

anarchist fortnightly

# Freedom

Vol. 62 No. 8

21st April 2001

50p



## Media in Mayday frenzy

**T**here's an excited hum wafting from the offices of the national media these days, as journalists wait for their crack at the story of the year.

Just like the arrival of Santa Claus to small children, the coming of Mayday has started a buzz among the upstanding seekers of truth who work for the lords of the press.

Going on previous form, the day promises to have it all. Lots of dodgy foreigners, people with long hair, self-confessed anarchists, a few hippies, brave and dutiful coppers facing down determined smokers of the weed, maybe even sacrilegious attacks on such national monuments as the cenotaph, Winston's statue, or the Piccadilly branch of McDonalds.

We have a choice. We can be frightfully nice, and try to keep these people sweet – meekly wave a banner, maybe, or wait until the election, then campaign for some politician to represent us.

Or we can say we don't give a toss, and fight back against oppression without worrying how it'll play in the *Daily Mail*. The answer we give is the only honest one – we don't give a toss.



# anarchist fortnightly

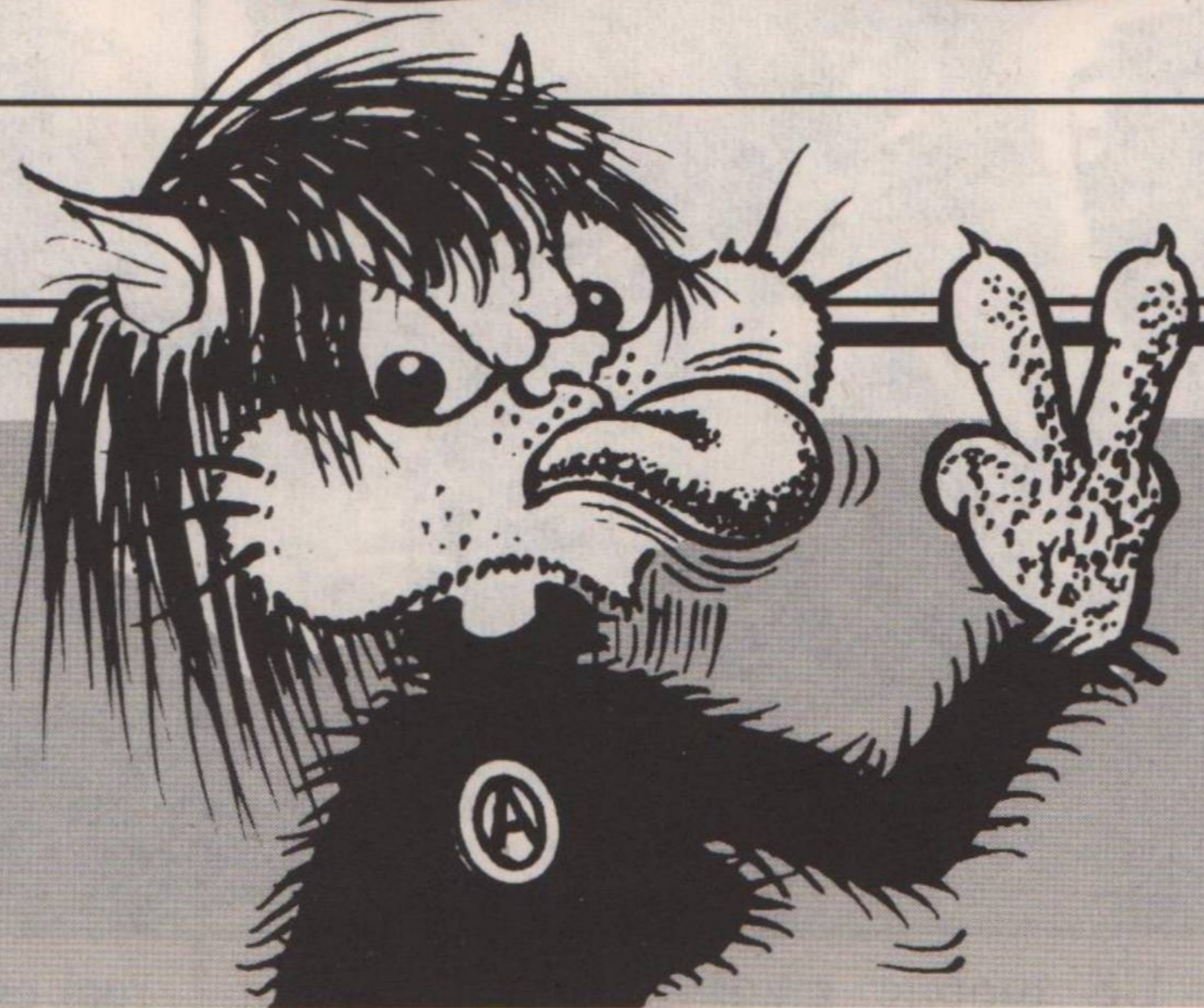
# Freedom

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**APATHY AIN'T  
SO BAD**  
see below



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**ANARCHY**

## Shut it down

**A**nti-nuclear activists last week piled pressure on the owners of Sellafield nuclear plant, after renewed international concerns about the site's safety.

In the latest embarrassment for BNFL, the company which runs nuclear power facilities in the UK, Norway's government has called for the plant's closure. This follows a sixfold increase since 1996 in the amount of technetium-99 (Tc-99) deposited along the Norwegian coastline. In a separate development, the governments of Denmark and Ireland last month demanded that reprocessing at Sellafield should be "terminated immediately".

Since its opening half a century ago, Sellafield has suffered a catalogue of accidents and safety scares. In October 1957, when it was known as Windscale, it was scene of the world's worst nuclear accident before Chernobyl. In 1998, a study carried out for Greenpeace International by the University of Bremen concluded that the area around the plant was as heavily contaminated with radioactivity as the zone around the Chernobyl complex.

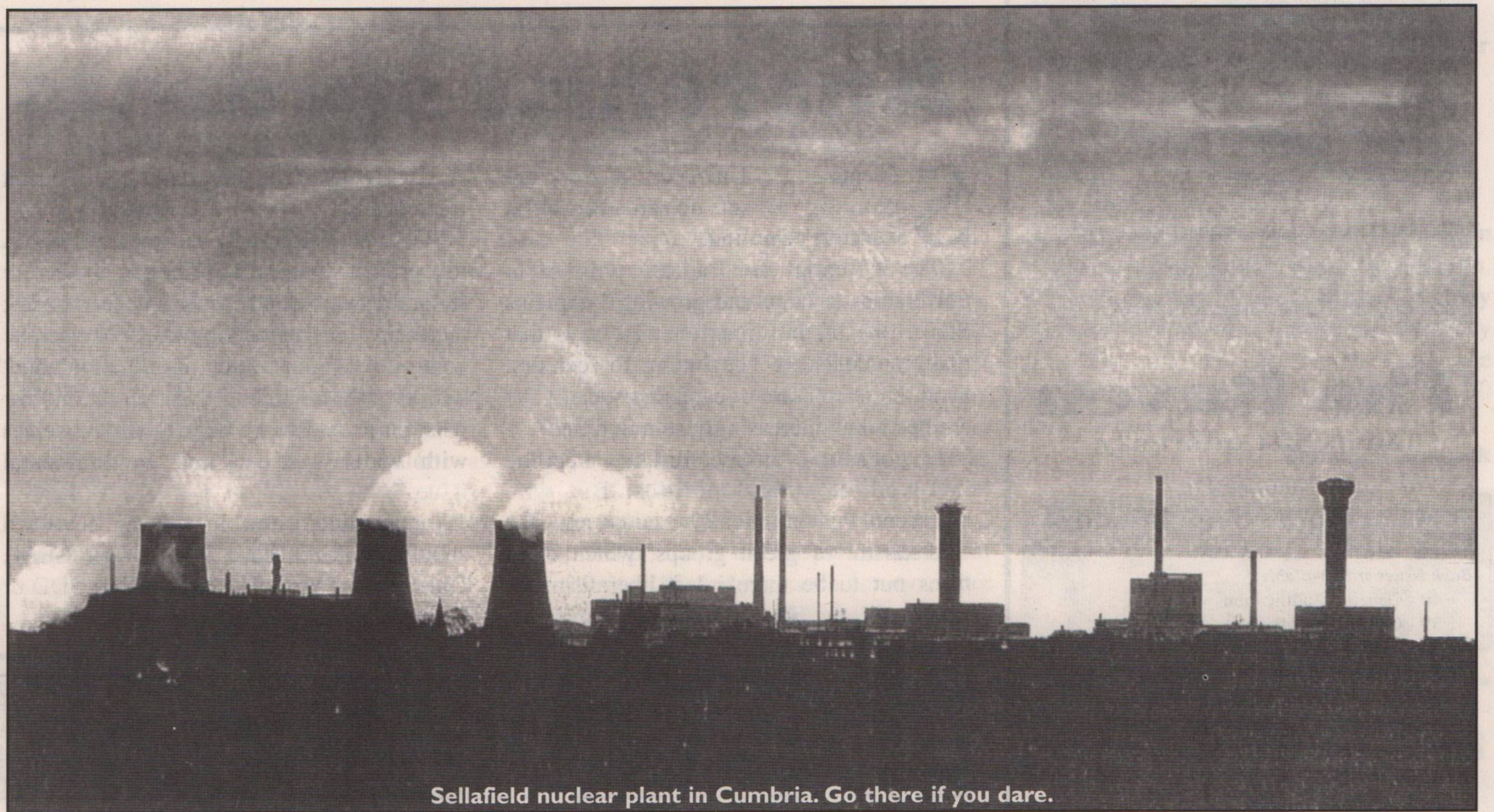
The reprocessing facility at Sellafield receives spent nuclear fuel from around the UK and abroad, and restores it to a form in which it can be used again. Tc-99 is removed during the reprocessing, and discharged into the North Atlantic.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE), a state body, say that they are encouraging BNFL to change its habits. But when asked if a failure to comply could result in the plant being shut down, their representative says, "we have to consider the 10,000 people who are employed at Sellafield, and the storage of the highly active waste. Added to that, the company will lose a lot of money".

Aurora, an activist who has taken a particular interest in nuclear issues, responds bluntly, "nuclear power is too dangerous. What are we supposed to do with the waste? Dump it, and contaminate the planet, that's what.

"All nuclear power has done is make a profit for a few people who didn't care about the consequences, while the state got its weapons-grade plutonium. Why care if no proper records were kept, or some got lost? Well, we should care. We've got to live with the results for a very long time".

One way to measure the radioactivity of an element is its half-life. That means the amount of time the radioactivity will take to decay to one half its original amount. The half-life of Tc-99 is 213,000 years.



Sellafield nuclear plant in Cumbria. Go there if you dare.

## The case for apathy

**T**ony Blair's new election date, 7th June, has caused huge problems for the political parties. They'd been gearing up for 3rd May for months.

The poster sites were booked, and couldn't be cancelled without incurring huge penalty fees. The lonely types who'd offered to help out on the trail were politely sent home to wait a bit more. MPs get an extra month to enjoy the payrise they recently gave themselves, before they have to do any work.

But the posters have been unveiled without fuss, and they're bland enough not to stand out from all the other shiny brands clamouring for our attention. It seems to suit our political masters to keep quiet just a little longer. "Frankly, people are going to be sick and tired of politicians if we do too much now", says one Tory candidate. "We have to be careful how much we turn up on the doorsteps".

This will no doubt be the explanation we are given too, after the election, when the electorate has trundled out in ever smaller numbers. People, we'll be told, were sick and tired of the whole thing.

Nothing wrong with that, you might say. Of course we'll be sick and tired of it - we already are. But that's not how it'll play in the media. We're gonna get an earwiggling

from politicians and pundits, over what they like to call (fingers wagging as they do so) 'voter apathy'.

We are not ashamed. If we can't abstain because of apathy, what the hell can we abstain for? Apathy is just another way of

### ELECTION VIEWPOINT

saying that, whatever the result, the losers will be us. Our task, as anarchists, is to explain why. Here are five reasons.

- By the simple act of voting, we endorse the political system. A vote for any party, any individual, will always be a vote for the status quo. It is an acceptance of the agenda our rulers set. What we do when we vote is roll over and hope our tums get tickled. It is an act of surrender.

- It is by the electoral process that government is legitimised. Any particular government is legitimised, because in the election we choose it. Government in principle is legitimised, because we have the power to choose.

- Because voting gives us the power to rule over ourselves (so the rhetoric goes), it can easily be presented as the only legitimate form of political participation. Different ways of running our lives, of participating in society, become illegitimate. Direct action, which is the opposite of representative democracy, can be condemned out of hand.

- What the vote gives the bosses is the ultimate safety valve for discontent. Anything remotely radical, after it's squeezed through the electoral process, will be pretty lifeless. And that's even before the radical politicians snuggle their bums down on the Westminster benches.

- Having the vote means that the state's power is under our control - or so they're happy to let us think. The state is therefore a tool in our hands. Consequently, any expansion to the state's power is in our interests.

This last leap is particularly dangerous, because it is so logical. The critical point comes at the start, when we accept that the vote lets us control the state's affairs. It does no such thing. Reject it.



## Freedom

anarchist fortnightly

*"I think there are a lot of similarities between our programmes."*

### Jorg Haider

Leader of Austria's far-right 'Freedom' Party, comparing himself to Tony Blair

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# EU aid for telecoms

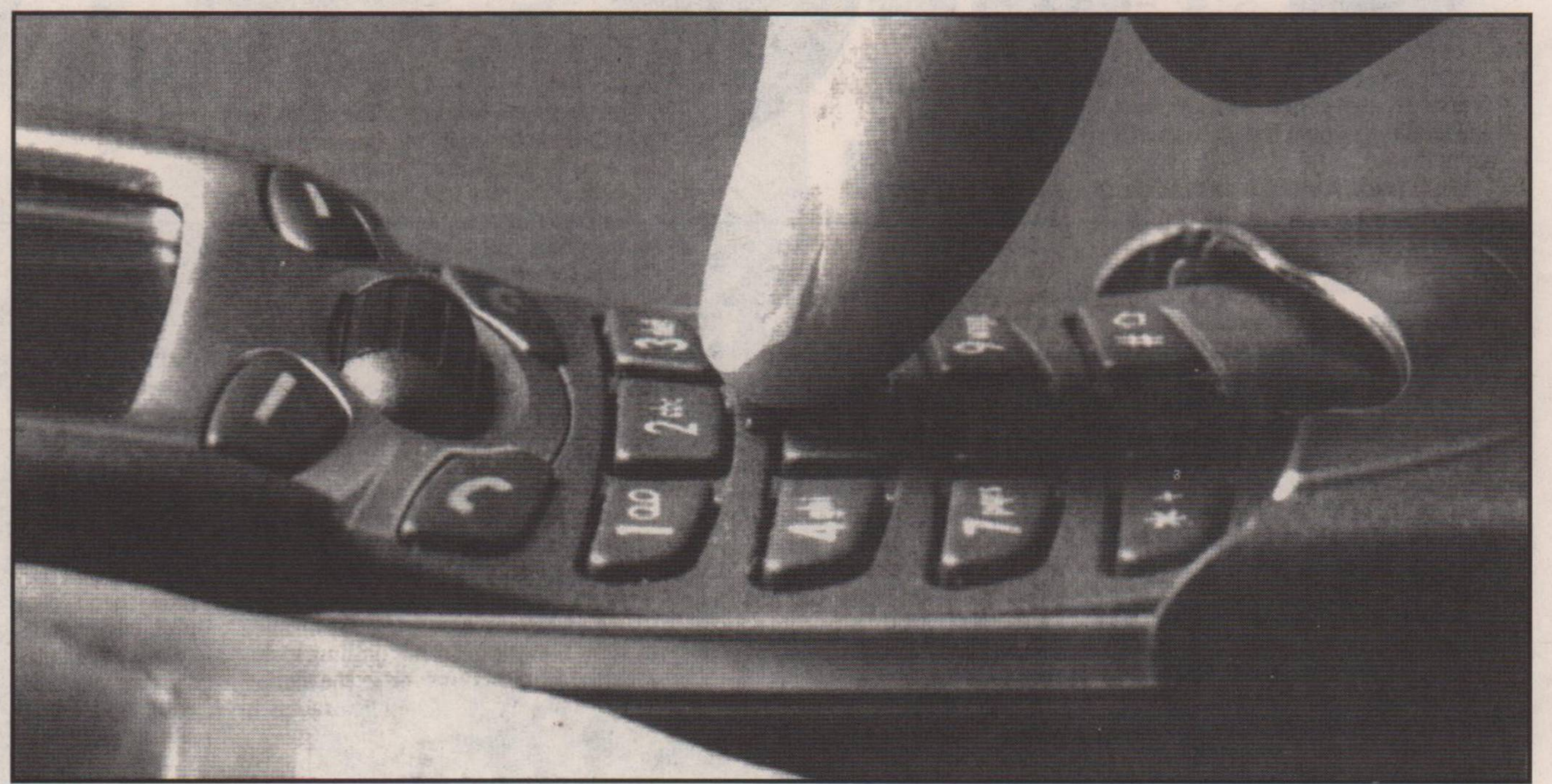
European mobile phone companies, including Britain's Vodafone, look set to get substantial financial help from the European Investment Bank (EIB).

The European Union's lending operation is considering generous long-term loans, in response to pressure on the telecommunications industry from the economic downturn, and the crippling cost of last year's bids for third-generation mobile networks.

Commercial banks worldwide have made loans to the industry of over \$300bn, but are now reported to be nervous of further commitment.

Companies such as Vodafone and Orange have paid up to six times what they expected, in bids to secure the so-called 3G licences. They now need even more money, to finance building the necessary physical networks.

At the same time, the US-driven downturn in the European electronics sector is gathering pace. Last week, Scottish workers were preparing themselves for an announcement



from US mobile giant Motorola that it intended to close its plant at Bathgate, West Lothian, with the loss of 3,000 jobs. This would be in addition to 700 jobs the firm has already cut in Swindon. This follows a drop in Motorola's quarterly profits. British Telecom meanwhile looks set to sell £2bn of

real estate in an attempt to reduce its £30bn debt. The sale, which was expected to take a year, has been rapidly brought forward in response to the imminent downgrading of BT's credit rating.

The EIB has made huge loans to telecoms firms in the past, including Orange. These mostly occurred in the early days of mobile technology, to finance the first networks until profits started coming in. This lending dropped as profits in the sector grew, and commercial borrowing became easier.

Although the EIB loans haven't been finalised, they have already attracted criticism from many people. "Typical. You can just imagine what the bank would say if I told them I'd spent much more than I could afford", says Danny Fraser, a member of the AEEU engineering union, whose Scottish members will be affected by the expected Motorola closure. "First the big banks, then the governments. They always step in to help out when the companies come unstuck. I bet they aren't so generous with the people who're going to lose their jobs".

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## Anarchist students

Students at the University of York are planning to set up an Anarchist Student Federation.

"The potential for radical politics in universities is large and growing", explains Steve, one of the organisers. He says that many students are "beginning to feel first hand the real nature of capitalist society. We are becoming increasingly commodified".

He goes on, "many students become involved in radical politics. But who represents this on university campuses? The 'radicalism' of green groups, which often turns out to be merely left liberalism. Or worse still, the Socialist Workers Party, that

revolving door of democratic centralist 'radicalism'.

"We hope people will become involved in this project. Our initial principle aims were to address student issues on campuses; increasing fees, decreasing loans, democratic control of administration, information about who exactly is funding these place, and for what purpose. But we hope to ally ourselves with wider workers' and environmental issues".

Anyone interested in getting involved should contact: Steve H. at York LEAF, University of York, Heslington YO1 5DD or [Punkfuckinrock@yahoo.com](mailto:Punkfuckinrock@yahoo.com)

## News in Brief

• **Barbed Wire Britain** The Anti-Detention Network, which campaigns against the imprisonment of asylum seekers and migrants, has changed its name. It is now called (in full) Barbed Wire Britain: Network against Refugee and Migrant Detention. It is linking up with European groups Barbed Wire Europe and Europe Barbelee

• **Faslane** Sixteen anti-nuclear activists were arrested at Faslane naval base on 7th April, as 150 demonstrators protested against what the British state calls its "nuclear deterrent". The Scottish dockyard is home to the UK's Trident submarine fleet. Police moved in after several of the demonstrators had successfully cut their way through the perimeter fence. A representative of campaign group Trident Ploughshares said, "we were delighted that so many people came down to Faslane at short notice". Referring to a recent court case, in which judges decided that Trident was not illegal under international law, they continued, "people know the judges had a chance to do the right thing, and they blew it. It's up to all of us now to step up the campaign".

• **South London** An Asian man was attacked in a Bermondsey street only hours after members of the National Front marched through the area on Saturday 7th April (see picture, right). Around thirty neo-nasties marched from Bermondsey South railway station to the underground station, carrying

English flags. They were heavily outnumbered by anti-fascist demonstrators.

• **Anti-Terror campaign** Activists against the government's Terrorism Act, which came into force in February, have launched a new Network against the Terrorism Act (NATTA). At a meeting held in London on 8th April, they agreed that this should replace the original Campaign against the Terrorism Act (CATA).

• **Nottingham** The 'No Tarmac Quarries at Bestwood' Campaign finally triumphed over the Tarmac conglomerate last week,

after fighting for three years to stop the opening of two sand quarries between Bestwood village and the Bestwood Country Park. Tarmac announced on Tuesday 10th April that it had decided not to go ahead with the quarries, and that it would hand the land over to the country park instead.

• **Bradford** The 1 in 12 Club is celebrating its twentieth birthday this month. Formed by members of the city's anarchist-orientated Claimants Union in 1981, it set out to provide an accessible and affordable social venue for the low-waged and unemployed. Celebrations begin on Friday 27th April, and carry on until Mayday. The 1 in 12 Club is at 21-23 Albion Street, Bradford BD1 2LY.

• **North London** The seven-a-side Looney Left Footie Tournament will be held again in Clissold Park, as part of the Mayday festivities. Kick off is 11.00am on Sunday 29th April, entry £15 per team. Contact [looneyleftcollective@yahoo.com](mailto:looneyleftcollective@yahoo.com) to book a place. Places are limited.

• **Secret programme** Home Secretary Jack Straw has initiated a secret programme to fly thousands of asylum-seekers out of Britain against their will. In what is widely seen as the first step in a state campaign to remove 30,000 applicants whose bids for asylum have been turned down, the government has chartered special planes to help them reach this target by the end of the year.





# Mayday Monopoly

Anarchists in London are getting ready to play Mayday Monopoly in ten days time. Conceived as a day of celebration and action on the streets of the capital, activists say that the event on 1st May is an attempt to reclaim Mayday from the self-styled 'official' labour movement who, they say, have used it to "pay lip service to workers' struggles".

The process of reclaiming Mayday began two years ago, with a tube party in 1999. Last year saw a four day long festival of anti-capitalist ideas, which included a huge conference in north London and the events around Parliament Square.

The idea behind Mayday Monopoly this year was to encourage different but simultaneous protests and parties around the city centre. "We hope that this will take the form of lots of autonomous actions, separate yet interconnected, which express our opposition to the monopoly that capitalism has over our lives", say the organisers.

There is no overall co-ordinating body. Groups and individuals are planning their own activities, and forming affinity groups where necessary. The Monopoly organisers have, however, invited them to submit details for inclusion in their publicity material. By the end of last week, at least thirty actions were known about. Preparations for many others were thought to be under way in secret, in an attempt to avoid attention from police and secret services.



"Look at a monopoly board and consider the possibilities: housing, debt, railways, privatised utilities, prisons and above all, streets and areas in which the daily business of capitalism continues, normally unhindered", suggest the organisers. "Take the day off, organise a strike, phone in sick, make sure you're on the streets".

Helpfully, they've published a 'game guide', both on the internet and in booklet form. This lists locations from the Monopoly board, together with the buildings found

there today that might be of particular interest to anti-capitalists. The area around Pentonville Road, for example, contains branches of McDonalds, Nat West and Scheme 2. It also has BT offices, as well as a large prison.

- More information and advice can be found on the website: [www.maydaymonopoly.net](http://www.maydaymonopoly.net)
- Emails (and details of actions planned) to: [mayday2001@husthmail.com](mailto:mayday2001@husthmail.com)
- There is also a discussion list: [maydaymonopoly-subscribe@yahoo.com](mailto:maydaymonopoly-subscribe@yahoo.com)

## 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.

It might be "the biggest demonstration in London for decades", but senior cops have admitted to the *Observer* (8th April) that they've 'no idea' who the criminal masterminds are behind Mayday Monopoly. This is in spite of fears that the "anti-capitalist Mayday protests could descend into mayhem and anarchy". (Anarchy? Wasn't that the point?)

This being the *Observer*, the darling of Britain's liberals, it's got to have a stab at recording both sides of the story. "Anti-capitalists claim they have been subjected to a systematic police campaign of harassment and intimidation", it ventures. It quotes two activists who were stopped at Stansted last month, as they returned from the People's Global Action meeting in Milan. "There's a war of attrition going on, even though we've done nothing illegal".

But is reporting both sides enough? Police 'say', anarchists only 'claim'. And while their 'claims' are reported, they're wrapped around with innuendo and lies. What the reader will remember is the threats of mayhem on the streets, the unpredictability of the anarchist 'ringleaders', and the armed response units standing by. Liberal the *Observer* may be. Unbiased it certainly ain't.

## Why Monopoly?

An introduction from the Mayday Monopoly game guide

The game of monopoly is one of accumulation, making it perfect for our times. The aim for each player is to make a profit through the sale of a single commodity – land – and to expand their empire. In real life, one single commodity generates all profits – our labour power. Since labour power cannot be separated from people, we are literally bought and sold in the market place. To prevent stagnation, capitalism must constantly expand. Thus we must consume as well as produce.

Originally invented as the Landlord Game, to expose the parasitic role of landlords, the game was repackaged as Monopoly in the USA at the height of the Great Depression, as a sop to workers who were being laid off and losing their livelihoods, a distraction from the reality of capitalist poverty. Such distractions may have got more sophisticated – television, the internet, holidays abroad, flashy cars – but our exploitation continues unchecked.

As capitalism is a social relationship between classes, its continuation requires the participation of both exploiters and exploited. By continuing the repetitive cycle with work and consumption, we reproduce this alien mode of production. We are therefore our own jailers. However, since capitalism is opposed to human needs and desires, there is a constant struggle between those of us who

produce and the bosses who reap the rewards. It is a global system, with the rule of the market imposed everywhere, usually by force. Capitalism's twin is war.

Mayday is the day, above all others, when we celebrate struggles against class society, and demonstrate our internationalism. Last year saw huge demonstrations and strikes in many countries, including India and Iraq.

As we celebrate this year, we should remember that by acting collectively, we have the power to bring the whole game to an end.

## Artists on Mayday

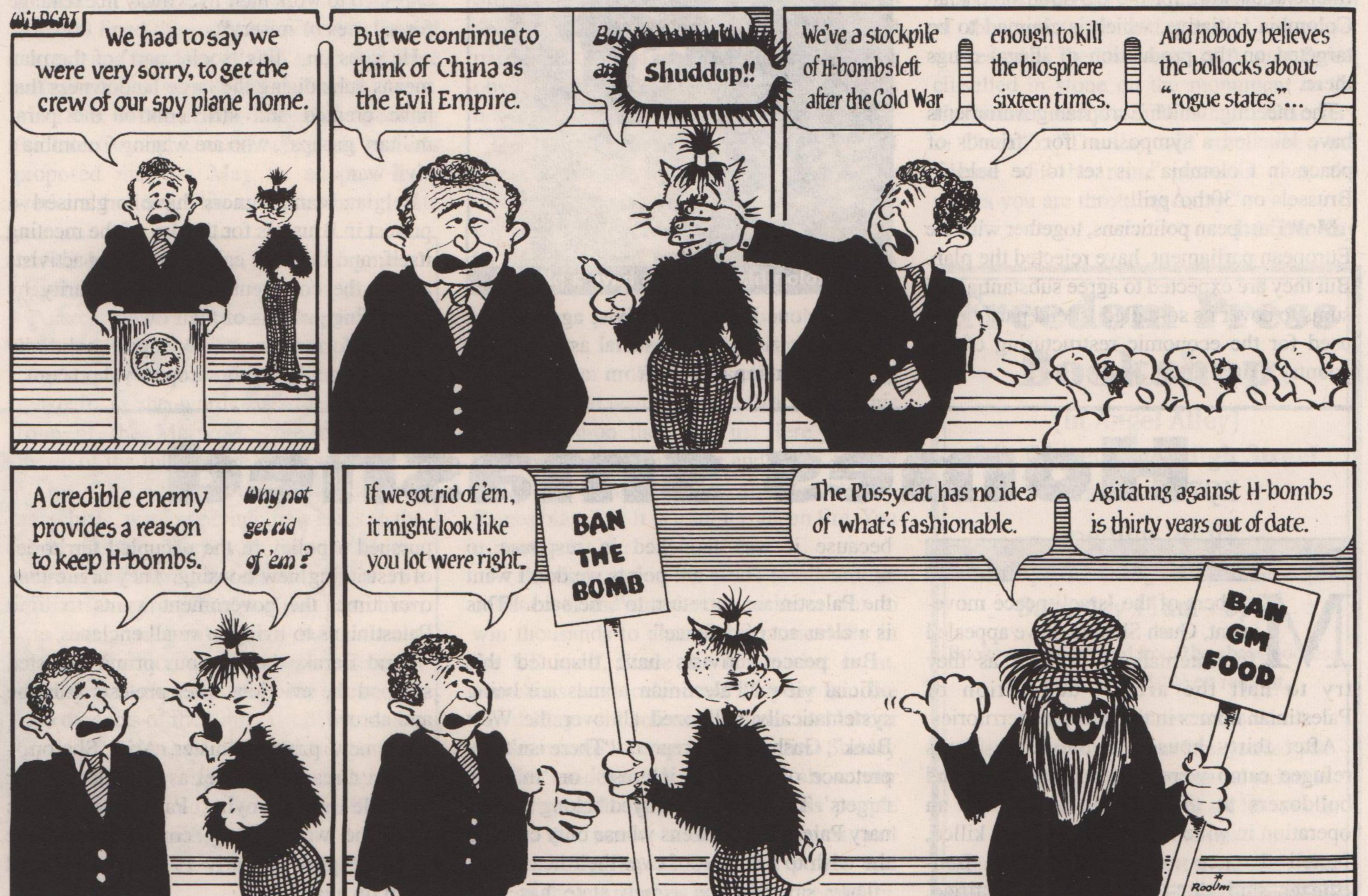
A Mayday artists' conference is set to take place at Chelsea College of Art, off London's Kings Road, on Monday 30th April. According to Zuky, its organiser, the aim of the conference is to "turn the growing unrest among artists to a political act that will improve the actual life conditions of individual artists, and democratise their participation in the art institutions".

In particular, Zuky says he wants to attack the foundations of London's art scene. "We see it as one of the last remnants of

Thatcherism, combined with characteristics of global capitalism", he says. "We will attack the hierarchic form of the art establishment, and the dispossession of artists from the huge profits that the sector as a whole makes from their activity".

The conference will comprise a general meeting, with short slots for speakers, and workshops for smaller groups. It is planned to discuss proposals for future projects too.

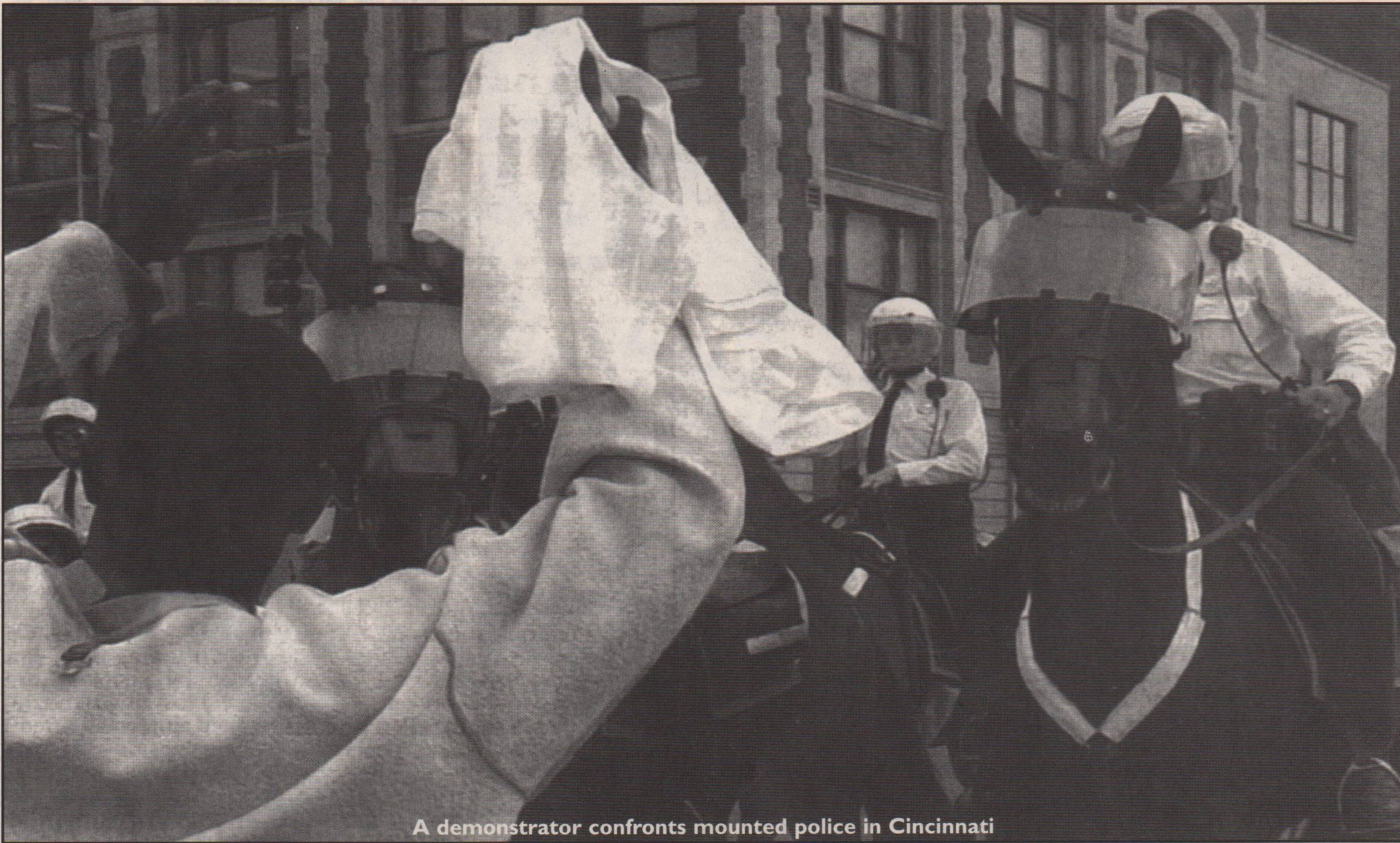
It starts at 11am, and finishes at 8pm. For more information, call Zuky on 07944-384 226 or email [mydychlse01@hotmail.com](mailto:mydychlse01@hotmail.com)



We are intending to publish reports on Mayday activities around the UK and abroad in our issue of 19th May. Please send reports, photos and comments to reach us by first post on Thursday 10th May, or e-mail us at [FreedomCopy@aol.com](mailto:FreedomCopy@aol.com)



## Cincinnati resistance



A demonstrator confronts mounted police in Cincinnati

### United States

Cincinnati was under curfew last week, after the mayor declared a state of emergency. This followed several days of rioting, which erupted after police shot dead an unarmed man.

"The violence on our streets is uncontrolled", said Mayor Charles Luken. "The time has come to deal with this seriously". There were reports that he was considering calling out the National Guard.

The riots were centred on Over-the-Rhine,

a deprived area whose population is predominantly black. It was here that Timothy Thomas, who was himself black, was shot dead on 8th April, as he tried to escape arrest on minor charges. These included driving without a licence, and failure to wear a seatbelt.

Activists in the Ohio city say that a policeman chased him into a dark alleyway, and shot him in the chest. This has led, they say, to hostility towards police boiling over after years of resentment. Timothy was the fifteenth person killed by cops in the last six

years. All of the dead have been black.

The riots grew out of several small anti-police demonstrations, numbering no more than 50-150 people. Up to 70 protesters were arrested, and at least as many treated for injuries received when cops fired rubber bullets and 'non-lethal' shotgun rounds at crowds.

US activists have attacked the way in which the mainstream media have reported the riots.

Editorial on page 7

## Anti-Nike billboards

**Australia:** New billboards are to be targeted by protesters, who will try to send readers to an anti-Nike website. As part of an advertising campaign to market its football boots on 900 boards around the country, Nike has devised an advertisement that appears to have been defaced, with a web address written over the top. In fact, the address takes surfers to a Nike-run promotional site. The M1 Alliance, an anti-globalisation group, is urging activists to deface the posters for real, by crossing out the Nike address, and replacing it with details of their anti-Nike site – [www.bantheboot.com](http://www.bantheboot.com)

They say that the advertisements are dishonest, because they are made to look as if they have been attacked by anti-capitalists. M1 member David Glanz agrees. "I think it's a great idea. They are trying to subvert our message, and we will subvert theirs".

Nike has expressed concern. A company representative asked the public not to damage their billboards. "If they are defaced, they will be replaced".

## Demo in Dublin

**Ireland:** Around sixty people picketed the US embassy in Dublin on 7th April, to protest at George Bush's unilateral scrapping of the Kyoto treaty. Other demonstrations



At the US embassy, 7th April

have been held around Europe and the US, after his announcement, made at the end of last month.

## EU funds civil war

### Colombia

Representatives from the Colombian government are scheduled to meet officials from several European states at the end of the month, in a bid to win financial backing for the US-sponsored Plan Colombia initiative, which is claimed to be targeted on the production of illegal drugs there.

The meeting, which European governments have labelled a symposium for "friends of peace in Colombia", is set to be held in Brussels on 30th April.

Most European politicians, together with the European parliament, have rejected the plan. But they are expected to agree substantial aid sums to cover its so-called 'social part', to be used for the economic restructuring of the country's rural areas.



Colombia's soldiers have a plan

Sergio, one European activist against Plan Colombia, says that the social aspect of the plan is "inseparable from and just as

destructive as the military part". He says that European money will be used to integrate the countryside into the global economy "by concentrating property even more in the hands of a few landlords, and the subsequent proletarianisation of peasants, who are expected to work their lives away in exchange for salaries of misery".

He goes on, "this 'social part' of the plan means subsidising the large landowners that have created and still control the paramilitary groups", who are waging Colombia's civil war.

Belgian campaigners have organised a protest in Brussels for the day of the meeting itself, and they are calling on other activists across the continent to show solidarity by organising protests of their own.

For information, or to report solidarity actions, email [pcentouroeurope@yahoo.com](mailto:pcentouroeurope@yahoo.com)

## Homes smashed

### Palestine

Members of the Israeli peace movement, Gush Shalom, have appealed for international support as they try to halt the army's demolition of Palestinian homes in the occupied territories:

After thirty houses in the Khan Yunis refugee camp were flattened by tanks and bulldozers at the end of last week, an operation in which two civilians were killed, Israeli defence minister Binyamin Ben-Eliezer said that the raid was justified,

because it was launched in response to mortar fire. "These are points we don't want the Palestinians to return to", he said. "This is a clear act of defence".

But peace activists have disputed this official view. "Palestinian homes are being systematically bulldozed all over the West Bank", Gush Shalom reports. "There isn't any pretence of 'security interests' or 'military targets'. The houses destroyed belong to ordinary Palestinian citizens whose only crime is the wish to have a roof over their heads".

They say that the Israeli state has long

pursued a policy in the occupied territories of restricting new housing. They argue that, over time, the government wants to limit Palestinians to living in small enclaves.

Ehud Barak, the previous prime minister, stopped the evictions after protests at home and abroad.

But new prime minister, Ariel Sharon – known already in Israel as 'Bulldozer', for his role in destroying Palestinian homes when he was military commander in the Gaza Strip in the early 1970s – has started them up again.

## Lawyers resign

**Canada:** Lawyers in Quebec were last week threatening to resign en masse from the state's team of prosecutors, in protest at what they said was political interference in the judicial process. One lawyer had already quit the eight-member panel, and others were expected to follow. This came as courts were preparing for large scale arrests, during protests against the Summit of the Americas in Quebec City yesterday and today.

Prosecutors say justice minister Paul Begin ordered them to delay all bail hearings for arrested demonstrators for the full three days the law allows, as a way of keeping them locked up for the duration of the conference, which ends tomorrow.

"This is political interference, and we should not stand for it", said one lawyer. "We will not accept these directives".



# Mayday: its anarchist history

Mayday is a day of special significance for the labour movement. While it has been hijacked in the past by the Stalinist bureaucracy in the Soviet Union and elsewhere, the labour movement festival of Mayday is a day of world-wide solidarity. A time to remember past struggles and demonstrate our hope for a better future. A day to remember that an injury to one is an injury to all.

The history of Mayday is closely linked with the anarchist movement and the struggles of working people for a better world. Indeed, it originated with the execution of four anarchists in Chicago in 1886 for organising workers in the fight for the eight-hour day. Thus Mayday is a product of 'anarchy in action' – of the struggle of working people using direct action in labour unions to change the world.

It began in the 1880s in the USA. In 1884, the Federation of Organised Trades and Labor Unions of the United States and Canada (which changed its name in 1886 to the American Federation of Labor) passed a resolution which asserted that "eight hours shall constitute a legal day's work from and after May 1, 1886, and that we recommend to labour organisations throughout this district that they so direct their laws as to conform to this resolution." A call for strikes on 1st May, 1886 was made in support of this demand.

In Chicago the anarchists were the main force in the union movement, and partially as a result of their presence, the unions translated this call into strikes on 1st May. The anarchists thought that the eight hour day could only be won through direct action and solidarity. They considered that struggles for reforms, like the eight-hour day, were not enough in themselves. They viewed them as only one battle in an ongoing class war that would only end by social revolution and the creation of a free society. It was with these ideas that they organised and fought.

In Chicago alone, 400,000 workers went out and the threat of strike action ensured that more than 45,000 were granted a shorter working day without striking. On 3rd May 1886 police fired into a crowd of pickets at the McCormick Harvester Machine Company, killing at least one striker, seriously wounding five or six others, and injuring an undetermined number. Anarchists called for a mass meeting the next day in Haymarket Square to protest the brutality. According to the Mayor, "nothing had occurred yet, or looked likely to occur to require interference."

To understand why the state and business class were so determined to hang the Chicago Anarchists, it is necessary to realise they were considered the 'leaders' of a massive radical union movement. In 1884, the Chicago Anarchists produced the world's first daily anarchist newspaper, the Chicagoer *Arbeiter-Zeitung*. This was written, read, owned and published by the German immigrant working class movement. The combined circulation of this daily plus a weekly and a Sunday edition more than doubled, from 13,000 per issues in 1880 to 26,980 in 1886. Anarchist weekly papers existed for other ethnic groups as well (one English, one Bohemian and one Scandinavian). As Martyr Oscar Neebe clearly argued, "these are the crimes I have committed: I organised trade unions. I was for reduction of the hours of labour, and the education of the labouring man, and the re-establishment

of *Die Arbeiter Zeitung*, the workingmen's paper."

Anarchists were very active in the Central Labour Union (which included the eleven largest unions in the city) and aimed to make it, in the words of Albert Parsons (one of the Martyrs), "the embryonic group of the future 'free society'."

The Chicago anarchists, like all anarchists, were applying their ideas to the class struggle. They were forming unions organised and animated with the libertarian spirit. They saw that anarchism was not a utopian dream but rather a means of action – of (to use Bakunin's words) "creating not only the ideas, but also the facts of the future itself" by means of direct action, solidarity and organising from the bottom up. That was why they were effective and why the state framed and murdered them.

The remaining four (Albert Parsons, August Spies, George Engel and Adolph Fischer) were hanged on 11th November 1887. They are known in labour history as the Haymarket Martyrs. Between 150,000 and 500,000 lined the route taken by the funeral cortege and between 10,000 to 25,000 were estimated to have watched the burial.

In 1889, the American delegation attending the International Socialist congress in Paris proposed that 1st May be adopted as a workers' holiday. This was to commemorate

working class struggle and the 'Martyrdom of the Chicago Eight'. Since then Mayday has become a day for international solidarity.

In 1893 the new Governor of Illinois made official what the working class in Chicago and across the world knew all along and pardoned the Martyrs because of their obvious innocence and because 'the trial was not fair'.

The authorities had believed at the time of the trial that such persecution would break the back of the labour movement. They were wrong. In the words of August Spies when he addressed the court after he had been sentenced to die: "If you think that by hanging us you can stamp out the labour movement ... the movement from which the downtrodden millions, the millions who toil in misery and want, expect salvation – if this is your opinion, then hang us! Here you will tread on a spark, but there and there, behind you – and in front of you, and everywhere, flames blaze up. It is a subterranean fire. You cannot put it out."

At the time and in the years to come, this defiance of the state and capitalism was to win thousands to anarchism, particularly in the US itself. Since the Haymarket event, anarchists have celebrated Mayday (on the 1st of May – the reformist unions and labour parties moved its marches to the first Sunday of the month). We do so to show our solidarity with other working class people across the world, to celebrate past and present struggles, to show our power and remind the ruling class of their vulnerability.

Iain McKay



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Anarchists stay true to the origins of Mayday and celebrate its birth in the direct action of the oppressed. Oppression and exploitation breed resistance and, for anarchists, Mayday is an international symbol of that resistance and power – a power expressed in the last words of August Spies, chiselled in stone on the monument to the Haymarket martyrs in Waldheim Cemetery in Chicago: "The day will come when our silence will be more powerful than the voices you are throttling today."

Iain McKay

## Freedom Press Bookshop

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London E1 7QX

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"The disastrous quasi-anarchism of Chechnya" Grozny, February 2001

## Why Jennifer is wrong

In our issue of 24th March, we printed a letter from Jennifer Ivens (reproduced right) in which she argued that anarchism is doomed to failure. Here are two responses.

I would like to respond to Jennifer Ivens's critique of anarchism. She said that under an anarchist system goods will be managed by consensus decision-making by communities. Her argument, then, was that it can't always be known if a consensus has been achieved, but if it is not, then the goods will go un-managed so a state will be necessary to suppress dissent. Here argument does have some empirical weight – an account of a commune in the '70s said: "All personal decisions were made by individuals. The community met once a week on Sunday evenings to discuss group issues, but if someone refused to abide by the consensus of the group there was no way to enforce the decision and generally nothing happened. It ran counter to the wishes of the group to force any individual to conform or to demonstrate more commitment than he was willing to give. As a result, problems of getting work done around the commune were never solved. The members of the commune tried everything we could think of, including encounter groups and rotating leadership, but nothing worked."

Like so many critics of anarchism, though, Jennifer's problem is really that she lacks imagination enough to try to solve the problem. For instance, suppose upon joining or forming a commune, members signed a contract agreeing to abide by the outcome of direct democratic processes, perhaps with certain constitutional guarantees to protect their rights, so that, for instance, the majority couldn't vote to murder black people. Under such an agreement the member *has* voluntarily agreed to abide by whatever the

outcome is, and the problem is bypassed. It merely becomes an issue of enforcing the contract, and a breach of contract would mean the member would be defrauding everybody else in the commune, so they would be defending themselves and their own by enforcing it.

The other solution lies in taking the opposite route that Jennifer takes. She implicitly points out that the consensus must be reached

**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

if goods are to be managed by the community, which is obvious. Likewise, the above example of the failing commune reveals that the commune broke down when a consensus could not be upheld concerning 'group issues'. The problem, then, lies not with anarchism but with communism – if there were no 'group issues', then there would be no need for a consensus. Jennifer has forgotten that anarchism is not, has not always been, and need not always be communist.

And finally, Jennifer's references to failed

'quasi-anarchism' in the world. Chechnya is not an example of an attempt at anarchism in action. Chechnya is an example of two groups battling to be sovereign governments over a particular territory – one a 'liberal' democratic state the other a prospective, probably Islamic, state. The chaos in Chechnya is statist, not anarchist. Somalia is different. Ten years ago the Somalis brought down their central government and smashed

was not thought out by one man but discovered over a long period of time."

At the same time, "the Somalis have a holy respect for private property", coupled with this the "attitude to business is strictly *laissez-faire*". And, giving weight to the fact that Jennifer's judgement of Somalia is wrong, "business is booming in this unusual country where taxation and government regulation used to destroy almost all private business ventures". Somalia is an example of anarchy working, not perfectly because none of us expect it to (not being utopians), but very well.

Richard Garner

More on Somalia can be found at <http://www.economic.net/somalia/index.html> or snail-mail me for print-outs at 31 Hatfield Road, Ipswich IP3 9AF.

The state is a means by which a tiny minority – perhaps no more than one million out of a total population of 6,000 million – has ultimate control over the resources, knowledge and peoples of the world. Such control can only be maintained by violence, lies, secrecy, propaganda and psychological manipulation.

To succeed in ridding itself of the state, and any other form of power, humanity doesn't need to subdue 'dissenters'; it only needs to recognise and reject those who seek dominance over others. That's not difficult if a majority, or even a sizable minority, is willing to be involved. If Jennifer simply means that an anarchist society needs to have a way of resisting any resurgence of authoritarianism she is right, but that doesn't mean a state.

Somalia and Chechnya have nothing to do with anarchism. They are the result of clashes between rival authoritarian groups, contending for power.

John Andrews



## What we say ...

### Shut the lot

The half-life of technetium-99, which is washed up in ever-increasing amounts along the Norwegian coastline, is 213,000 years. The results of Sellafield's reprocessing activities are going to be with us for a very long time indeed.

Western governments have been fascinated by nuclear technology since the development of the atomic bomb during the second world war.

But there was never such a gross imbalance between costs and benefits, as the one which has accompanied human attempts harness the power of the atom. The environmental costs, over too many millenia to contemplate, are dire. Even the economic costs (let's talk a language politicians can understand) are astounding. Nuclear power is not, never has been, profitable. It has never been economically efficient. It has always run at vast financial loss.

The only reason for the development of the so-called civil nuclear industry was because the state needed its plants to generate essential materials for its bomb-building programmes. Without nuclear weapons, nuclear plants would never have been built.

So the costs are huge indeed. The benefits, unless you count protection of a powerful few in their right to enjoy their power, are non-existent.

Fortunately, we can do something about this lunacy. It seems very unlikely, for example, that another nuclear plant will ever be built in the UK. That is entirely due to the work of people in the peace and ecology movements. Protest achieves. Let's campaign. Fight to shut down Sellafield. Fight to shut them all. And while we're at it, let's bury the bomb too.

### Rare moderation

www.bless. The European Union might have to step in to help out the beleaguered telecoms industry. What's new? The state is a system of social relationships in which we consent to give away power to those above us in the chain. This consent is less likely to be maintained, the bosses' logic runs, when we can't get enough food to eat, or entertainment to distract us, or cars to drive. As it's big business that provides the goodies for us to consume, its success is supposed to keep us happy. For this reason alone (quite apart from the fact that business is the politicians' bankroll), it must be indulged.

Most government support is freely given, without strings. The only surprise in this case is that it's loans under discussion - they have to be paid back. Compared to the usual way of doing things, this counts as tight-fisted. With our tongues only slightly in our cheeks, what can we do but praise the EU's moderation?

### Stronger resistance

Tragically, the fact that police shot dead an unarmed man in Cincinnati wouldn't have made the news, but for the fact that several days' rioting and a nightly curfew were the result. The death of Timothy Thomas, who was black, wouldn't otherwise be so much out of the ordinary (in a city where 15 black people have been killed by cops since 1995) that it would have troubled the pages of most American newspapers, let alone British ones.

If any sort of good comes out of this death, it will be the result of black Cincinnati's resistance to oppression. The pastors who were urging their flocks to go home and pray missed the point. Praying won't change a thing. Fighting back against injustice will. The resistance must grow stronger.

# Readers' letters

## Every vote counts

Dear *Freedom*,

When you tell people not to vote (7th April), I think you're wrong. The problem we've got in this country is that people don't take enough interest in politics, even though they know capitalism's unfair.

Everyone knows politicians are corrupt, they're only in it for themselves. But that means we've got to work even harder to hold them to account. Better still, we've got to campaign on behalf of people who are going to represent *our* interests in government, instead of their own.

At last, there's a radical challenge to New Labour in Britain. The Socialist Alliance is standing in the election on a programme of socialist change, which will make this country an immeasurably better place to live. Every vote counts. Use it. Don't tell people not to vote. Campaign for a socialist Britain.

Jim Delaney

## Disturbing trend

Dear *Freedom*,

Your treatment of Jonn Roe's letters (13th January and 24th February 2001) raises important issues. Whilst I thought Jonn's original letter about the film *Billy Elliot* was overly enthusiastic and insufficiently critical it was far more sensitive and balanced than the original rant, posing as a review, published in *Freedom*. Yet his letter was savagely cut and an almost equally long piece of 'Smart Alec' commentary from *Freedom*'s editors substituted "for lack of space".

Jonn Roe was right to object, but instead of apologising *Freedom* appended a sarcastic

comment to his second letter. Anarchism is nothing if it does not practise what it preaches, and *Freedom* needs to reflect on how it relates to contributors. Any anarchist enterprise that fails to give as much thought to how it operates as to what it says is in danger of developing very dodgy politics.

Whilst 'New *Freedom*' has improved visually, several features indicate a disturbingly simplistic trend towards ill-thought out populism in the style of Socialist Worker. The recent cover pieces on Eminem and Hannibal were exceedingly trite and presumably included to titillate the appetite of potential buyers. The inclusion of a 'what we say' column is in the worst tradition of knee-jerk socialism.

As a life-long anarchist, I would love to see a flourishing *Freedom* that both practises and preaches libertarian politics. I am more concerned than encouraged by recent developments.

Christopher Draper

## Popular culture

Dear *Freedom*,

By publicising the latest products of the entertainment industry (e.g. 'Hannibal', 'Eminem') *Freedom* ceases to be a publication concerned with serious issues and instead becomes a low budget version of any other tabloid or broadsheet newspaper.

Whichever angle it is approached from, popular culture remains a manufactured package of celebrities and manipulative superficial images and sounds which may have its uses, but exists primarily to transport money from the public to the fashion machine, consisting of large companies and their representatives in the media.

It is somewhat depressing, then, to see an 'alternative' publication playing a part in this process and degenerating into yet another promoter of the products of consumer society. The philosophy seems to be 'If you can't beat them, join them'.

Ben

## IWW history

Dear *Freedom*,

I am currently researching and writing a history of the IWW (Industrial Workers of the World) in Britain and Ireland. I would welcome any information, anecdotes and personal accounts, together with copies of IWW material produced here in the past.

If you can help, please write to me at 9 Omdurman Street, Swindon SN2 1HA, or telephone 01793-610707. All information will be appreciated.

Kevin Brandstatter

## Red Rambles

Dear *Freedom*,

Due to current closures of footpaths in Derbyshire, resulting from foot and mouth, the first meeting of Red Rambles on 7th May has been changed from a ramble to a Mayday anarchist picnic. The meeting place and time remains The Hurt Arms, Ambergate at 12.00 noon on that date.

Jonathan Simcock

**Correspondents are asked to keep their letters short. The editors regret that they may have to cut letters for reasons of space.**

## Donations

mid-April 2001

### Freedom Fortnightly Fighting Fund

Pershore, RS, £8; Rhondda, NN, £1; Wirral, NC, £6; Wolverhampton, JL, £2; Beckenham, DP, £10.

mid-April total = £27.00  
Total for 2001 = £461.00

### Freedom Press Overheads Fund

Pershore, RS, £10; Tynemouth, CS, £3; Wirral, NC, £5; Wolverhampton, JL, £2; Beckenham, DP, £10.

mid-April total = £30.00  
Total for 2001 = £610.00

### Raven Deficit Fund

Pershore, RS, £8; Wolverhampton, JL, £2; Beckenham, DP, £10.

mid-April total = £20.00  
Total for 2001 = £390.00

## AN APOLOGY TO OUR SUBSCRIBERS

The last issue of *Freedom*, dated 7th April, was dispatched late. When you got it, you may've noticed that the envelope had stamps on, instead of the usual red print. This was because our franking machine (which 'stamps' the envelopes, ready for collection by the Post Office) broke down. We're sorry for the delay.

## FREEDOM PRESS BOOKLIST

Our new and improved booklist is now available. Ask for a free copy from us at 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

The booklist will soon be uploaded to our website. You can check it out at [www.ecn.org/freedom](http://www.ecn.org/freedom)

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<b>Freedom (24 issues) half price for 12 issues</b>				
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Claimants	18.00	-	-	-
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5 copies x 12	26.00	32.00	44.00
10 copies x 12	50.00	60.00	84.00

## COPY DEADLINE

The next issue of *Freedom* will be dated 5th May, and the last day for copy intended for this issue will be first post on Thursday 26th April.

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) or e-mail to [FreedomCopy@aol.com](mailto:FreedomCopy@aol.com)

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## The Anarchist Alternative

### Press freedom or a free press

Sophie Rhys-Jones married one of the Queen's younger sons and became known as the Countess of Wessex. She has now made the headlines in every national newspaper after being inveigled into making indiscreet, if often sensible, remarks to a fake sheikh who turned out to be a chief investigative reporter of the *News of the World*, one of Britain's biggest-selling scandal sheets, which commented in its own leader: "Yet again, your favourite newspaper has set the news agenda".

When discussing press ethics it is said often enough that the newspapers which are known as the 'gutter press' have the largest circulations, and that the public gets the press it wants. To us, this argument ignores the fact that freedom of choice is not freedom when the choice is determined by a handful of press 'barons' whose companies are huge capitalist concerns. When they attempt to compete with each other by feeding their readers their daily diet of sport, sex and scandal, their success formula is the cult of personality, appealing to a public bored with the routines of daily life and seeking escapism in reading about the lives of royalty, actors and public entertainers, and lacking the energy to inform itself about the political and social problems of the world.

The exceptions are small papers which are funded by political parties and pressure groups which, with few exceptions, slavishly follow the concept of government and political influence and who, at election time, can be guaranteed to exhort their readers to vote one way or the other – vote tactically, vote with reservations, but vote. The press may criticise the actions of governments, but it stands for the principal of authority; it may attack the excesses of capitalism, but it is a principal upholder of the capitalist system; it may criticise the police or military, but be staunch upholders of the rights of property. For those in power, a free press is a necessary evil in that it is necessary to transmit the views of the ruling elite to the public.

That is why we claim that a free enterprise press is not a free press, and that if we want a truly free press, serving the people by furthering the causes of internationalism and the equal rights of all humanity, rather than nationalism, jingoism and xenophobia, then we must support, financially and otherwise, papers like *Freedom*.

The mass circulation papers have enormous staffs of editors, sub-editors, reporters, foreign correspondents, photographers, stringers, not to mention the ancillary staff, designers and printers, yet they do little to inform us of the real reasons behind all the often tragic human stories they tell us about every day. Now if *Freedom* and our contemporaries had just a few hundred more readers, who would be willing to spend the same amount of money each week as they do on buying papers which are essentially for entertainment, to be discarded as instantly forgettable the following day, the small and genuinely 'alternative' press could flourish and, we suggest, have more real influence than the mass media.

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## Meetings & Events

### London Anarchist Forum

**20th April** Anarchy and Education (symposium, with guests)

**27th April** Anarchy School: Class 2 (regular explorations of basic anarchism, for new and old anarchists)

**4th May** May events: general debate

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](http://www.trak.to/LAF) or [LAF@anarchic.co.uk](mailto:LAF@anarchic.co.uk)

### Reclaim the Streets

General information on RTS: 020 7281 4621 or [rts@gn.apc.org](mailto: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](mailto:allsorts@gn.apc.org) specifying 'subscribe RTS only'.

To receive info on general direct action, etc., stuff subscribe to

[allsorts@gn.apc.org](mailto: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](mailto:allsorts@gn.apc.org)

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

[www.reclaimthestreets.net](http://www.reclaimthestreets.net)

### Looney Left Footie Tournament

**Sunday 29th April 2001 • kick-off at 11am**

Clissold Park, Stoke Newington (nearest tube Manor House)

Contact: [looneyleftcollective@yahoo.com](mailto:looneyleftcollective@yahoo.com)

### Mayday Artists Conference

**Monday 30th April 2001 from 11am to 8pm**

Chelsea College of Art in Manresa Road

(off Kings Road, nearest tube Sloane Square/South Ken)

contact Zuky Serper, mobile: 07944 384226, email [mydycglse01@hotmail.com](mailto:mydycglse01@hotmail.com)

### Critical Mass Bike Ride

**on Tuesday 1st May**

Meet 7.30am at Marylebone Station (off Marylebone Road) or else at Liverpool Street Station, converging at Kings Cross for a late breakfast.

Continuing during the day to link up with and support various actions around the Monopoly Board.

email [mayday2001@hushmail.com](mailto:mayday2001@hushmail.com)

An invitation to play ...

### MAYDAY MONOPOLY

**on Tuesday 1st May 2001**

Contact us at BM Mayday, London WC1N 3XX (tel: 07989 451 096)

website at [www.freespeech.org/mayday2k](http://www.freespeech.org/mayday2k)

e-mail enquiries to [mayday2001@hushmail.com](mailto:mayday2001@hushmail.com)

### 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](mailto:ain@ziplip.com)