

anarchist fortnightly Freedom

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50p



Armageddon awaits

In 1962, the United States and the Soviet Union came to the brink of nuclear war. *Thirteen Days*, the Hollywood remake of the Cuban missile crisis, is being marketed with the scary warning "you'll never believe how close we came".

Luckily for Hollywood (which loves a happy ending), and even more luckily for the rest of us, the Soviet Union

backed down. The nuclear missiles, which Khrushchev's navy were carrying to Cuba for deployment a few miles from the Florida coast, turned homewards.

Huge sighs of relief all round. But surprisingly enough, the last word on the issue belongs to Kevin Costner, producer and star of *Thirteen Days*. "Things have changed since the Cold War", he has said. "But we're still,

interestingly enough, on the brink. These weapons of mass destruction have not gone away".

Armageddon is averted in 2½ hours of cinema in 2001, just as it was in thirteen days in 1962. But the reprieve might have been only temporary. The missiles are still out there. It's up to us to make Hollywood's happy ending permanent, as it is to make it real.

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And now it's Naples ...

Just two weeks after clashes in the Mexican town of Cancun, anti-globalisation protests in Naples erupted into violence again last week as police charged crowds with batons and teargas.

More than 20,000 demonstrators from Italy and beyond had travelled to the city, many by special train from Palermo and Milan, because it was hosting the third conference of the Global Forum, a networking meeting of bosses from government, technology and finance. The title of the meeting was 'Reinventing Government', and its theme was how to develop the role of the internet in the self-styled democratic states.

Although the meeting began on Thursday last week, last Saturday (the last day) was designated the day of action by campaign groups. Among these were a number of anarchist groups, which included syndicalists, pacifists and communists.

City police and the paramilitary carabinieri imposed tight security on the city centre, sealing off streets with barricades and riot vehicles to prevent the protests from reaching the Piazza Plebiscito where the meeting was being held. Hundreds of them were detailed to protect every bank and every branch of McDonalds along the routes taken by marchers.



As protesters marched from their meeting points towards the centre, cops contained them on all sides. Walls and shop fronts were spray-painted, and for about forty minutes police charged the march with batons and teargas. They also fired rubber bullets. Demonstrators threw stones in return. A computer store was destroyed.

One section of the crowd went to the Plaza Borsa, where a pitched battle with police took place. Many activists had come prepared with helmets, masks, shields and even Molotov cocktails. After half an hour's

fighting, many protesters surrendered to police and others were forced to retreat.

At least seventy protesters were injured, and forty police. These included a senior police commander, hospitalised with head wounds. Four journalists, including one from Italy's

Indymedia Centre, were reported to have been injured as well.

Around a hundred protesters were arrested, about half of them while they were receiving hospital treatment. However, few of these were expected to be charged.

Tight security has been imposed at dozens of high-level meetings and summits around (continued on page 2)

Amnesty damns Prague jails

Amnesty International has confirmed the accounts of mistreatment given by activists who were held in Czech jails after last autumn's protests against the IMF and World Bank in Prague.

In a report published last week, the human rights lobby group details human rights abuses, including illegal arrest and detention, inhumane prison conditions and beatings.

"We are concerned that the Czech police appear to have violated the rights of hundreds of people who were detained following protests" says the report, which was based on extensive research.

It cites the case of thirteen UK passport holders. On 26th September, they were heading for the coach that was due to take them back to Nottingham. But when they saw police beating up two people in the street, they stopped to see what was happening. They were then assaulted by six cops.

"I was grabbed by the throat, by a policeman in riot gear, and pinned against a wall, held there and repeatedly called a bitch", said Deirdre Melia, one of the group. Seven of them were then arrested, and held in custody for 32 hours.

In a small number of cases, Amnesty

considers that the severity of the police may amount to torture. The range of violent tactics used against handcuffed detainees included beating, prodding, slapping, kicking, pushing and twisting of fingers.

Tadzio Mueller, a German protester, told Amnesty that in Lupacova Street police station, where he was held, "they pushed my head down until it was between my legs and

then a cop stuck his boot in my face ... Four or five officers dragged me up from the floor, pushed me into a room where the arrest cells were, and proceeded to beat me".

It is also reported that most of those detained were not allowed to tell their families or to contact a lawyer. Some detainees with serious injuries sustained at the time of their arrest were denied adequate medical treatment.

Election deadline nears

Tony Blair has until next week to decide whether to call his General Election for 3rd May, as all reports suggest he would dearly love to do.

There have been rumours for some time that he would announce his intention to call a vote as early as Monday 26th February, and parliament would in that case be dissolved on 5th April.

As recently as two weeks ago, an ICM poll for BBC news found that 63% of those questioned thought the election should take place no matter how serious the foot-and-mouth outbreak. But at the start of this week,

it appeared that many of those who intended to vote were changing their minds. A poll carried out for Channel 4 News showed that only 36% now thought it should go ahead, while 47% said it should be delayed.

Local elections too will be affected if the prime minister decides that his chances of holding on to power will be compromised by having a poll at a time of what has been represented as a "national emergency".

If elections are delayed, the UK could have its first autumn election since 1974.



Protesters clash with the Czech police force in Prague at the end of September 2000

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Freedom

anarchist fortnightly

“Social democracy in every land is thus setting out for the new Jerusalem, along the same old muddy political tracks, of which some of us are so weary”

Charlotte Wilson

Anarchists work towards a society of mutual aid and voluntary co-operation. We reject all government and economic repression.

Freedom Press is an independent anarchist publisher. Besides the fortnightly newspaper *Freedom*, we also produce *The Raven* quarterly journal and many books on all aspects of anarchism. We also run Britain's biggest anarchist bookshop.

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Gallery cleared

The *News of the World* newspaper has been left embarrassed, after police and the state's Crown Prosecution Service decided last week not to continue with their attempts to intimidate London's Saatchi Gallery and Tierney Gearon, the photographer whose work provoked a police raid on the gallery.

In the first raid on an art gallery by Scotland Yard's obscene publications squad since pictures by John Lennon were seized over thirty years ago, cops warned curator Jenny Blyth that she had a week to remove two photographs of Gearon's own children from display in the 'I Am A Camera' exhibition. The photographs showed the two children, aged four and six, without clothes. In one of them, the younger child is pissing in the snow (see picture, right).

Inspector Brian Ward visited the gallery in St John's Wood twice. The first time was an undercover mission, to see that the images were still on show. The second time, on 8th March, he came with other cops to confront Blyth.

Police also warned Edward Booth-Clibborn, who published the book of the exhibition, to remove thousands of copies from sale or face prosecution under child pornography laws. Blyth, Gearon and Booth-Clibborn were told that they all up to three years in prison and a \$10,000 fine under the 1978 Protection of Children Act. This makes it a criminal offence to take, own, distribute or display indecent photographs of children.

Soon after the raid, it became clear that police were working closely with the *News of the World*. Although the newspaper reported that cops were "acting on complaints from concerned members of the public", the police themselves told the Saatchi Gallery that they were following up complaints from the paper's journalists.

In its editorial on Sunday 11th March, the



News of the World called for the closure of what it called "a revolting exhibition of perversion under the guise of art". It also attacked fellow paper the *Independent on Sunday* for sponsoring the exhibition and accused it of hypocrisy for its opposition to the now-abandoned 'name and shame' campaign conducted by the *News of the World* last summer.

But lawyers for the Crown Prosecution Service decided that the case should be dropped. "After carefully reviewing the evidence submitted by the Metropolitan police, the CPS has advised that there is insufficient evidence to provide a realistic prospect of conviction" said a lawyer.

This followed massive criticism of the police's actions, across a range of political opinions. This extended from the govern-

ment's culture secretary, Chris Smith, to members of the Freedom to be Yourself naked campaign group, who staged a nude protest outside the gallery last Thursday.

The artist herself, while pleased that the threat of prosecution has been lifted, doesn't seem as opposed to censorship as some of her defenders. "Of course there is a place for censorship in our society", she argues. "I find it amazing the amount that the authorities do let slip by".

Anarchists on the other hand, who expressed outrage at the threatened prosecution, have denied that the state has any right to censor her. "I don't like the photos myself", said one. "But that's my right. We don't get anywhere by censoring people. Freedom of speech is worth defending, even when it's over spooky pictures like that".

RTS at PGA

Groups from around Europe are meeting in Milan for the European conference of People's Global Action (PGA). Members of the UK's RTS, which belongs to the international coordinating network, are in Italy for the conference, which begins today.

The PGA network was launched in 1998 in Geneva, to improve communication between activists fighting the global market system around the world.

Member groups have to agree to five 'hallmarks' in order to join. According to these, they reject the World Trade Organisation and other trade liberalisation agreements; they reject all forms and systems of domination; they adopt "a confrontational attitude" in place of attempts to lobby bosses; they advocate non-violent direct action; and they follow "an organisational philosophy based on decentralisation and autonomy".

Besides RTS, other member groups come from South America, India, Sri Lanka, South Korea, Bangladesh, Serbia and the United States.

(continued from page 1)

the world since the huge anti-capitalism demonstrations against the World Trade Organisation in Seattle in 1999.

Police and activists in Canada are busy preparing for the next day of action, against the Summit of the Americas which begins in Quebec on 20th April. Solidarity actions around North America are also planned.

RTS hopes that the Milan Conference will go some way towards planning mobilisations for the G8 summit in Genoa in July, for the annual meeting of the IMF and World Bank in Washington in October and against the Ministerial Conference of the WTO in November, besides organising sustained actions that go beyond single days of actions. They also want to plan ways of strengthening and expanding the existing European activist networks.

Information on prisoners

Garf Gabbard, who was arrested during the disturbances at Euston in 1999, is now in Pentonville prison awaiting sentence and would welcome letters. His address is Garfield Marcus Gabbard FT9062, HMP Pentonville, Caledonian Road, London N7 8TT.

Mark Barnsley is now at Wakefield prison. Contact him: Mark Barnsley WA2897, HMP Wakefield, Love Lane, Wakefield WF2 9AG.

A new publication from Freedom Press out now



Charlotte Wilson Anarchist Essays

edited by Nicolas Walter

Charlotte Wilson was the principal founder of Freedom Press and the first editor of *Freedom* in 1886. Like the work of her better-known contemporary Peter Kropotkin, whom she invited to England to join the *Freedom* group, her anarchist writings are scholarly, original and clear.

Nicolas Walter finished editing this compilation for Freedom Press a few days before his untimely death.

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Sodexho day of action

A group of anti-prisons activists in London is planning a day of action against the detention multinational Sodexho next month. The event on Wednesday 4th April follows last month's demo against the company in Bristol.

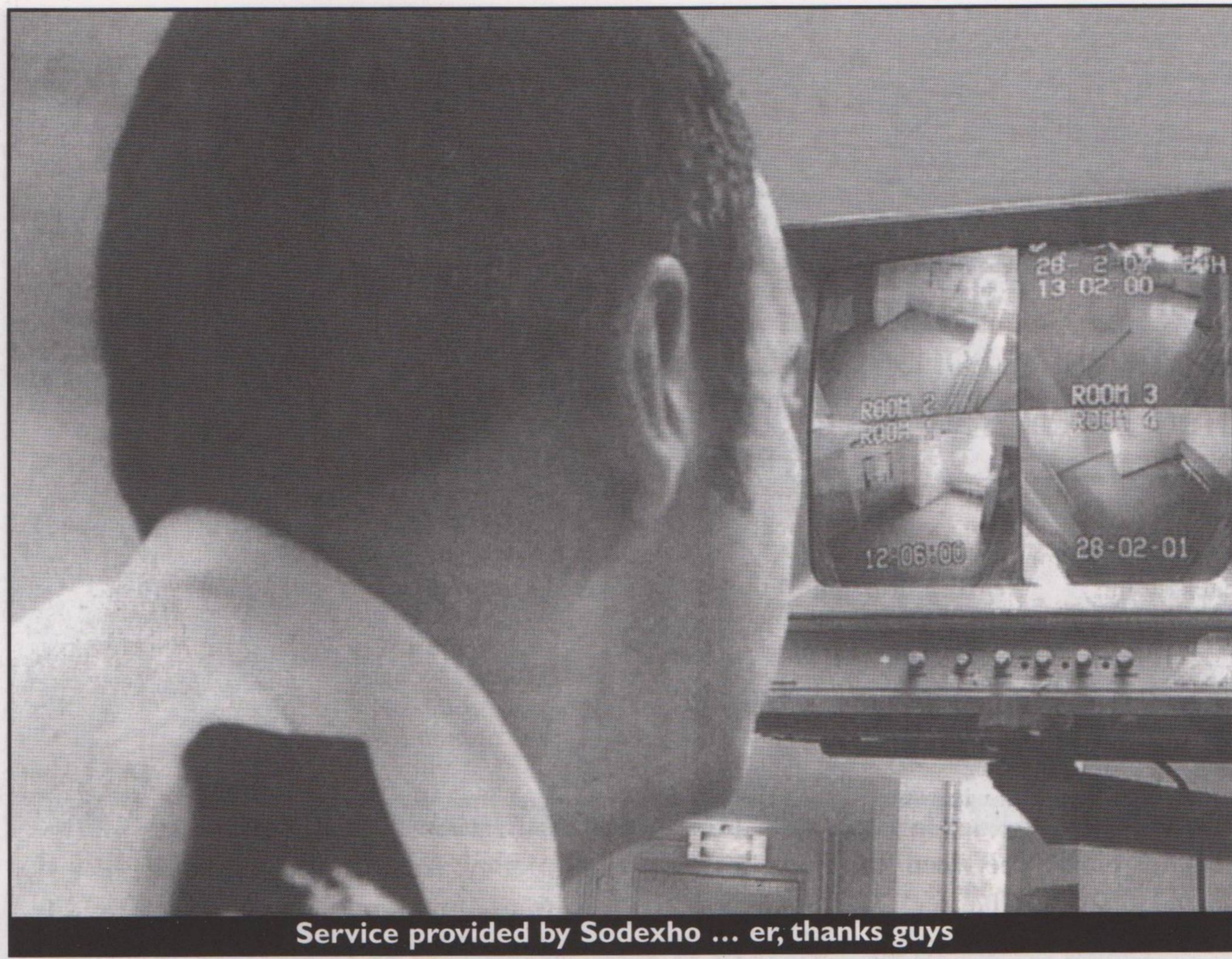
Sodexho has long been an anarchist target, because of its role in servicing prisons and detention centres worldwide. In June 1994, the then-French company entered a business alliance with US firm Corrections Corporation of America (CCA) to pursue prison management opportunities around the world.

It is now responsible for distributing the vouchers which UK asylum-seekers live on. It also owns half of UK Detention Services (CCA owns the other half), which is now building prisons such as HMP Blakenhurst in the midlands, and has a regional Prisoner Transport Contract.

On Saturday 24th February, about 25 people gathered in Bristol's Queen's Square to protest at the company's activities. They then marched to College Green where there is a Marriott Hotel (part-owned by Sodexho), handing out over 800 leaflets on the way.

Some activists managed to enter the hotel itself, where they draped a banner from a first-floor window which read "Sodexho Marriott - from hotels to prisons".

They later moved to the Eastgate branch of Tesco, to protest against the voucher system.



Service provided by Sodexho ... er, thanks guys

There were no arrests, but two protesters were banned from Marriott hotels for life ("our two friends have been very much affected by this unfair decision!" claims one of the demonstrators, unconvincingly).

CCA's share-value rose from \$8 in 1992 to \$30 in 1997. It even posts its daily share price on the gates of its American prisons.

The CAGE network supports resistance to prisons. For more information see www.veggies.org.uk/cage or e-mail prison@narchy.fsnet.co.uk or telephone 07931 401 962

In Bristol contact SOD-ACTION, Box 95, 82 Colston Street, Bristol BS1 5BB sod-action@fsmail.net

Editorial on page 7

Towards Mayday 2001

In our issues leading up to Mayday 2001, *Freedom* will run this regular column, featuring the more ludicrous/obvious plants by Britain's finest.

Under the headline 'Anarchists plot May protests to disrupt election', the *Times* (Tuesday 13th February) reports on the 'extremist groups' who are "plotting to paralyse London with violent May Day protests 48 hours before the expected general election polling day".

Apparently, "intelligence reports say that organisers are recruiting support from abroad to choke the capital on May 1. They intend the protests to spill over to election day."

Police are busy "monitoring electronic traffic between anarchist groups to thwart their plans, amid fears that ringleaders are intent on causing more trouble than at last year's May Day protests".

Talking to the *Times* to mark his first year as head of London's police force, Sir John Stevens, said that he was drawing up plans to cancel all police leave over the May Day weekend and was also considering a ban on all protests in the capital. "We cannot have the streets of London descending into anarchy" he thundered. "That cannot be allowed". The paper also reports that every security agency in the country is trying to uncover and then block the protesters' plans.

Niketown demo

Anti-Nike campaigners occupied London's main Niketown store at the beginning of last week, in a move designed to highlight the company's treatment of its workers around the world and to show solidarity with the Zapatista movement in Mexico.

Dressed in white overalls, activists from libertarian group The Wombles marched to the flagship store in Oxford Street on Sunday 11th March, after an earlier gathering outside the Mexican Embassy in Mayfair.

They then stormed into the shop, and unfurled a banner in the central atrium which read 'Nike sucks the life out of Mexico', complete with a Nike 'swoosh' dripping blood.

Several of them made speeches for the benefit of shoppers who had stopped to listen, and a shower of leaflets dropped from a walkway sent staff members scrambling around on the floor as they tried to pick them up before anyone got a chance to read them.

Security guards struggled vigorously to remove the demonstrators, as many of whom began to chant "Nike, Nike, take a hike". Several were punched.

Police arrived quickly, but it was another quarter of an hour before the campaigners moved back onto the pavement. The shop was then effectively shut for twenty minutes, while leaflets were handed out explaining the treatment of Nike factory workers in Cambodia, Indonesia and elsewhere. One Womble pointed out that campaigners working within Indonesia had picked five Nike factories at random. She claimed that they had been found to be rife with sexual abuse of women workers. "Nike say they are ethical" she said, "and it's proven time and time again to be bullshit".

The Wombles were joined by campaigners from south and central America. One of the declared aims of the actions was to show solidarity with the Zapatista rebels in the Chiapas region of Mexico, who have been active in supporting indigenous people there

since 1994. The Niketown protest followed a huge rally in the Chiapas city of San Cristobal de las Casas, and coincided with the entry of the subsequent Zapatista tour into Mexico City itself.

A Peruvian protester, standing on the street outside Niketown, explained that the struggle against multinational firms in the west couldn't be separated from the struggle of indigenous peoples across the world. "I'm here in solidarity with the Zapatistas because in Mexico and Peru, these multinationals make big business".

The same store was the subject of a protest by sweatshop campaigners in December.

BBC under threat

A conference was held in London's Kings Cross at the end of last month to alert the public to a little-reported threat to broadcasting.

This comes from the government's white paper on the media, *A New Future for Communications*, which was announced in December. This was designed, said culture secretary Chris Smith at the time, to give broadcasters "lighter touch regulation so that they have the freedom to operate effectively". For the first time the BBC will be forced into direct competition with its commercial rivals.

Critics at the conference said that this would herald the end of the BBC as a

medium for any sort of free expression. "As night follows day, there would follow a systematic erosion of the BBC's popular base, until it became an American-style unwatched public broadcaster", Stephen Barnett, professor of communications at Westminster University, told the conference. "At that point, the licence fee, and therefore the BBC, dies. It's not difficult to level the playing field if you don't mind barren ground".

Nobody from the BBC or the national press attended the conference, organised by the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom.



University under siege

Palestine's Birzeit University is now under a state of siege, following a blockade by the Israeli army. On the night of 7th March, soldiers moved to destroy sections of the only road linking the university to Ramallah, digging trenches and destroying the asphalt over 400 metres. Besides cutting off the university, this also cut off 34 villages with a population of around 65,000 people. Cars, ambulances and provisions have been unable to reach them since.

On 12th March, over 1,000 people marched from Ramallah to the ruined road, calling for the removal of roadblocks and the filling in of the trenches. These included teachers, staff and students from the university.

Demonstrators began to fill the trenches by hand and with simple gardening tools. They also used a bulldozer which had been brought from Ramallah. Israeli army units stationed on a nearby hilltop kept the action under surveillance, but at first made no effort to intervene.

But soon they started to fire teargas at the marchers, and when this was unsuccessful in dispersing them, rubber bullets were used. Several demonstrators then began to throw stones at soldiers.

More clashes took place later as Israeli forces moved to re-open the trenches. One man was killed and many injured as an army bulldozer moved in under heavy escort.

Later on last week, the army installed



Protesters on the Ramallah road, 14th March, watched by Israeli soldiers

cement blocks between the trenches and posted guards on the road. Telephone lines to the university were also cut.

Birzeit University has long been a symbol of coexistence between Palestinians and Israelis. Even though it has been closed down by military order several times, its policy always has been one of recognising the rights of both sets of people to live in peace.

But the university is in what the army now refers to as a 'territorial cell'. This is an old strategic idea, now revived by Israeli politicians and military bosses, in which the occupied territories are divided into 64 cells, isolated from each other and each having a designated military garrison. Commanders would have near-absolute power.

Palestinian and Israeli activists are fighting

the policy. Adam, from Israeli peace group Gush Shalom, condemns a policy in which "troops with their finger ready on the trigger are given free rein". He says that "war crimes are committed in our name. Let us not stay silent".

Tanya Reinhart, a professor at Tel Aviv University as well as an anarchist, is harsher still in her criticism of the Israeli state's activity. "There aren't six million Palestinians in the occupied territories, and the ideology of evil is different as well" she says. "The army and the government are just protecting the living space of the settlers. But in Germany too, most of the Germans were not Nazis. The majority just chose not to know".

Editorial on page 7

Düsseldorf

Next month sees a festival of anarchist ideas and action in Düsseldorf. The three-day event, over the weekend 20th-22nd April, has been called the 'Libertarian Days'.

The organisers say "our recent forms of protest have been in general dictated by the need to fight against existing power structures and fascism. We wait eagerly for the next big action to have a decent chance to annoy the state again. Not enough! We feel that a mere reaction to the status quo is only a start. There is too little real discussion of our own positions, and at the same time the strengths of our ideas for society are hardly noticed outside our own scene".

They reject claims from pro-capitalists that history is over, and that parliamentary democracy is the only justifiable form of social organisation. "In contrast", they say, "we as anarchists seek the complete self-empowerment of individuals in a society based on solidarity".

The weekend begins with film and music on the Friday evening. Cultural events will continue over the weekend, with a "colourful and loud demonstration for anarchy" and workshops too.

Anyone needing somewhere to sleep in Düsseldorf should telephone the organisers on 00 49 173 1761737.

New weapon

The US Marine Corps has developed a new 'directed energy weapon' for use in crowd control. Snappily named the Vehicle-Mounted Active Denial System, the device concentrates electromagnetic energy into a beam that penetrates clothes and heats up moisture in the outer layers of the body.

Officials at the Virginia research institute where the weapon has been built rushed to limit an outcry from human rights workers, when their plans were published prematurely in the *Marine Corps Times*. The system, which is highly classified, was to have been unveiled later in the year.

Chris Hellman, an analyst at the Center for Defense Information, an independent group that monitors military planning, warns of the uses to which the technology could be put. "Clearly we've seen military combat weaponry migrate to the civil sector", he says. "Just walk past any Swat team".

New saints

The pope has recently beatified 233 Roman Catholic priests and supporters who died in 1936, during the Spanish Civil War. All of them were supporters of Franco's fascist forces.

Anarchists are generally thought to be still loathed by the Vatican for their opposition to Franco in the 1930s, and particularly for the old CNT/FAI slogan of 'no god no master'.

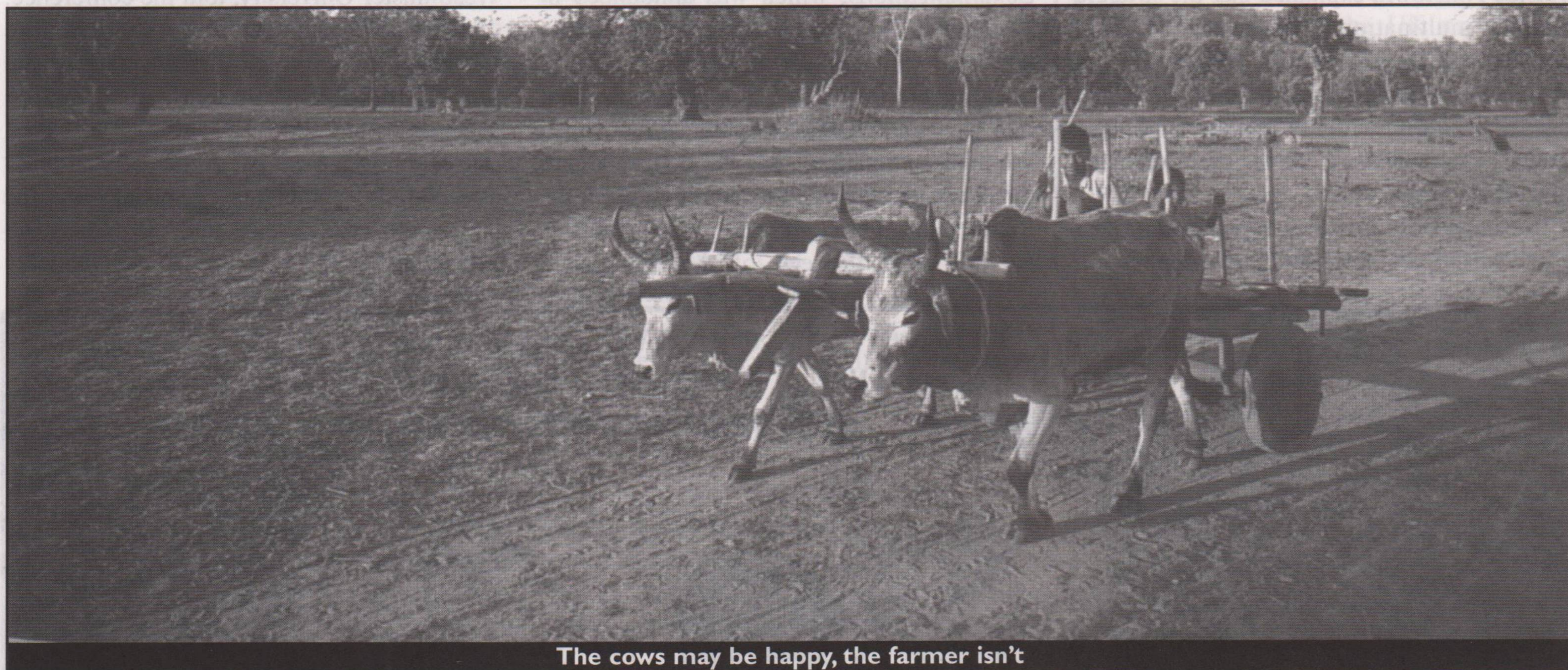
Beatification is part of the process by which the church creates saints. It is often conferred as a preliminary step to sainthood.

Prisoner

Sami Niemenen, a young Finnish anarchist, was imprisoned on 2nd October 2000 and will be there till April. He is one of 33 total objectors to the military call-up, who has refused to do the 'alternative' civil service offered to objectors.

You can write to him at: Sami M.J. Niemenen, Helsingin Työsiirtola, PL 36 Vantaa, Finland.

Indian farmers' rally



The cows may be happy, the farmer isn't

Farmers from all over India planned to converge on New Delhi on Monday for a mammoth rally and siege of the country's parliament. Organisers of the action said that they wanted to force the Indian government to lobby world bosses to exempt agriculture from direction by the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

This followed a similar rally in Mumbai last month, when 51,000 farmers tried to destroy imported agricultural products in the city's harbour. The state responded with mass arrests.

Swamy, an activist from the Karnataka Farmers' Association, says "the GATT Uruguay round agreements and the establishment of the WTO were proclaimed as a means of enhancing the creation of global wealth and property, and promoting the wellbeing of all people in all member states.

In reality, however, the WTO has contributed to the concentration of wealth in the hands of the rich few, increasing the poverty for the majority of the world's peoples, especially in the third world countries".

K. Varadharajan of the All-India Kisan Sabha, which claims to represent sixteen million small farmers, is blunt about incomes on the land. "Prices have crashed", he says, for a range of crops including tea, rice, coconuts and cotton.

In the last ten years, economic liberalisation has seen a deterioration in the support offered to agriculture by government. The state's investment in irrigation and in giving credit to farmers has been slashed in response to anti-subsidy rules. Last summer's poor monsoon has only made matters worse.

Swamy argues forcefully that the WTO allows rich states to subsidise their farmers

but at the same time forces India to dismantle quotas on imports. He says "the WTO and GATT agreements have functioned principally to pry open markets for the benefit of transnational corporations at the expense of national and local economies, workers, farmers, indigenous peoples, women and other social groups as also of health and safety, the environment and animal welfare".

But Biswajit Santra, a Bengali activist who has seen the crisis in Indian agriculture at first hand, argues that opposing globalisation is not enough. "We only avoided mass starvation in the 1960s because the government begged the US for help", he says. "There wasn't any WTO then. We've got to look more deeply at the way Indian society is run and who reaps the benefits. I support the farmers, of course I do, but food for all should be a basic right too".

The Biblical Banquets

Anarchists share with the general population the idea that religion is something best avoided, but that some people seem to need it. The attitude of my daughter is typical. "Dad", she says. "Why do you bother with all that shit?"

This idea of course arises from the Enlightenment and the scientific revolution, and even secular politicians have attempted to sideline religion. The attempt was made by Zionists to make Tel Aviv, not Jerusalem, the capital of Israel. Nehru, independent India's first prime minister, built Chandigarh as the capital of India, the idea being that people should consider themselves Indians rather than Muslims or Hindus (though when one Russian politician said they should work together as they were both atheists, Nehru told him he was a Russian atheist whereas Nehru himself was a Hindu atheist!)

So I propose that we don't walk around this shit but we turn it into fertiliser. Has this ever been done before? I think it has. It was done in the Reformation, which wasn't a reform but a revolution, a revolution which provided the basis of the modern world.

This was the origin of capitalism, the Protestant reformers turned the shit of the Catholic Church into the fertiliser for capitalism, and yes folks, there was a time when capitalism was liberating. It's all relative I know.

We anarchists have a faith, a secular faith. We believe in the free society and the end of authority. Of course, all oppressed people dream of liberation, and their view of the future divides roughly into two camps. One

"In this mountain shall the Lord make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow"

simply inverts the social order without changing it, and the exploited become the exploiters. Some however are visionaries with dreams of an egalitarian society, where social conflict is at an end. You might call these people prescientific anarchists, because they believed in divine power to accomplish their ends.



Jesus and his disciples enjoying an egalitarian bite to eat

In the accounts of the Last Supper, one can see that both tendencies were present. The disciples argued over precedence, and Jesus said that precedence was at an end. The egalitarian ideas are well known in Christianity – the peaceable kingdom, swords into ploughshares and the rest; and they have their secular versions in the Land of Cockaigne and the Great Rock Candy Mountain.

Perhaps the most appealing of these images from the Bible is in the Book of Isaiah (25.6-9). This describes the messianic banquet and meat feast which (as the story goes) will be given by god for all humanity, to mark the end of history and the beginning of the Kingdom of Heaven. The accounts of eating and drinking at the Last Supper are seen as foreshadowing this messianic banquet itself.

Jesus of Nazareth, about whom there is no reliable historical information, seems to have been an egalitarian visionary. But he lived in a rigidly hierarchical society, and hierarchy in any society is most clearly shown in who eats with who and in what order. In other words, his practice of eating with 'publicans and sinners' (which caused such offence) was

a form of propaganda by deed, a form of civil disobedience which he may have learned from the Cynics. He did it to show that in the coming kingdom of god which all Judaism expected, there would be no hierarchy.

There are at least two anarchist groups who practise this form of revolutionary activity today, the 'Food not Bombs' group and the Catholic Worker. This activity transgresses social norms, destroying existing social relationships and creating new ones. Today's 'publicans and sinners' are the lumpen-proletariat: the riff-raff, the underclass, the unemployed, the homeless, those who are economically unproductive. Abolish this class and we have a revolution.

I'm talking about solidarity, hardly a new concept. It happened in the trade union movement – once there was solidarity between the craft unions and the unskilled unions there was progress for all.

As there is neither a Catholic Worker nor a 'Food for Bombs' chapter in London (where I live), I have decided to 'bore from within' in two of the seventy groups that work with

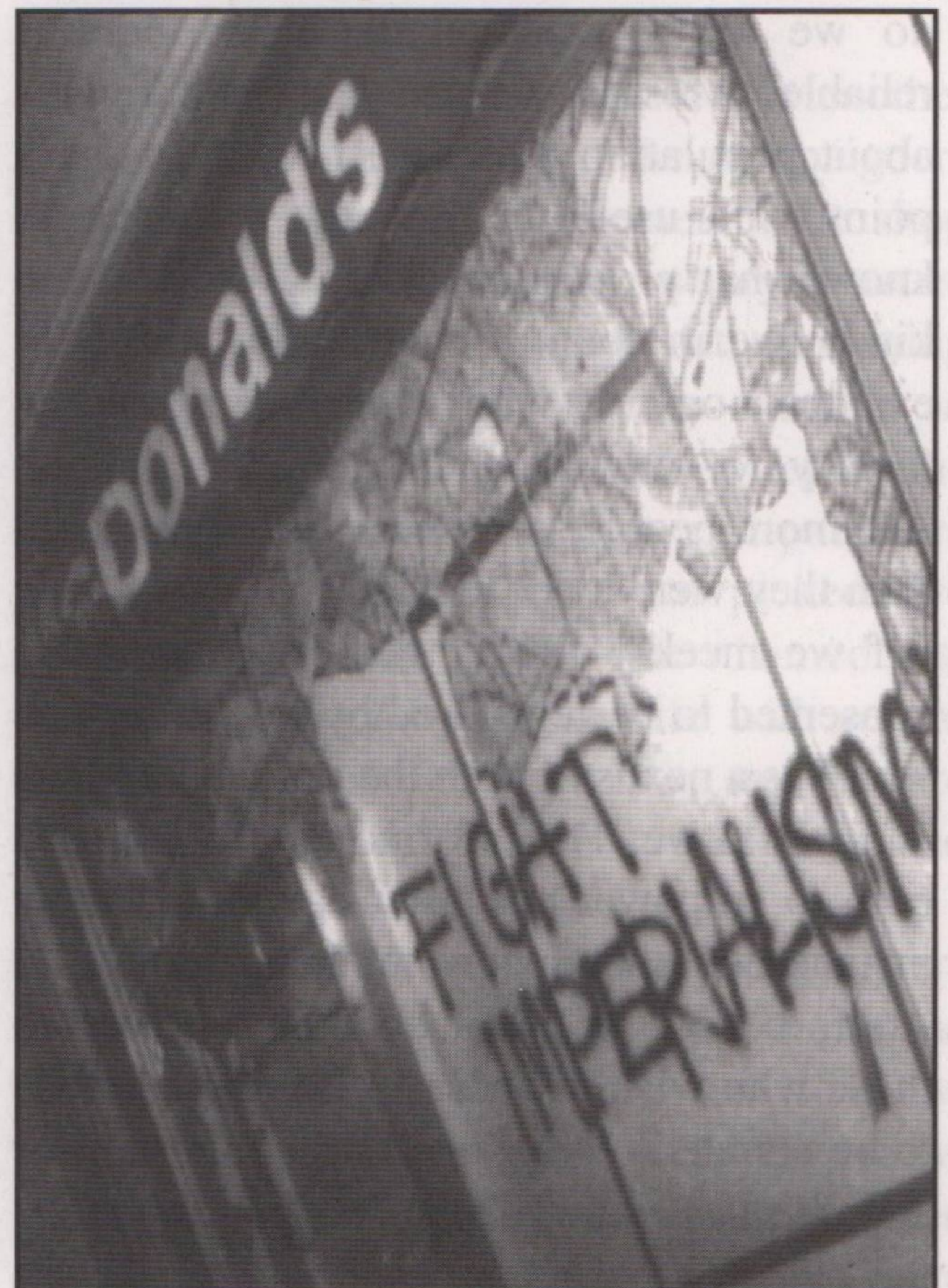
homelessness here. One provides an excellent three-course vegetarian meal but the volunteers generally do not join the clients in the dining room for the meal but eat by themselves in the kitchen. So just as in ancient Palestine, who eats with who is a powerful indicator of social hierarchy. By eating with the clients, I feel I am giving them the message that hierarchy can be overcome.

Quite a lot of these operations are in the crypts of churches and again the hierarchy is obvious, god above but man below. There is one place I work where the project has got out from under god and has taken over half the church. Here you feel god and man are slugging it out on a level playing field. In this place you can glimpse the end of religion, where the earth is in the process of being won back for humanity, where the excluded, the drugged and the destitute mix on equal terms of easy familiarity with ordinary members of society. It is a real community centre and I have become a regular churchgoer. Just never on Sundays.

Peter Lumsden

A fast food nation

Last year, Americans spent \$110bn on fast food. The average American eats three fast food meals a week, the majority of them in outlets of McDonalds, Burger King and the other multinational giants. But the industry has just been battered by the publication of a new book,



which details some of the industrial processes which lie behind the production of modern fast food burgers.

Eric Schlosser's *Fast Food Nation* describes in detail the mechanisation of the cattle and meat-packing industries in the United States. This has led (as it did in the UK too, until the food scandals of the last decade) to the feeding of dead animals and industrial waste to cattle. (It was even legal to feed cattle with dead dogs and cats until 1997, when the British BSE crisis prompted a slight change in the regulations).

This has led to vastly increased incidences of infections such as listeria, salmonella and E.coli. These infections can lead to kidney failure, anaemia, internal bleeding, irreparable damage to internal organs and ultimately, death.

Schlosser reports that fecal material regularly contaminates meat in the slaughtering process, either from other animals which haven't been properly cleaned, or because the low-waged packing workers who pull out the intestines from carcasses dribble their contents. Raw meat shipments have also been found to contain anything from insects and metal shavings to urine and

vomit. He also writes that at several US meat-packing plants, state inspectors have found cattle infected with measles and tapeworm.

Fast Food Nation will remind a lot of us of the infamous McLibel trial, in which McDonalds sued two members of the London Greenpeace group after they distributed a leaflet attacking the company.

After the longest trial in British legal history, in which defendants Helen Steel and Dave Morris defended themselves (legal aid is not available for libel cases), Judge Bell ruled that McDonalds had been proved to exploit children with their advertising, falsely advertise their food as nutritious, risk the health of their regular customers, be "culpably responsible" for cruelty to animals, be "strongly antipathetic" to trade unions and to pay low wages.

He did however rule that London Greenpeace's allegation that McDonalds was responsible for food-poisoning had yet to be proved. As you might say after reading Schlosser's book, if cow shit mixed in with your burger isn't going to poison you, then what is?

RSG

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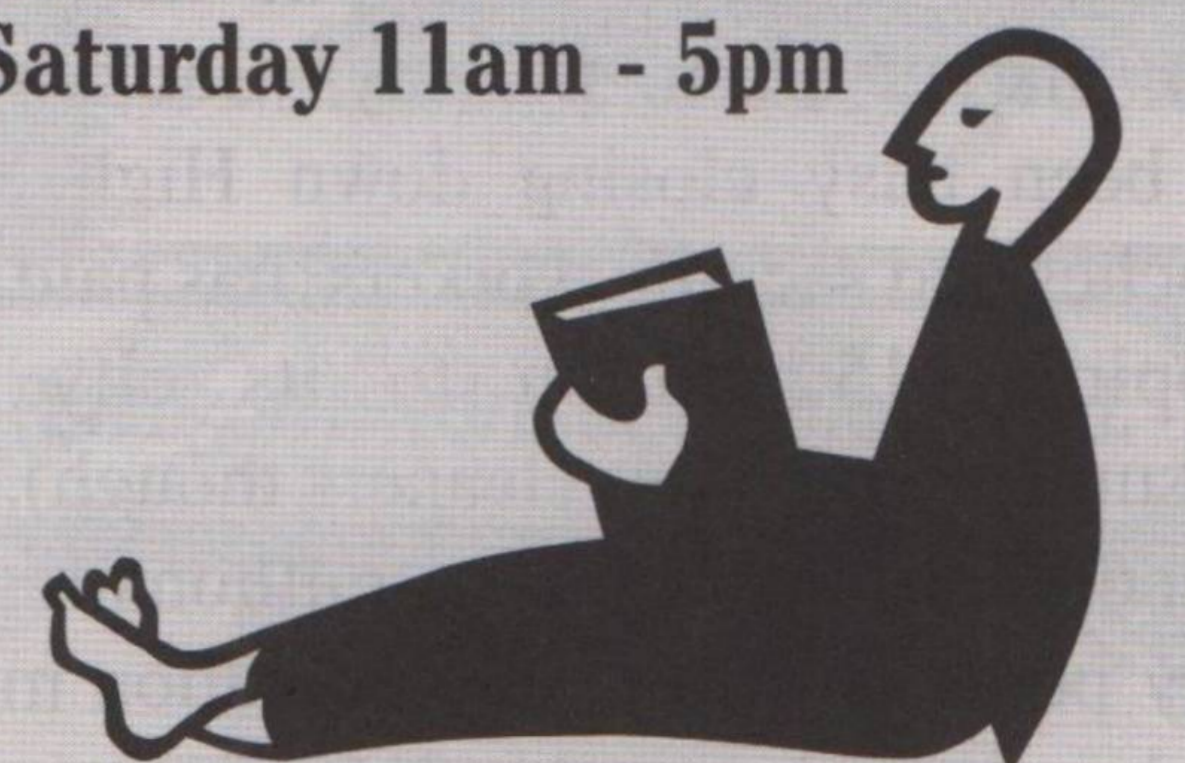
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Another crisis down on the farm

The BSE report cost £16m and took 13 months to complete and contains one message: the British public was misled. But it always is. "No-one is to blame" Nick Brown (Secretary of State for Agriculture) assured us when the report was published. It was, he declared, as if this somehow made it okay, "an institutional failure". No doubt, when the enquiries and reports of the foot-and-mouth fiasco are completed, they will come to the same conclusion. No individuals were responsible, they will say, it was another institutional failure.

Institutional failure? Do institutional employees, when they go to work, pass through some metamorphosis, changing from responsible and accountable individuals into anonymous, blameless institutional clones?

These clones, as the ritual enquiry which follows any disaster clearly illustrates, work on a different plane to ordinary people. They are never responsible, and if they are not responsible they cannot be blamed. No-one is responsible, no-one is to blame, no matter how obvious the cause, how many the casualties, or how loud the warnings.

Many people have dual roles in our society – Monday to Friday institutional clone, and the rest of the time an individual, for example. But the distinction is not clearly made. Except, that is, in matters of responsibility and blame. Then, if the individual is, at the time in question, acting in institutional clone mode, they are not responsible and there is no question of blame. So, as anarchists have long known, institutional clones, especially those of government, are axiomatically irresponsible.

This division is further marked by another split. Uniquely among 'developed' nations,

today's Britain has a heavily positional social structure. Monarch, aristocracy and the whole genetically elite structure is essentially positional, and even if these positions have functions, the jobs are never advertised. People seek, or are given, a 'position' which brings privilege and reward regardless of the ability of the holder – job



creation for the upper classes and the right sorts of people.

At the other side of the split in the nature of social roles is function. The tasks of providing food and water, disposing of sewage and waste, or maintaining cleanliness and hygiene, are fulfilled by functionaries whose social position is least valued – they are bottom of a heap of distorted social values. In fact, one could say that the more vital the function the less the social position.

At the top of society are the strongest and

most irresponsible positional institutional clones (monarchs, flunkies, and similar). They spend their lives just 'being'. At the bottom are the most powerless yet responsible individuals (sewage operatives, hospital cleaners and the like). They survive by 'doing'. The obvious conclusions are, the higher the position the less vital the function,

and the more important the function, the lower the social position.

Of course things aren't always that clear cut. The middle ground is characterised by the grey area of the 'professions'. They act as an interface between individuals and institutions, and as go-betweens display many characteristics of both. No matter what they pretend, ultimately they are inclined towards the institutional side of the divide. Even leaders of the unions, representing the poorest individuals, are not averse to a

position in the Lords, or Brussels, as a reward for carrying out their function. The institutional inclination confirms George Bernard Shaw's conclusion that "professions are conspiracies against the laity".

So we have a social structure where humans tend to hop in and out of institutional clone mode, believing the deeper in they can get, the more secure their position. Once in they have the benefits of irresponsibility as part of the security of their position. Because, as Nick Brown said, any failure, no matter how many are killed or what is destroyed, it will be 'an institutional failure'.

By contrast, for those who try to live as free individuals, such as many anarchists, life can be difficult. They tend to believe that their intelligence and communication with others will offer them some protection from the authoritarian institutional world. For those not fortunate enough to have this option, and who cannot climb the institutional ladder, there is little other than a servile life of state dependency and/or crime. Both will find that the institutions of society are against them. The trouble is, from the institutional perspective, this is regarded as keeping people in their appropriate place.

It is little use regretting the BSE disaster or the Hatfield rail deaths or other 'institutional failures' (which the foot-and-mouth case might well come to be seen as). They are a predictable price of the system. Anarchists would never give power to anyone on these terms. And they would only lend it for a specific function anyway, so that "positions" would not be created. While this is logical and sane, what chance of it happening in the present social structure? Very little.

Colin Johnson

Industrial commentary

Workers worth £5,000: City fatcats £1,000,000

Readers of *Freedom* won't need telling that there is one rule for the bosses and another for the rest of us, but a couple of reports in the press recently show quite how sharp the divide is as far as work is concerned. There are thousands of workers in Britain whose lives have been ruined because of asbestos. It is impossible, of course, to properly compensate someone who has mesothelioma (a lung tumor caused by exposure to asbestos) however according to *The Financial Times* many workers will get just £5,000 and will have to pay their legal fees. The worker's lawyer described the pay-outs as 'devastating'. It is appalling but sadly not surprising that any worker's health is exposed at work but just £5,000 for a life (less costs) shows just how little workers' lives are worth to bosses.

Over in the City though money doesn't seem to be a problem, despite the current stock market crash. Barclays Bank, which has been busy closing down High Street branches and sacking workers, has paid out a whopping £15 million to its city staff (presumably not their cleaners though), with a hundred becoming bonus millionaires. For every pound profit its city operation makes, Barclays branches make £16, yet it is their city workers who get the million pound bonuses!

By the way Barclays boss earns a cool £2.8 million a year. The national minimum wage is going to be increased to £4.10 an hour.

McDonalds Resistance

McDonald workers are getting organised and fighting back. The McDonalds Workers Resistance (MWR) has been formed by

workers in Scotland to try to organise workers employed by the fast food chain across Britain. They have produced an excellent newsletter called *McSues*. MWR is not linked to any union and is organised non-hierarchically. Oddly enough, they have found mail sent to their PO Box (PO Box 3828, Glasgow, G41 1YU) has strangely disappeared. "Needless to say there is an obvious suspect" they report ... we can't imagine who they mean! If you do want to get in touch, try sending them an e-mail at mwrposse@yahoo.co.uk

Off The Tracks

A couple of months ago RMT members on the London Underground voted by 90% to go on strike. The courts stopped the action, although the train drivers (who belong to ASLEF) did take action. RMT has now re-balloted their members and a stunning 93% have voted for strike action. The next one-day strike, over safety concerns and privatisation, will take place on Thursday 29th March. RMT activists are calling for a major march and rally in London.

Global Women's Strike

Good to see growing support for the Global Women's Strike which took place at the start of March and is now in its second year. In Britain the fire fighters union became the first UK union to give the day official backing. A number of other unions' local branches also supported, but full marks to Spanish syndicalist union the CNT which called for a general strike that day. Can we look forward to the TUC doing the same next year?

Richard

Anarchists and the census

The census of the UK population is almost upon us, and it raises a question for anarchists about their participation in civil society. Refusing to vote is one thing. We can easily justify a rejection of party and of political ideology. But should we allow ourselves to be registered and counted? Many years ago I wanted to make the gesture of destroying my



Filling out the census form in 1851 in a cartoon taken from *Punch*

British passport, but decided that the point I wanted to make – that I did not want the protection of her Britannic Majesty – was outweighed by the freedom I would be denied in not being able to travel.

Now I have a different dilemma. The functionaries of our central state offices wish to enumerate everybody who is resident in this country, and to classify them. I do not recognise this nation as having a political identity which is either congenial or acceptable. But the census, it can be argued, fulfils an administrative, and not a political need. However the affairs of what is amusingly called Great Britain are ordered,

there is some value in knowing how many of us there are, how many are old and young, how many are male, female (or transsexual?) and which parishes of this sceptred isle we inhabit. But to register people is to have power over them. I do not ask my neighbours to give me information about themselves under penalty of the law, so why should that most grotesque of artificial persons, the state?

It may be that some of the census questions can be considered benign, and others less so. And we cannot afford to duck the awkward questions about knowledge and information which arise if we decide to resist being counted. It is quite clear that electoral rolls are imperfect documents, but we have no means of knowing how imperfect, and when we want to cheer at a low voter turnout, how do we know whether the basic data is reliable? Most of us use facts and figures about population when we need to make a point – it is useful in argument to be able to know what proportion of people of certain kinds live in country or urban districts, for example, or how many attend that holding facility for unwilling children, the school. Are more people, or fewer, being oppressed than they were a decade ago?

If we meekly fill in the forms, we have consented to be registered by a civil service which is a nexus of both the political and the administrative. The information can be used both to empower and to enslave us. It is an instance of knowledge not being power in itself, but of offering abundant power to those who wish to abuse it. But if we refuse to be counted, who gains? A conundrum for anarchists.

Peter Regan

What we say ...

Election deadline

The frustration in Downing Street must be intense. Planning for the forthcoming general election began even before the last one was out of the way. How to secure the Labour Party an unprecedented full second term in office? Blair and Brown have been 'prudent' with their spending (they like that word); they haven't outraged too many people (though everyone's sense of being vaguely pissed off is okay, it seems); the media is relatively friendly. Even the Tories have obliged, with constant reminders of why we all hated them when they were in power.

And now, of all times, those pesky cows and sheep and pigs have spoilt everything. Worse still, lots of farmers (though surprisingly few animal rights activists) have been threatening all-out war the minute government forces try to carry out the latest death threats.

To have an election or not? Should Tony call a poll at the time which best suits Tony (always remembering that the queen has some say in the matter too)? But that risks annoying voters, who will say that Blair is putting his own interests above those of the country.

Nobody would claim that party politics is easy. But if this farce is all our bosses are prepared to serve up to us in the name of 'democracy', then they get what they deserve. If putting a cross in a box is how we define freedom, then of course that one day every four or five years is important above all else. Those fifteen crosses in a lifetime, those thirty strokes with an old HB pencil, this is the extent of control over our own lives which democracy provides. And that is something which should worry the rest of us, even as Tony worries about the latest news from the frontline of the foot-and-mouth war.

Sodexo sucks

Should we oppose Sodexo because it is a vile multinational firm that exploits its workers (such is the nature of capitalist profit-making), or should we oppose it because of its crucial role in the vile business of locking people up?

The answer, of course, is that the two go hand in hand. We oppose the domination of some human beings by others which the profit system represents. And we oppose the domination of some human beings by others which is imprisonment. Sodexo looks particularly grubby because its paws are stuck in both manure heaps. But just one heap would be enough to smell pretty bad. Every institution of domination reeks, whether state or industry. And we oppose them all.

Candle of hope

Freedom hovers, the veiled splendour which sits upon the horizon of human hopes. But in the present, these dark hours that precede the dawn, we can often use the light of solitary candles to guide our way along the path.

The struggle around Palestine's Birzeit University is one such candle of hope. Cut off from the outside world by the action of Israeli occupying forces, activists from both Palestinian and Israeli communities have rallied to its defence.

Nationalism, as always, has no constructive answer to the problems of the Middle East. The solidarity shown by groups such as Israel's Gush Shalom reveals a constructive vision of how people might live in harmony if only the repressive forces of the state, and the even more repressive ideologies of its apologists, were removed.

Readers' letters

On voting

Dear Freedom,

The forthcoming general election is a great opportunity for anarchists to highlight that political parties and parliament are part of the problem not the solution to the problems this country and the planet faces. A word of caution though. We need to be careful though not just to tell people that 'voting is useless' or 'it doesn't matter who you vote for'. Firstly for most people this just counter intuitive. It is clear to them that their children's schools and their local hospitals are better funded now than under the Tories, that voting Labour did make (a small) difference. Secondly such slogans offer no positive alternatives. So let's not just tell people not to vote (it is actually very possible that more people will not vote in the next election than vote for the winning party) let's use this as an opportunity also to promote the positive images and ideas of anarchism.

Also although there seem to be a number of local anti election initiatives (such as the one reported in Bristol last issue) yet again there doesn't seem to be any attempt to link anarchist groups and individuals together. Whatever differences we might have surely we all agree on the reasons not to vote, so how about everyone trying to get together for this one??

By the way congratulations on the redesign. It's very good. Keep up the good work.

Richard Griffin

Dudley strike

Dear Freedom,

Pleased to see you are doing something about Dudley. The dispute's been publicised through

the anarchist trade union network and IWW (non-anarchist I know).

If anarchists needed any proof that it does not matter who you vote for, Dudley is it. When in opposition Labour opposed PFI. Now in power they are happy to put profits ahead of worker's jobs and livelihoods.

Dudley is not an isolated case. Labour is about to embark on the biggest hospital building programme for a generation, but the bad news is that it is all to be financed through PFI. The needs of patients, staff and careers are bound to come a poor second to corporate greed and profit making.

And it's not just our health service Labour is privatising. The Dudley strikers have also highlighted the link between their campaign and the proposed closure locally of fire stations and old people's homes and the privatisation of council housing. Labour in power cannot be trusted.

We should also be wary of Unison. Although they have made the dispute official Unison pours millions into the Labour Party. What do they get back for this? As Dudley shows nothing! Anarchists who belong to Unison should use this dispute to expose what a waste of members money affiliation is.

NHS Worker

Eminem's irony

Dear Freedom,

In his rush to condemn me as 'elitist' and 'ignorant', Tom Jennings (Letters, 10th March) appears to have overlooked the main thrust of my original argument. I did not seek to dismiss (or even discuss) the liberatory potential of rap music and hip hop culture. Instead, I wanted to focus attention on the irony of Eminem: the corporate capitalist

'rebel'. More generally, I wanted to initiate critical debate about a celebrity culture that engenders rigid performer/audience divisions. Naturally, if Tom is not happy with the standard of such a debate he can always contribute something himself – or even continue with his pedagogical sniping from the sidelines.

Dean

New Freedom?

Dear Freedom,

I like the recent changes to Freedom very much – I think that it now reads much easier and those short and punchy articles are much more effective in putting the anarchist position across. I'm not for 'dumbing down' but the old long and incomprehensible texts did tend to put you off.

Chris

A critic writes

Dear Freedom,

Anarchism is a vision of a stateless society, where goods will be managed by consensus decision-making. (The state is understood to be an organisation that wields a monopoly of legal violence.) However, unless it can be known that everyone will always accept the consensus decision, the community will need state powers to subdue dissenters.

To have any effect the community will have to become the state. So anarchism cannot possibly work. Attempts to install it can reasonably be expected to result in the disastrous quasi-anarchism of Somalia, or Chechnya.

Jennifer Ivens

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mid-March 2001

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Hebden Bridge, HS, £30; London, RG, £2; Rugby, DR, £6; Wolverhampton, JL, £2; Wisbech, MC, £12; Uxbridge, RCS, £10.

mid-March total = £62.00

Total for 2001 = £385.00

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The Anarchist Alternative

London's skyline

Higher and higher go the towers in London, making it look more and more like New York or Hong Kong or Bangkok, with the same bunch of undoubtedly talented architects: Renzo Piano, who has just been commissioned to design Europe's tallest building by London Bridge Station, and our very own Lords Foster and Rogers. International architecture for an international economy.

The planning committee of the City of London Corporation – the very privileged body that runs the part of London known as the Square Mile, and which it describes as “the world's leading international financial centre” – has approved the construction of a 42-storey tower a stone's throw from Freedom's offices that could “ruin forever” views of London's historic St Paul's Cathedral, a baroque masterpiece comparable only with St Peter's in Rome or Brunelleschi's dome in Florence.

So says English Heritage, a statutory body charged with commenting on such matters, which has protested and called the decision “a matter of national importance”. It suspects that the tower is the first of a cluster the city wants to see built.

We have here what is perceived as a “conflict of interest” between environmentalists (represented by English Heritage) and business people (represented by the City Corporation), both parties being facets of the establishment, and no solution satisfying both sides.

It has been suggested that high-rise buildings satisfy only the monumental vanities of developers and their architects, and that the same plot-ratios could be achieved by low-rise developments. But we prefer to think that possibly these developers know their own business, and that these enormous towers are necessary to the kind of work that keeps twenty-first century society going.

The problem as we see it is that of the nature of work in the modern world, in which a smaller and smaller proportion of the population is doing anything genuinely useful or productive. Those people who do the world's work are so often living in the shanty towns of the third world, or the inner cities of Britain or council houses waiting for repairs, while office blocks soar to the skies.

The City of London has a million inhabitants by day, and a thousand at night - the janitors and nighttime security guards. Each morning, trainloads of commuters are brought in from the suburbs to push pieces of paper around, or to send messages from one computer to another, and in the evenings they celebrate in designer bars before being shunted out again. This creates massive transport problems.

Anarchists believe that among those office workers there are many who pause to question the whole concept of work, and it is for them that we produce our books and papers.

English Heritage can protest all they like - they can't defy the might of the City of London. But 'ruin for ever' that skyline? Well, perhaps not for ever. We look forward to a world in which these monuments to capitalism can be demolished, and Christopher Wren's domes and spires be seen again in all their glory, and our architects and engineers delight us with their ingenuity in providing for a life of comfort and leisure for all.

FREEDOM fortnightly

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Meetings & Events

London Anarchist Forum

23rd March The Poverty of Workerism (Devil's Advocate: Steve Ash)

30th March Why I am an Anarchist (Speaker: Peter Neville)

6th April To be announced

13th April Monthly open dialogue

The weekly discussion forum of the London anarchist movement now in its eighteenth year. Every Friday from 8pm at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn. For more information see: www.trak.to/LAF or LAF@anarchic.co.uk

Reclaim the Streets

General information on RTS: 020 7281 4621 or rts@gn.apc.org

London meeting every Tuesday at 7pm

(check RTS answerphone for venue)

For info on RTS subscribe to allsorts@gn.apc.org specifying 'subscribe RTS only'.

To receive info on general direct action, etc., stuff subscribe to allsorts@gn.apc.org specifying 'subscribe allsorts'. To have your news action reports, etc., sent out to hundreds of like-minded people all over the country (and bear in mind probably cops too) e-mail it to allsorts@gn.apc.org

Reclaim the Streets, PO Box 9656, London N4 4JY

www.reclaimthestreets.net

Make some noise at Wakefield Prison

Saturday 24th March 2001

meet 12 noon at Wakefield train station

On the day Mark Barnsley and others will go on a 24-hour hunger strike

Close Campsfield – Saturday 31st March

assemble at 12 noon at main gates, Langford lane, Kidlington
(Oxford bus 2b/c/d or lifts from outside Debenhams at 11.30am)

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Saturday 7th April from 10am to 5pm

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£2 waged, free or donation unwaged, disabled access

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contact: 00 49 173 1761737 (in Germany: 0173 1761737)

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Red Rambles 2001

Red Rambles walks and rambles for Radicals, Libertarians, Anarchists, Greens, Socialists, Syndicalists, et al. See <http://members.tripod.co.uk/ainema/index-2.html>

Mayday bank holiday 7th May 2001

Meet at 12 noon outside Hurt Arms Hotel, Ambergate, Derbyshire, on the A6 road (also on bus route R1 for Nottingham to Manchester, 100 yards from Ambergate railway station) for a short and easy walk four miles in length through Shining Cliff Woods. Walk concludes with a Mayday picnic, so bring food and drink to share, musical instruments, blankets to sit on, etc. Walk leader Jonathan.

Telephone 07939 440548 / 01773 827513 or e-mail ain@ziplip.com