each barricade ... these deputies being invested with binding mandates and accountable and revocable at all times”. In the SWP’s version of history, the blockades did not do this and so, unsurprisingly, without organisation, there was confusion. As an argument against anarchism it is useless. So the SWP’s fictional example is an argument against centralisation – of placing decision-making power at the centre. In their story, faced with the task of co-ordinating actions which they had no knowledge of, the ‘key organiser’ could not act and by not having a federal structure, the roadblocks were weakened due to lack of co-ordination. In reality, a federal structure existed within the demonstration, each roadblock and affinity group could take effective action instantly to

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Farm cash figures

Historically the backbone of all mass fascist movements has been provided by the newly impoverished middle class; and for this reason the news of a 90% drop in the profits per acre of agricultural land should concern us. Put that history and those figures, with the known facts that the BNP is making giant strides within the Countryside Alliance, with the proliferation of 'keep hunting' banners on the recent pickets at oil refineries and there are real grounds for worry.

Let's look at that history a little, and at the sociological background, there are other parallel; (it has been said that fascism arises when neither the traditional Right, nor the traditional Left are powerful or determined enough to push through their policies, but that presupposes the need).

It is commonplace that since – until very recently – most industrial/manufacturing or service workers did not have bank accounts; most factories big offices or similar concerns paid in cash weekly with, once a month, larger payments to cover overtime; working class families could be seen in shops once a month pulling out large wedges of money. Much richer middle class families, who kept their money in the bank, seldom if ever handled such sums.

So fantasies grew up amongst the middle class, as to how much better off members of the working class were than they. These fantasies were fed, whenever strikes happened, by the press. Bosses would 'leak' highly inflated figures as to the supposed earnings of their striking employees to say that these were greedy. (In most strikes the striking workers would have been

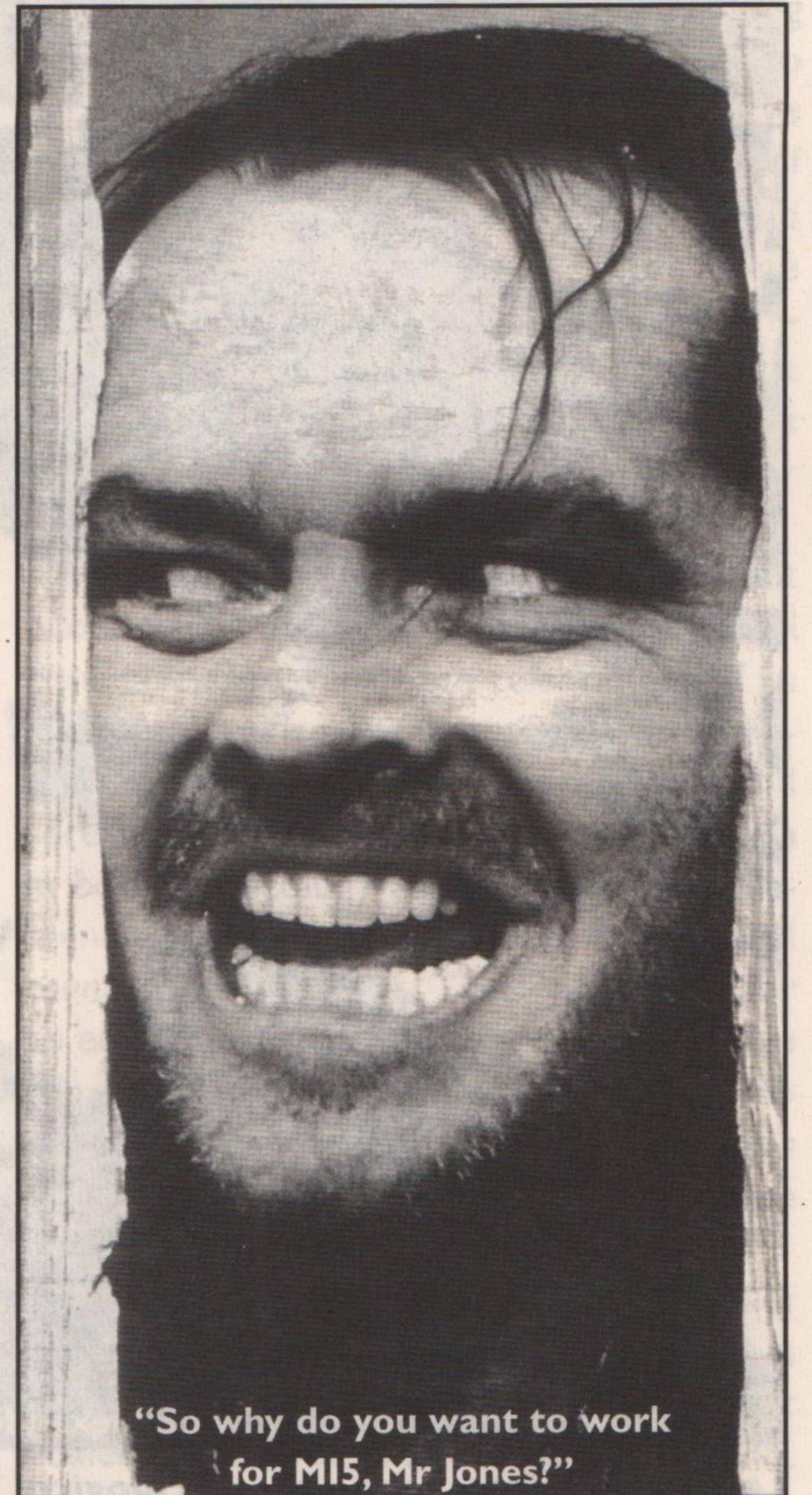
ecstatically happy if, at the end, their union had been able to arrange that in future they be paid a quarter of what the media had been saying they earned.)

This meant that the middle class gained a fixed belief that the workers – even if they had been badly treated in the past – were now getting too much of the national income and there should be cuts. This inspired right-wing parties and caused weak-kneed labour parties to become even more feeble. Eventually the right would make a head-on attack at the most noted and powerful sectors of the working class, even going to the extent of deliberately cutting back on the manufacturing industries in order the better to control the working class.

This caused a partial slump, and you cannot have a slump without hitting at the middle class. Whereas the comfortably off can afford to save, the poor cannot – they spend nearly all their income in order to survive, so cutting the wages of the poor has an immediate effect. The larger shops and trading concerns can usually survive that as they just take a bit longer to pay their bills; small shopkeepers and market traders haven't that luxury, as many of those go to the wall. The larger concerns in the first instance gain as they can move into the gaps caused by bankruptcies, and for a short time their expansion takes up some of the unemployment, but as formerly skilled workers are now unskilled in their new jobs general wages go down yet further, less is bought overall and the underlying slump deepens.

It hardly needs emphasising that though the nature of industry had moved a lot since the '30s, Thatcherism and the years since have followed this pattern. It has taken time for the impoverishment to reach down to people like the farmers, but the day they first voted for Thatcher it became inevitable. The consequences are frightening. LO

What's it all for?



It's tough at the top

Sheherazade Ventura is married to Zac, left 'comfortably off' by his father, the late and loathsome billionaire, Sir James Goldsmith. Not content with a life of ease however, she slogs it out behind the counter of a London organic food shop. Presumably she then gets the bus home to her dingy council flat, and uses her hard-earned cash to feed the meter. Or maybe not.

We don't blame Sheherazade for her position in life, or despise her for being (considerably) richer than us. But we do look forward to the day when everyone has access to the good things they need and all of us can work like her, not because the boss or the debts are breathing down our necks, but simply because it gives us satisfaction to do what needs to be done.



Sheherazade Ventura

A-Spire reopens ... briefly

The A-Spire squatting collective returned to its old premises (the old church on Woodhouse Lane) in Leeds, for three days at the beginning of November.



Friends and comrades marked the event with three days of discussion, entertainment and fun, including the Critical Mass bike ride which finished there on Friday 3rd after setting off from City Square. No information yet on another venue.

Two pieces of news about the spooks of MI5, MI6 and GCHQ in Cheltenham. The first is that their combined budget is going to rise by 17% over three years, to a meagre £940 million. Sadly it's not in our interest to know how this money will be spent, so the government won't tell us. The second is that the secret services are going to start psychological tests on their employees, to identify 'adverse character traits'. Whatever can they mean?

All this was revealed in the annual report of parliament's Intelligence and Security Committee, published at the start of the month ('intelligence' is their term, not ours). Again, it isn't in our interests to know many of the things in the report, so much of it has been censored by ministers and by those self-same spooks we're supposed to fork out so much money for. Good to know they're earning their keep.

More on Crystal Palace

The unexpected decision of Bromley Council (as reported by TC in *Freedom*, 4th November) that the leisure centre/retail complex should go ahead in the face of vigorous local opposition is all too typical of what is going on up and down the country.

The campaign of opposition including occupation of the site is to be greatly admired but it must not stop now.

This is a nation-wide problem and it needs to be fought by a nation wide network of opposition. The whole project is about profit and I suggest that the time has come to fight these people on their own ground and identify those retail outlets who intend to rent space in the new complex and make them the target of a nationwide boycott. Needless to say it ought to be made clear to Bromley Council that the leisure centre will also be the target of a boycott by the very people it is intended (supposedly) to benefit. This means there must be a campaign now to get people to pledge now that they will support the boycott and stick by it and not give up because they feel they have lost.

These same principles could be applied to gain nation wide support for every local community fighting Development Plans. The consumer boycott could prove the most powerful of weapons if enough people join in. What it needs is the willingness to boycott (and

make clear to the Head offices what you are doing) major High Street outlets because of what they are doing in another part of the country.

To this end it would be useful to set up a network to exchange information about local campaigns and identify the boycott targets – perhaps this already exists. If it does and anyone can supply information could they contact me at edmacarthur94@hotmail.com or at the Freedom Press bookshop on Saturdays.

Ed McArthur

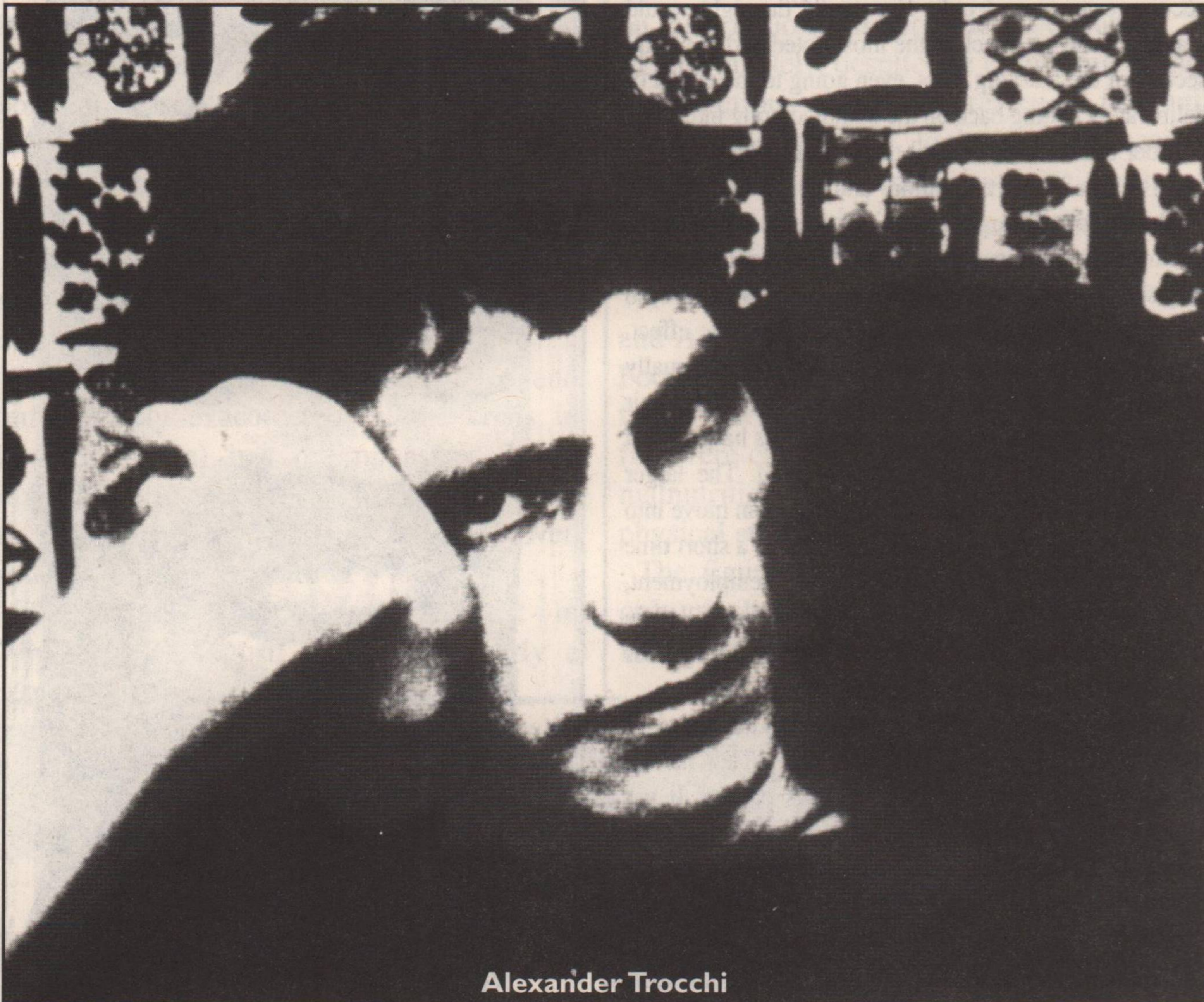


COPY DEADLINE

The next issue of *Freedom* will be dated 2nd December, and the last day for copy intended for this issue will be first post on Thursday 30th 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).

Bumper book bargains

New arrivals at the Freedom Press Bookshop

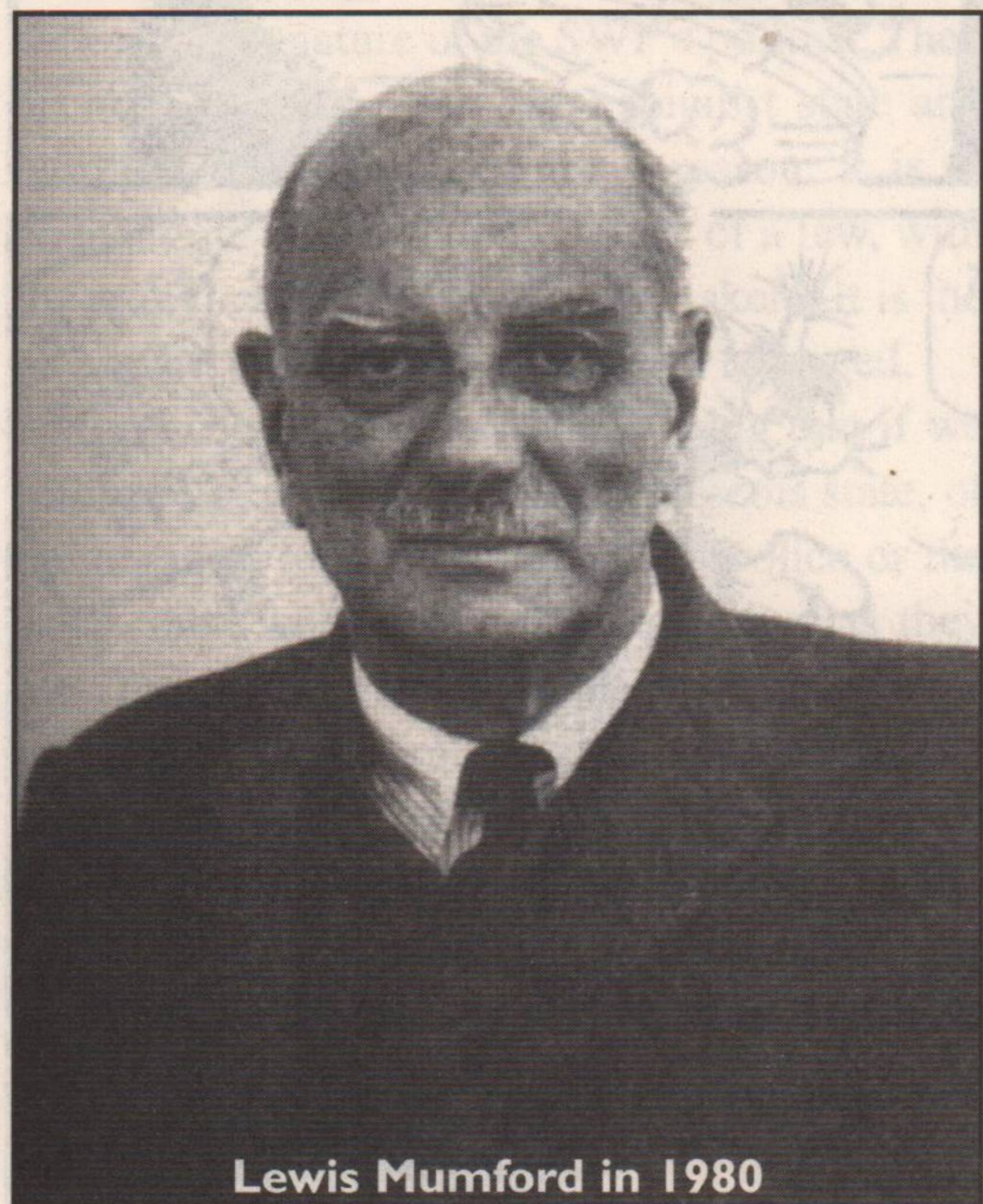


Alexander Trocchi

Lewis Mumford and the Ecological Region: the politics of planning* by Mark Luccarelli, Guilford Press. Internationally recognised as one of the twentieth century's most influential urban historians and critics, as well as one of the foremost advocates of regional planning, Lewis Mumford was strongly attracted to the 'planning from the bottom up' ideas of his mentor, the Scottish botanist Patrick Geddes. Geddes was a philosopher of town and country planning as a popular, practical activity that he was convinced should be carried out by ordinary people in their own communities and environments, rather than them wasting time and effort in trying to persuade governments or local authorities to do it.

Mumford developed and adapted Geddes's principles of the ecologically-based region to show how the practice of urban planning and an ecological understanding of a natural geographical region were interdependent and ought to be controlled from the grassroots – i.e. by those affected – if cities were to be rescued from their descent into a soul-less megalopolis and if the natural and built environments were to co-exist in a balanced, sustainable way.

The book covers in detail topics such as 'Community and Place', 'Dinosaur Cities', 'Defining Regionalism,' and 'Planned Decentralisation: the Road Not Taken', and demonstrates how Mumford's ideas remain extraordinarily relevant and valuable to today's urban and environmental crises, if



Lewis Mumford in 1980

only we take the trouble to read him. It also shows how he tried to put his ideas into practice through the radical Regional Planning Association of America of which he was a founding member, and through which he advanced his concept of regional development that accounted for the mutual importance of the social world and the natural ecosystem.

In the light of the current serious flooding of lowland and riverside areas of Britain, what a pity this important urban critic and social commentator is not around today to highlight the foolhardiness of building on flood-plains, carpeting the land with concrete and using ever-more intensive farming methods that compact and erode the soil. But his ideas are still around and we can find some answers there.

230 pages with diagrams, maps and index. Published price £15.00, our price £5.95.

A Life in Pieces: reflections on Alexander Trocchi, edited by Allan Campbell and Tim Niel, Rebel Inc. The jacket of this fascinating foray into cultural history says that Trocchi, who I'd never heard of until recently, was at various times a "junkie, visionary, pimp, beat, literary outlaw, pornographer, philosopher, pig farmer, underground organiser and antique book dealer" and was "an influence on almost every facet of post-war underground culture". The list of people contributing their memories of, or observations and opinions about him certainly reads like a Who's Who of the '60s and '70s underground scene, and although much of it was before my time I recognise many of the names: Jeff Nuttall, Allen Ginsberg, Leonard Cohen, Patti Smith, Christopher Logue, William Burroughs – even the Situationist Guy Debord, who was unknown to most people in 1960.

Many of these pieces have not been published before and there are numerous extracts from Trocchi's own writings and recorded conversations weaving in and out of the book, including letters and lengthy excerpts from some of his books, in particular *Cain's Book* and *Young Adam*. There are also extracts from some of the erotic novels he wrote for the famous Olympia Press.

It was apparently a documentary film made

for the BBC that spawned the idea for a book, and we are informed that the latter has benefitted from more thorough research than the former.

Your 307 pages also gets you notes and sources, a bibliography and further reading list, and an index. The publisher's original price has now been reduced from £10.99 to a derisory £1.99.

Uniting the Tailors: trade unionism amongst the tailors of London and Leeds, 1870-1939 by Anne J. Kershen, Frank Cass. This is an important, detailed study of the condition of the mainly immigrant Jewish workers in the tailoring industry of London and Leeds, their struggles to organise in unions in pursuit of economic improvement and their battles, triumphs and failures against the sweatshop employers.

Of particular interest to us in Whitechapel is the scope of information, some of it previously unresearched, about the situation in London's East End where the workers were helped by anarchist and socialist activists. A major role was played by Rudolf Rocker, of course, but less well known is the role of William Wess, who took on the post of secretary of the strike committee during the Jewish tailors strike in 1889, and who founded the Federation of Jewish East London Labour Unions. Wess was a member of William Morris's Socialist League and his aim with the Federation, like all the other anarchists and socialists, was to encourage co-operation and unity between Jewish and Gentile workers, without which they knew there could be no progress in the workers' conditions. Wess was later the compositor for *Freedom* and in 1892 was responsible for saving *Freedom* Press's printing type and other materials from the clutches of the landlord whose Stoke Newington premises they were sharing with another group (see *Freedom – One Hundred Years: 1886-1986, Centenary Edition**). As an interesting footnote, one of *Freedom* Press's supporters and bookshop regulars tells us that he has a family connection to Wess and he has already bought three copies of the book.

Kershen's research emphasises that women were the backbone of the tailoring workforce, but these tailoresses, as they were called, were often divided amongst themselves and proved difficult to organise in unions. Needless to say, the bosses took

advantage of every difference in skill, class, age and ethnic or religious origin to reinforce these divisions, making it even harder for the women to unite and organise across these boundaries.

Kershen's predecessor at Queen Mary College, Professor William Fishman – known to all and sundry as plain Bill – the author of several books on London's East End and another bookshop regular, says in his generous Foreword: "This is not only about Jewish immigrants. It embraces the conditions of British factory workers, craft divisions and sweated labour ... The author has filled a vacuum in both British and Jewish social history, and thereby offers us a unique contribution to knowledge."

A 226-page hardback, plus 19 pages of illustrations and photographs. It includes copious chapter notes, 29 tables, a bibliography and an index. It was published at £35, but you can get it from us at a mere £6.99.

The Radicalism Handbook: a complete guide to the radical movement in the 20th century compiled by John Button, Cassell. This book "highlights the continuity and power of radical thought and action throughout the twentieth century and demonstrates the courage of women and men from all over the world who have been prepared to make a stand for their radical beliefs. It contains over 360 biographies of twentieth century radicals from every field, including freethinkers; suffragists; pacifists; Third World liberationists; campaigners for civil, human, women's and gay rights; as well as global and environmental activists. A preliminary section, 'Radical Forerunners', ranges from Mikhail Bakunin and Aphra Benn to Oscar Wilde and Mary Wollstonecraft. The entries in the main bibliographical section have been carefully selected to give a balance of women and men, and Western and Third World thinkers and activists. In addition there are over eighty profiles of radical groups and movements that have played an important role in shaping politics and society in the twentieth century. At a time when grassroots activism is set for a renewed upsurge, *The Radicalism Handbook* provides inspiration for a new generation of radical thinkers and campaigners."

A useful rule-of-thumb with publications claiming to be 'complete guides' to anything

(continued on page 5)

Photograph taken from *Uniting the Tailors* by Anne Kershen

(continued from page 4)

is to assume that they're incomplete. Thus in this one we find politicians and other statisticians included as 'radicals', but not a mention of the first two genuine radicals – and anarchists – that I happened to look up, Rose Pesotta and B. Traven. However, this situation is probably unavoidable, to be fair, since even if it were possible to be truly complete any such guide would take so long to research, compile and verify that it would be well out of date before it was published. That said, this book certainly aims at the right end of the scale of completeness, and is a very handy reference manual. It also has pretty good entries on a fair number of anarchists and libertarians, and a useful feature is the appendices grouping people by country and by main areas of activity.

460 pages including three appendices and a 13-page index. Published at £13.99, our price only £3.99 plus £3.00 p&p due to its weight.

The Feminism of Flora Tristan* by Máire Cross and Tim Gray, Berg Publishers. This is an examination of the life and work of the celebrated nineteenth century writer and activist, a fundamental aspect of whose ideology was libertarianism. Tristan was a complex mixture of liberal feminist and individualist who nevertheless took up the ideas of socialism.

Born into an aristocratic family in France, she was cast out and disinherited in her early childhood. Forced into poverty, she entered into a disastrous marriage with her boss in her early teens, whom she fled from with her three children. Thirteen years later her husband shot and wounded her in the street in broad daylight. By then she had become an ardent champion of workers' emancipation – men as well as women, for she saw that without freedom for one group there could not be freedom for the other – and wrote and published her famous book *The Workers' Union*, which advocated a nationwide system of economic and industrial organisation for the French working class which would allow them to survive independently of the big capitalist producers and eventually usher in a socialist society, and she travelled around France tirelessly propagating her ideas.

Tristan was in favour of total freedom of expression, even for those whose opinions



Flora Tristan

she despised. However, she could be self-centred and intolerant of others and according to one writer "found it impossible to cooperate with other feminists or to accept their criticisms". Among her influences she counted Mary Wollstonecraft, Fourier, Robert Owen, Eugénie Niboyet, the Saint Simonians, Proudhon, Marx and Victor Considérant.

Despite the fact that she died before she had become influential enough to ensure the widespread dissemination of her ideas, Flora

Tristan made an important contribution to women's emancipation, despite the difficulties – which many others have found since – of trying to link it to the class struggle.

A 187-page hardback with a bibliography, further reading guide and index. Published at £25.50, our price is only £4.95.

Universities in the Business of Repression: the academic-military-industrial complex and Central America* by Jonathan Feldman, South End Press. A truly astonishing amount of information has been excavated for this bulky guide exposing academia's complicity with militarism and repression in developing countries. It deals chiefly with Central America, but also gives data on Vietnam, South Africa and Israel. Feldman clearly demonstrates that US universities, far from being merely impartial centres of learning are actively involved through funding by the state, big business and the military in the repression of third world peoples. He names the arms companies, the agro-chemical multinationals, the banks and the state agencies from whom they accept billions of dollars every year to do their research and development for them. The results of this R&D – commercial products, military hardware and economic and political policies



Universities in the Business of Repression

which poison, maim, kill and impoverish – are then handed over to their paymasters. (Additional information on US policies in Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador and Costa Rica can be found in abundance, for the less squeamish, in Blum's *Killing Hope*, mentioned in a previous *Freedom*.)

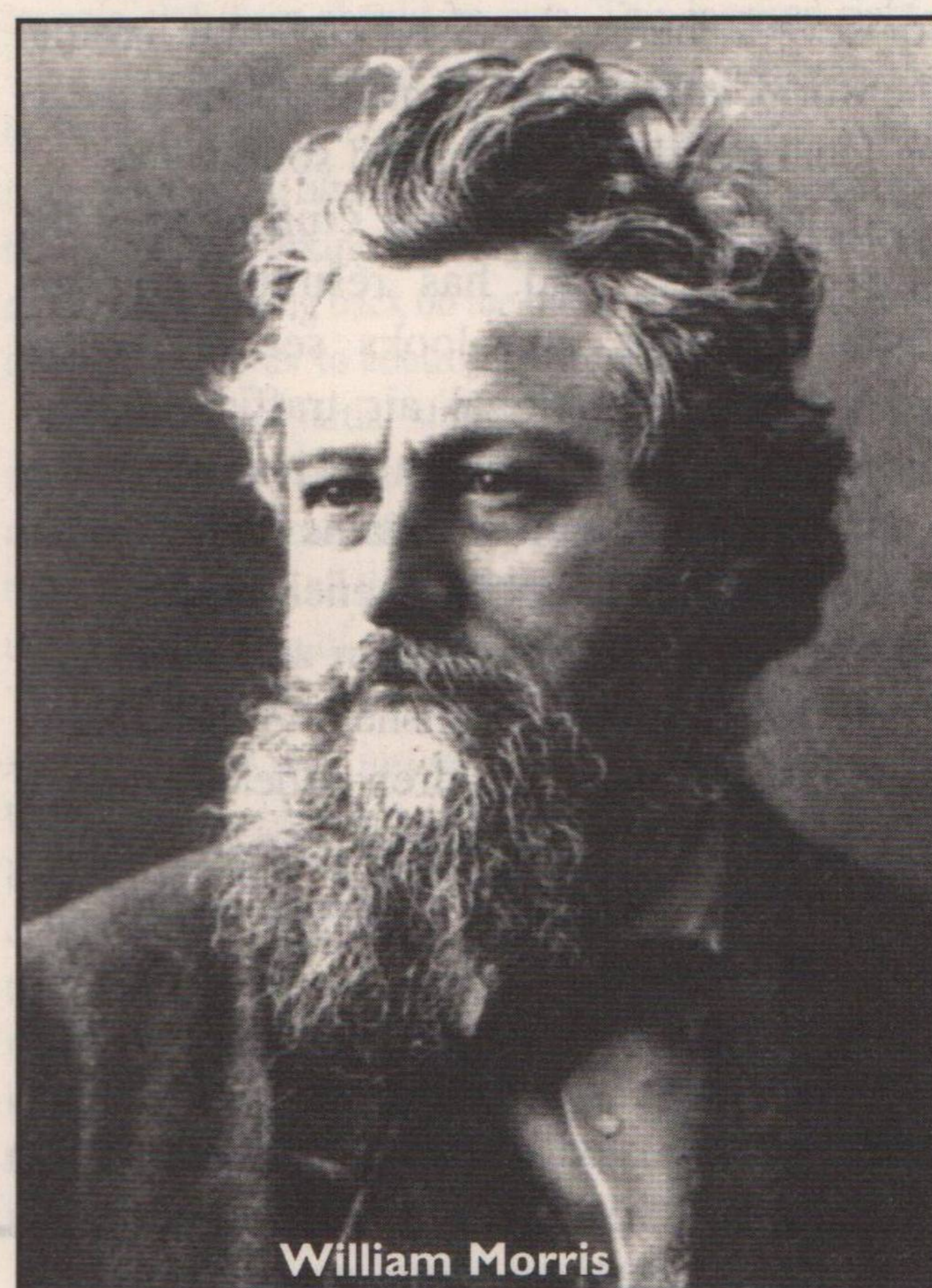
But more than just cataloguing the crimes, the book is a handbook for activists, presenting a strategy for disinvestment in these companies, modelled on the successful campaign against investments in the apartheid South African régime. Feldman illustrates the extent of involvement of individual US universities, and the book is packed with graphs, statistics and tables.

In its 370 pages there is an index, no fewer than six appendices and 50 pages of notes. Published in 1989, it remains one of the few accessible books on the subject in detail, and what's more we have it reduced from £11.50 to £3.95.

Journalism: contributions to 'Commonweal' 1885-1890 by William Morris, edited and introduced by Nicholas Salmon, Thoemmes Press. Launched in February 1885 by William Morris, *Commonweal* was the official journal of the Socialist League, of which he was a prominent member. Under his editorship the monthly paper soon became the foremost socialist periodical in Britain, and regularly ran articles by some of the best-known socialists including, among others, Engels, Eleanor Marx, Edward Aveling, Shaw, Paul Lafargue and Joseph Lane.

These are Morris's own articles which

most compilers of previous collections of his work have systematically ignored in favour of his lectures and speeches, or fictional works. Yet these political writings, says Salmon in his Introduction, "constitute one of the most



William Morris

powerful and sustained attacks ever made on the nineteenth century capitalist system. They were inspired by his implacable belief that socialists should abstain from all forms of electioneering and 'treat Parliament as a representative of the enemy'. His central aim ... was to attract new recruits to the socialist cause by showing how the bourgeois executive, irrespective of which party was in power, always governed in its own class interests. He also hoped to dissuade socialists from ignoring the existence of the class war and attempting to bring about the social revolution by parliamentary methods."

Morris never missed an opportunity to denigrate politicians and their pathetic and insincere attempts at reform, and in this hefty collection you can read his opinions and analyses on everything from the Match Girls' Strike to the Irish question, from the Channel tunnel proposal (!) to the Haymarket martyrs, via the Jack the Ripper murders. And old Morris had a wicked sense of humour too.

Two minor quibbles occur to me regarding the production: there is no indication in the contents list of what each section contains, aside from 'contributions to *Commonweal* for ... [e.g. 1888]', so it is very much a question of picking a year and wading through it; and there is no index either, which would have made this task a lot easier. Given the book's sheer size, however, I imagine that the editor and/or publishers balked at the thought of having to add perhaps another 50-odd pages. Nevertheless, this book is an excellent and welcome addition to the collections of social and political writings by this nineteenth century socialist.

674 pages, with chronology. Publisher's price £18.73, our price only £4.99. Due to the adverse weight-to-price ratio we will have to charge £3.85 towards postage and packing for those who can't get to the shop, as the damn thing weighs over a kilo!

Rethinking Eco-Feminist Politics* by Janet Biehl, South End Press. Besides being well known as Murray Bookchin's companion, Biehl is a social ecologist in her own right and an accomplished theorist and writer. In this critique of ecofeminism, she admits that she was once attracted to the idea herself: "It had been my earnest hope that ecofeminism would draw upon the best of social theory and meld it with radical concepts in ecology to produce a genuinely anti-hierarchical, enlightened and broadly oppositional movement, one that could

oppose sexism and the many forces that are at work in destroying the biosphere and trammelling human freedom. Its emphasis on women's sexual liberation as part of the 'revolt of nature' seemed an exhilarating contribution to feminist theory. It seemed to promise a new integration of humanity's place in nonhuman nature, an appreciation of women's historical role in childbearing and childrearing, while at the same time emancipating women from regressive definitions that placed them exclusively in that social role. It seemed to provide feminists with a creative and thoughtful approach for building an ecological movement."

Biehl gradually realised, however, that ecofeminism is "marked by massive internal contradictions – and even celebrations of its own incoherence. Some ecofeminists atavistically romanticise Neolithic prehistory, and spread theism, irrationalism and mystification in both the ecology and the feminist movements – and thereby contribute to a general counter-Enlightenment. Their proposals for an ecological ethics – ranging from a belief in the supposed 'aliveness' of nature, to goddess worship to affirming 'women's values' – are utilitarian at best, and regressive for women at worst."

Revealing the fallacies and contradictions of ecofeminism, Biehl argues that a feminist in the ecology movement need not accept ecofeminism *per se* as an ideology. In the end, she argues, social ecology, an alternative framework, is more liberating for men and women, as well as for our beleaguered biosphere.

181 pages, with chapter notes and index. The publisher's price is £9.50, our price is a mere £3.95.

Bookworm

The books reviewed here have just arrived at the shop and are all sold at a reduction from the published price. However, we cannot afford to sell the books cheap and also cover heavy postal charges (and books are heavy objects) so we do ask customers ordering by mail to add postage as a percentage of the original price, or as otherwise stated at the end of each review. Although we still have two issues of *Freedom* before the end of the year, with the present adverse weather causing delays in some postal services we thought it was not too early to make this a 'Christmas' books issue. So order now and be sure of receiving your books before the festive season starts.

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Lift the sanctions on Iraq

For anyone concerned with the ordinary people of Iraq, these are exciting times. Over two dozens flights to Baghdad airport defying the sanctions, a national political party finally breaking the political consensus in Britain, an internationally reported series of demonstrations to mark the tenth anniversary of the economic sanctions – all give grassroots activists enormous opportunities to build the movement against economic sanctions into an unstoppable force.

Even the oil 'crisis' (much exaggerated, and unfortunately exacerbated by the crisis in Israel/Palestine) has re-emphasised Iraq's importance in the international economy as the country with the second largest proven reserves of oil in the world.

The exhilarating sit-down protest in Whitehall in August, which saw nearly a

hundred people blocking the thoroughfare for several hours, received coverage around the world, and provided a platform for activists on local radio from Scotland southwards.

Unfortunately, despite the crumbling of the air sanctions (Iraq has resumed internal civilian flights, and looks set to receive scheduled international air traffic, perhaps from Russia via Iranian airspace), the humanitarian situation remains dire.

A survey by two UN agencies (the Food and Agriculture Organisation and the World Food Programme) published in September found that 800,000 children under the age of five were chronically malnourished. Chronic malnutrition can lead to lifelong mental and physical stunting.

The figures for chronic malnutrition have only declined slightly since 1997, when UNICEF reported 960,000 children under

the age of five chronically malnourished, despite three years of the UN-monitored oil-for-food humanitarian programme.

Anti-sanctions activists in Britain are gathering to hear from Hans von Sponeck, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator who resigned in protest against the sanctions in February, to see his new video about children in Iraq, and to share experiences, information and ideas.

The conference is jointly called by Voices in the Wilderness UK (who continue to break the sanctions) and CASI. Join us in Manchester for the most important anti-sanctions event of the year!

Milan Rai
Voices in the Wilderness UK

The Anti-Sanctions Conference (with Hans von Sponeck, former UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq) opens at 7pm on Friday 1st December at the Manchester University Students Union, continues on Saturday 2nd and finishes on Sunday 3rd December at 3pm. The conference is organised by Voices in the Wilderness UK. Cost for the weekend is £10/£5. Booking and

booking forms are available from Glenn kcnl@globalnet.co.uk or at 29 John Street, Enfield, Mddx or telephone (local rate) 0845 458 9571. Please make cheques to 'Anti-Sanctions Conference'.

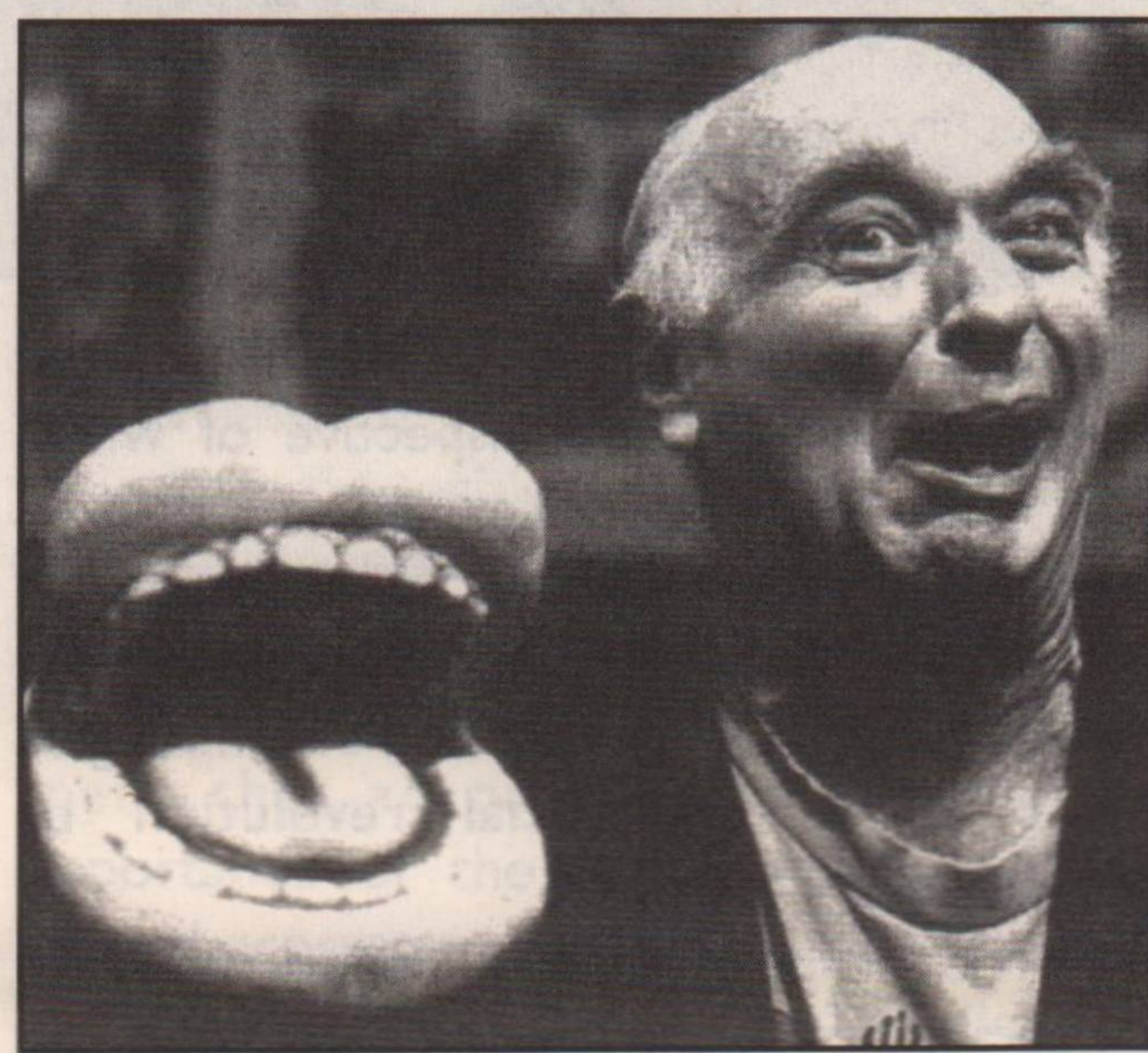
US election special

Important choices

Who said there was nothing at stake in the US election? There's a fierce battle on between the candidates to replace Buddy the labrador and Socks the cat, who'll retire with Clinton. George W. has a spaniel called Spot and two cats, Gore owns two dogs. Pat Buchanan, the raving loon who is standing for the Reform Party, has a cat called Gipper who "brings out his softer side". But why stop at White House pet? If there has to be a president, Spot's obviously the dog for the job. Sending him ten tins of Chum a day will be much cheaper for industry than supporting any human wannabe, and he's hardly going to know less about the world than his owner. Or is he already pulling Bush's strings?

Bite the ballot

Anybody with a few minutes to spare next 3rd May (or whenever it is our dear leader decides to call an election) might be interested in an idea kicked over from Canada. The Edible Ballot Campaign is organising a concerted attack of paper-munching for the next Canadian election. There's got to be potential in the UK too. Just imagine, the novelty of actually going into a polling station. And we guarantee any temporary indigestion as the paper slips down (make sure you chew properly) will be much easier to bear than the pain of digesting the real results, whatever they are. All power to the ballot-biters! You can check out their website at



<http://tao.ca/~wrench> or e-mail them at edibleballot@tao.ca

WEF: the next step

An international meeting was held in Switzerland last month to plan actions against the World Economic Forum (WEF) congress in Davos in the new year. About eighty people from several different countries discussed the implementation of a total blockade of the Swiss resort, throughout the congress which takes place from 25th to 30th January. Although there's still a lot of work to do, some main

principles were agreed: "we reject all forms and systems of domination and discrimination ... we clearly reject the WEF and deny it any legitimacy whatsoever ... we take a confrontational position to the WEF, which excludes both dialogue and any form of lobbying".

To subscribe to the e-mail list, send an empty message to mailto:anti-wefinfo-subscribe@egroups.de

(continued from page 2)

counter the police, without waiting for instructions from the centre, as well as communicate what was happening to other roadblocks and come to common agreements on what action to take. The Washington demonstration showed the effectiveness of anarchist principles, of decentralisation and federalism from the bottom up.

So the SWP's analysis of the Washington demonstration is faulty on two levels. Firstly, their account is not accurate. The demonstration was organised in a decentralised manner and worked extremely well. Secondly, even if their account was not fiction, it proves the failure of centralisation, not federalism.

They draw a lesson from their fictional account: "The police, needless to say, did not 'decentralise' their decision making. They co-ordinated across the city to break the protests."

Such an analogy indicates the bourgeois and authoritarian nature of the SWP's politics. They do not understand that the capitalist state and workplace is centralised for a reason. It is to concentrate power into the hands of a few, with the many reduced to mere order takers. It is the means by which bourgeois rule is enforced.

Moreover, they seem to be arguing that if we followed the example of the bourgeois state, of the organisational structure of the police or the army, then we would be as 'effective' as they are. They are, in effect, arguing that the anti-capitalist movement should reproduce the regulated docility of the police force into its ranks, reproduce the domination of a few bosses at the top over a mass of unquestioning automatons at the bottom. As Murray Bookchin argued, the Leninist "has always had a grudging admiration and respect for that most inhuman of all hierarchical institutions, the

military." The SWP prove him right.

Yes, there is a need for co-ordination and joint activity, but that must be created from below, in new ways that reflect the goals we are aiming for. During the Spanish Revolution anarchists organised militias to fight the fascists. One was led by anarchist militant Durruti. His military adviser, Pérez Farras, a professional soldier, was concerned about the application of libertarian principles to military organisation. Durruti replied: "I have already said and I repeat; during all my life, I have acted as an anarchist. The fact of having been given political responsibility for a human collective cannot change my convictions. It is under these conditions that I agreed to play the role given to me by the Central Committee of the Militias."

"I thought – and what has happened confirms my belief – that a workingmen's militia cannot be led according to the same rules as an army. I think that discipline, co-ordination and the fulfilment of a plan are indispensable. But this idea can no longer be understood in the terms of the world we have just destroyed. We have new ideas. We think that solidarity among men must awaken personal responsibility, which knows how to accept discipline as an autonomous act."

"Necessity imposes a war on us, a struggle that differs from many of those that we have carried on before. But the goal of our struggle is always the triumph of the revolution. This means not only victory over the enemy, but also a radical change in man. For this change to occur, man must learn to live in freedom and develop in himself his potentialities as a responsible individual. The worker in the factory, using his tools and directing production, is bringing about a change in himself. The fighter, like the worker, uses his gun as a tool

and his acts must lead to the same goals as those of the worker.

"In the struggle he cannot act like a soldier under orders but like a man who is conscious of what he is doing. I know it is not easy to get such a result, but what one cannot get by reason, one can never get through force. If our revolutionary army must be maintained through fear, we will have changed nothing but the colour of fear. It is only by freeing itself from fear that a free society can be built."

Durruti's words effectively refute the SWP's flawed argument. We need to organise, co-ordinate, co-operate our activities but we cannot do so in bourgeois ways. We need to discover new ways, based on libertarian ideas and not capitalist ones like centralisation.

They continue by arguing that "Anarchists say a revolutionary party is at best unnecessary and at worst another form of authoritarianism. But they cannot avoid the problems that a revolutionary party addresses." In reality, while anarchists reject the "revolutionary" party, they do not reject the need for an anarchist federation to spread anarchist ideas, convince others of our ideas and to give a lead during struggles. We reject the Bolshevik style 'revolutionary party' simply because it is organised in a centralised, bourgeois, fashion and so produces all the problems of capitalist society within so-called revolutionary organisations. As the anarchists of Trotwatch explain, such a party leaves much to be desired: "In reality, a Leninist Party simply reproduces and institutionalises existing capitalist power relations inside a supposedly 'revolutionary' organisation: between leaders and led; order givers and order takers; between specialists and the acquiescent and largely powerless party workers. And that elitist power relation is extended to include the

relationship between the party and class."

Such an organisation can never create a socialist society. In contrast, anarchists argue that socialist organisations should reflect as much as possible the future society we are aiming to create. To build organisations which are statist/capitalistic in structure cannot do other than reproduce the very problems of capitalism/statism into them and so undermine their liberatory potential. As Murray Bookchin puts it: "The 'glorious party,' when there is one, almost invariably lags behind the events ... In the beginning ... it tends to have an inhibitory function, not a 'vanguard' role. Where it exercises influence, it tends to slow down the flow of events, not 'co-ordinate' the revolutionary force. This is not accidental. The party is structured along hierarchical lines that reflect the very society it professes to oppose ... Its membership is schooled in obedience ... The party's leadership, in turn, is schooled in habits born of command, authority, manipulation ... Its leaders ... lose contact with the living situation below. The local groups, which know their own immediate situation better than any remote leaders, are obliged to subordinate their insights to directives from above. The leadership, lacking any direct knowledge of local problems, responds sluggishly and prudently ..."

"The party becomes less efficient from a revolutionary point of view the more it seeks efficiency by means of hierarchy, cadres and centralisation. Although everyone marches in step, the orders are usually wrong, especially when events begin to move rapidly and take unexpected turns – as they do in all revolutions. The party is efficient in only one respect – in moulding society in its own hierarchical image

(continued on page 7)

Reclaim your lives!

Dear *Freedom*,

I wanted to write to express my disagreement with your correspondent Mike Hamilton, as regards his ill-disguised personal attack on Nick S. (*Freedom*, 4th November) For me, it is Nick and Brian Bamford, with their refusal to concede to the argument that "we're all middle class now" and their attempt to work out a libertarian class struggle politics relevant to today, that makes *Freedom* such a stimulating paper.

Mike tells us that asthma has no "class recognition centre on board". This is nonsense. It is working class people who live in the most polluted inner-city areas, working class people who live in homes with the highest state of damp and disrepair. Mortality rates for ischaemic heart disease and lung cancer are higher for the working classes. Over the last thirty years the mortality rate for the upper and middle classes generally has fallen, while the mortality rate for the manual working class has risen. In the 1970s there was a twofold difference in mortality rates between classes I and V; by the 1990s it was almost threefold. It is the blindness of the Greens and Reclaim the Streets to issues around class that has excluded working class people from the environmental politics on which they ought to have most claim. As Nick says, green politics has been reduced to a campaign for clean air for the middle classes, with no sense of how those of us still caught up in the capital-labour relation of exploitation can use our social power as workers to fight for what the US activists call environmental justice.

Mike says Nick sounds as if he's writing for "some class war comic around about the 1930s." I think it will always be the case that those not affected by class will complain about the rest of us banging on about it. But

the exploitation of working class people didn't stop in the 1930s and the 'new social movement' prattle Mike resorts to has been old hat since the late '60s, and changed nothing for most of us. Telling us to stop going on about class is really saying that the anarchist project either is something we should leave to our betters, or that middle class anarchists think that their personal freedom doesn't stretch to combating the exploitation and want endured by the rest of us. Even Mike's use of the term 'the great

unwashed' drips with contempt. I think Nick and Brian have been consistent in doing precisely what Mike suggests – presenting an alternative vision, one of working class emancipation. Perhaps Mike should ask himself why he feels threatened or excluded or plain bored by this – perhaps that's the part of the *status quo* he's quite content with? If what Nick and Brian write makes people uncomfortable, well, perhaps a few anarchist complacencies about class – what we say about it, and who should say it and how it should be said – need a bit of a shake up. Keep up the good work.

Sean O'Rourke

Play safe?

Dear *Freedom*,

Mike Hamilton asks (4th November) "who elected Nick S. to perpetuate this ossified view" of class struggle. Like Mike, I don't see class analysis as a useful tool to understand this society or to help us construct a better one. But many (most?) anarchists do, and *Freedom* is an anarchist propaganda paper. So shouldn't it cover a range of anarchist views, so readers can make up their own minds?

Generally, I disagree with a lot of what Nick writes. But that is a good thing. The alternative is a paper full of things I agree with, and what's the use of that? 'Safe' might do for the *Daily Mail*, but it can't be what *Freedom* (or anarchism) is about. Can it?

Toby Crowe

Direct democracy and law

Dear *Freedom*,

Nick S. (letters, 4th November 2000) doesn't address any of the fundamental concerns I expressed in my letter of 21st October 2000 and in previous letters, and appears to misunderstand much of what I have said. I have never disputed Nick's contention that the protesters of Paulsgrove were largely working class women suffering discrimination though I think it is uncertain to what extent this is calculated conspiracy on the part of the authorities rather than unthinking selfishness and short term expediency. And my complaint that the fuel protests increased support for the Tories was certainly not meant to suggest that I consider New Labour a lesser evil (what a grotesque thought!); but that the fuel protests are motivated by and supported for quite the wrong reasons.

I ask again: should we not judge actions solely by whether their aims and their methods are what we consider good or bad? Milan Rai (and by proxy Chomsky) put the same point very well in his letter on the same page as mine (New-fangled anarchism). Nick

worries that some anarchists, as well as the chattering classes, are terrified by the white working class. Well, two nights ago I heard a posh-talking man (chattering class no doubt) on the radio demanding further punishment for the boy killers of James Bulger. I found his attitude as nasty and repugnant as that of the protesters of Paulsgrove. It is right, I believe, for anybody, whosoever they may be, working class or chattering class, to be frightened by nasty and repugnant attitudes or acts expressed or committed by anybody, whosoever they may be, working class or chattering class.

The other fundamental – and allied – issue that Nick failed to comment on is the question of the desirability, or otherwise, of democracy, direct or otherwise, but particularly direct democracy. I do not understand what democracy has to do with anarchism. These two seem to me to be diametrically opposed. I repeat: democracy is a system of power without restraints. I understand the core ideal of anarchism to be the abolition of power, and the freedom of individuals from the control of others.

Finally, if I understand him right, Nick deplores the anarchist failure to find a politics of direct action. Can he explain in concrete practical terms what such politics would be, and give a practical, even if imaginary, example of its application?

Amorey Gethin

Please keep sending in your letters and donations

(continued from page 6)

if the revolution is successful. It recreates bureaucracy, centralisation and the state. It fosters the bureaucracy, centralisation and the state. It fosters the very social conditions which justify this kind of society. Hence, instead of 'withering away,' the state controlled by the 'glorious party' preserves the very conditions which 'necessitate' the existence of a state – and a party to 'guard' it."

But, then again, the SWP know that anarchists do not reject the need for anarchists to organise as anarchists to influence the class struggle. As they argue, "Anarchism's attempts to deal with them have been far less effective and less democratic".

They continue: "All the major anarchist organisations in history have been centralised but have operated in secret. The nineteenth century theorist of anarchism Mikhail Bakunin's organisation had a hierarchy of committees, with half a dozen people at the top, which were not under the democratic control of its members."

It is just as well they say 'all the major anarchist organisations', it allows them to ignore counter-examples. We can point to hundreds of anarchist organisations that are/were not secret. For example, the Italian Anarchist Union was a non-secret organisation. Given that the IAU had around 20,000 members in 1920, we wonder by what criteria the SWP excludes it from being a 'major anarchist organisation'? The French Anarchist Federation which organises today has a weekly paper and groups all across France and Belgium. That is not secret and is a major anarchist organisation. We wonder why the SWP excludes it? Simply because they know their generalisation is false?

As for Bakunin's organisation, we wonder why anyone would have wanted to join it if they had no say in the organisation. Also, given that communication in the nineteenth century was extremely slow, such an organisation would have spent most of its time waiting for instructions from above. Why would anyone want to join such a group? Simple logic undermines the SWP's argument.

The reality of Bakunin's organisation is slightly different. The association's "single will," Bakunin wrote, would be determined by "laws" that every member "helped to create," or at a minimum "equally approved" by "mutual agreement." This "definite set of rules" was to be "frequently renewed" in plenary sessions wherein each member had the "duty to try and make his view prevail," but then he must accept fully the decision of the majority. Thus the revolutionary association's "rigorously conceived and prescribed plan," implemented under the "strictest discipline," was in reality to be "nothing more or less than the expression and direct outcome of the reciprocal commitment contracted by each of the members towards the others" (quoted by Richard B. Saltman, *The Social and Political Thought of Michael Bakunin*, page 115).

We should also point out that the Bolshevik party itself was a secret organisation for most of its life in Tsarist Russia. Bakunin, an exile from Tsarist Russia, would have been aware, like the Bolsheviks, of the necessity of secret organising. Given that the countries in which anarchists were operating were not democracies, in the main, a secret organisation would have been considered essential. The SWP ignore the historical context.

(continued in the next issue of *Freedom*)

Speak up!

Dear Comrades,

Can it be that the people outraged at Tony Blair's decision to cut funds for maintenance of British War Graves abroad are the same people who praised him for his modernity, progressiveness and readiness to dump the meaningless symbols of an irrelevant past when he scrapped Clause 4, repudiated Socialism, and cut links with the Trade Unions, and who sneered at those who protested then over his 'betrayal of the memories of those who fought, struggled, sacrificed and died for our freedom', calling them 'dinosaurs' and 'neanderthals', 'living in the past' and told them to 'move on' and even to 'get a life'?

To paraphrase Pastor Niemoller: "And when they had taken away everybody else, they came for me, and there was nobody to speak up for me".

Keith Ackermann

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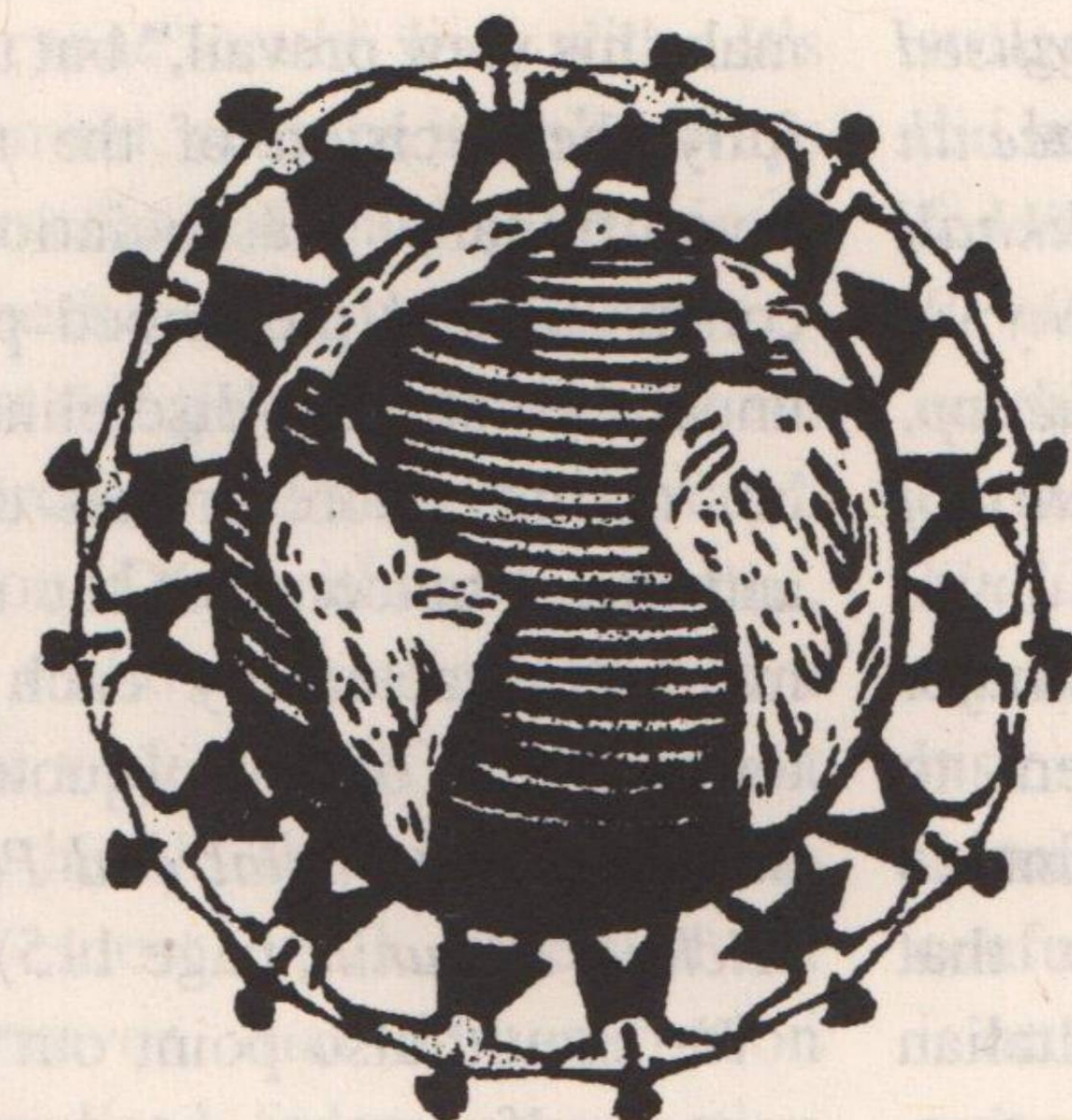
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Meetings & Events

Human Rights



we're planning this as our theme for
**International
Labour Day
(Mayday) 2001**



We are planning and organising events for the day now, and we'd welcome suggestions, help, comments and co-operation from your group. Perhaps you would like to get involved. What do you and your members think. Contact us at:
Lancaster & Morecambe Trade Union Council, 178a Lancaster Road, Morecambe
Tel/Fax: 01524 413600

**Lift sanctions
on Iraq**

The Anti-Sanctions Conference with Hans von Sponeck, former UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq opens at 7pm on Friday 1st December at the Manchester University Students Union, continues on Saturday 2nd and finishes on

Sunday 3rd December at 3pm

The conference is organised by

Voices in the Wilderness UK

Cost for the weekend is £10/£5.

Booking and booking forms are

available from Glenn

kcnl@globalnet.co.uk

29 John Street, Enfield, Middlesex
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Please make cheques to

'Anti-Sanctions Conference'

**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 wilderness tel: 01865 243 232

e-mail voices@viwuk.freeserve.co.uk
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