

anarchist fortnightly **Freedom**

Vol. 62 No. 11

2nd June 2001

50p



Now, where's my trough?

The general election takes place on Thursday. Politicians from every variety of authoritarian opinion are competing for your vote.

Anarchists maintain that the only society in which we can be free is one where we no longer give away to others the power to rule over us.

We do not have to say that all politicians are necessarily corrupt for our

criticisms of modern politics to be true.

It could be that some politicians really do want to represent us as best they can. Our problem is with representation, done badly or well.

We do not have to say that all politicians are corrupt for our criticisms to be true, in the same way that not all police have to be bastards for us to oppose the institution of the police.

But that's just logic talking. In fact, whatever logic says, we know the whole bloomin' shower of them are. Police are bastards, politicians are greedy. That's just the way it goes.

There'll be new pigs and old ones on 8th June, looking for troughs to shove their snouts into. Retire the lot of them to some quiet field in the country, we say, and let's get on with our lives.

anarchist fortnightly

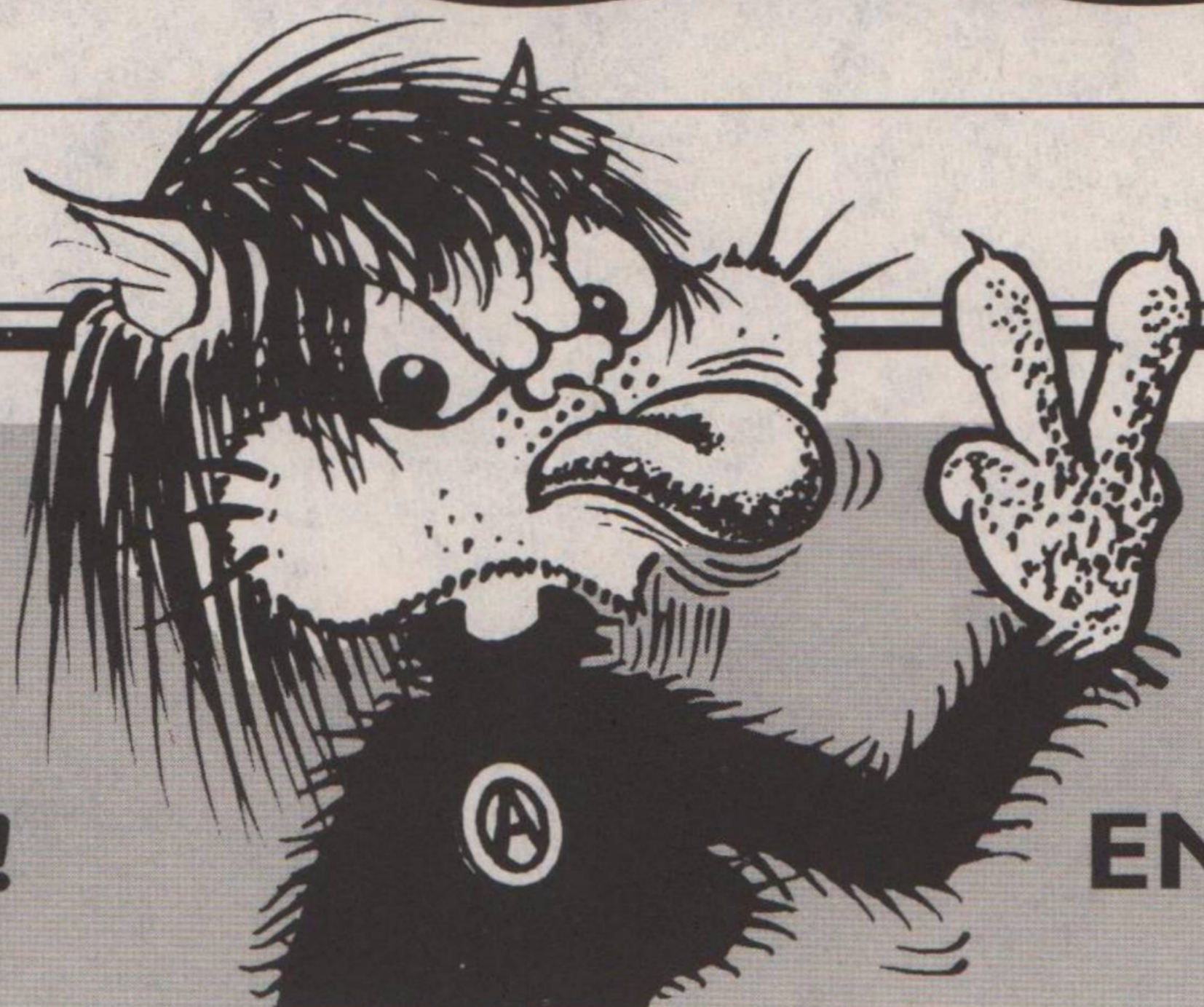
Freedom

Vol. 62 No. 11

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**BORED!
BORED!
BORED!**



**UK ELECTION:
AT LAST THE
END IS IN SIGHT**

**ABORTION AND THE
RIGHT TO CHOOSE**
feature on page 5



Foot and mouth: 'government is hiding the truth'

The government last week stood accused of covering up the continuing scale of the foot and mouth outbreak, as extra vets were sent to North Yorkshire in an attempt to deal with the disease's re-emergence in the area.

Amid fears of an escalating rate of infection in the Yorkshire Dales, it was announced that many more animals would have to be slaughtered, on top of the 50,000 already culled, in the effort to stop the disease from spreading.

"It's rampant, and there has been one big cover-up", said David Drake, who farms near Penrith. Other people in the area said that the government was trying to ignore the issue, because it would distract from their electioneering and counter their claims to be in control of the crisis.

At the same time, protests were growing in Devon against plans by the Ministry of Agriculture (MAFF) to bury half a million animals in an old clay mine near Hatherleigh, between the villages of Petrockstowe and Meeth.

The site, at Aish Moor Fields, was initially rejected as unfit for use as a burial site, because of a high water table. It is also close to two schools and two playgroups.

MAFF officials plan to liquefy half a million carcasses in fifteen underground chambers, from which fluids and gases will emanate as the animals decompose. These will then be removed by a private contractor.

But the government accepts that they cannot predict the long-term consequences on the local community, and that the decomposition process will take at least ten years to complete.

Protesters against the Aish Moor plan say that the burial site is dangerously close to waterways. They say that lethal pathogens, such as campylobacter, can be carried by wind and water, and that BSE might also be present. They also say that dangerous gases, such as ammonia, carbon dioxide and methane, will be produced as the animals decompose.

One member of campaign group STAMP (Stop the Aish Moor Pit) says, "the government is trying to hide the fact that this is going on. News coverage is non-existent. West Devon Council has a contingency plan to evacuate within a five mile radius of the site - MAFF cannot give any reassurances that mistakes will not happen, or that there will be no mistakes".

Editorial on page 7

Days before the election, we again say ...

Don't vote



Existence of spy network confirmed

The existence of a shadowy international spy network, codenamed Echelon, has been confirmed by a report from members of the European parliament.

The document, prepared by the parliament's temporary Echelon committee, was expected to be published this week. According to leaks of an earlier draft, it was due to conclude that the purpose of the US-led network of spy satellites and listening posts is to "intercept private and commercial communications, and not military communications".

Although Echelon's existence has been suspected for years, there has never before been confirmation from any official source.

It is run by the governments of the US, UK,

Canada, Australia and New Zealand, which divide the world up into zones where they eavesdrop on electronic communications. The information gleaned is shared between them.

In Britain, electronic communications are monitored by US supercomputers at Menwith Hill in North Yorkshire and by the UK at GCHQ's listening post at Morwenstow, in Cornwall. The machines can process and record millions of faxes, telephone calls and emails, using a system of keywords.

Human rights groups around the world have long expressed concern over the uses to which Echelon could be put. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) says, "several credible reports suggest that this system

presents an extreme threat to people's privacy all over the world".

"Most people don't understand how pervasive government surveillance is", says John Pike, a military analyst at Washington's American Federation of Scientists.

"If you place an international phone call, the odds that the US National Security Agency is looking are very good. If it goes by oceanic fibre cable, they are listening to it. If it goes by satellite, they are listening to it. If it is a radio broadcast or a cellphone conversation, in principle they could listen to it. Frankly, they can get what they want".

Editorial on page 7

Freedom

anarchist fortnightly

*"Under every stone
lurks a politician."*

Aristophanes

Greek playwright, 400BC

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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anarchist quarterly

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Copperas Hill cop-out

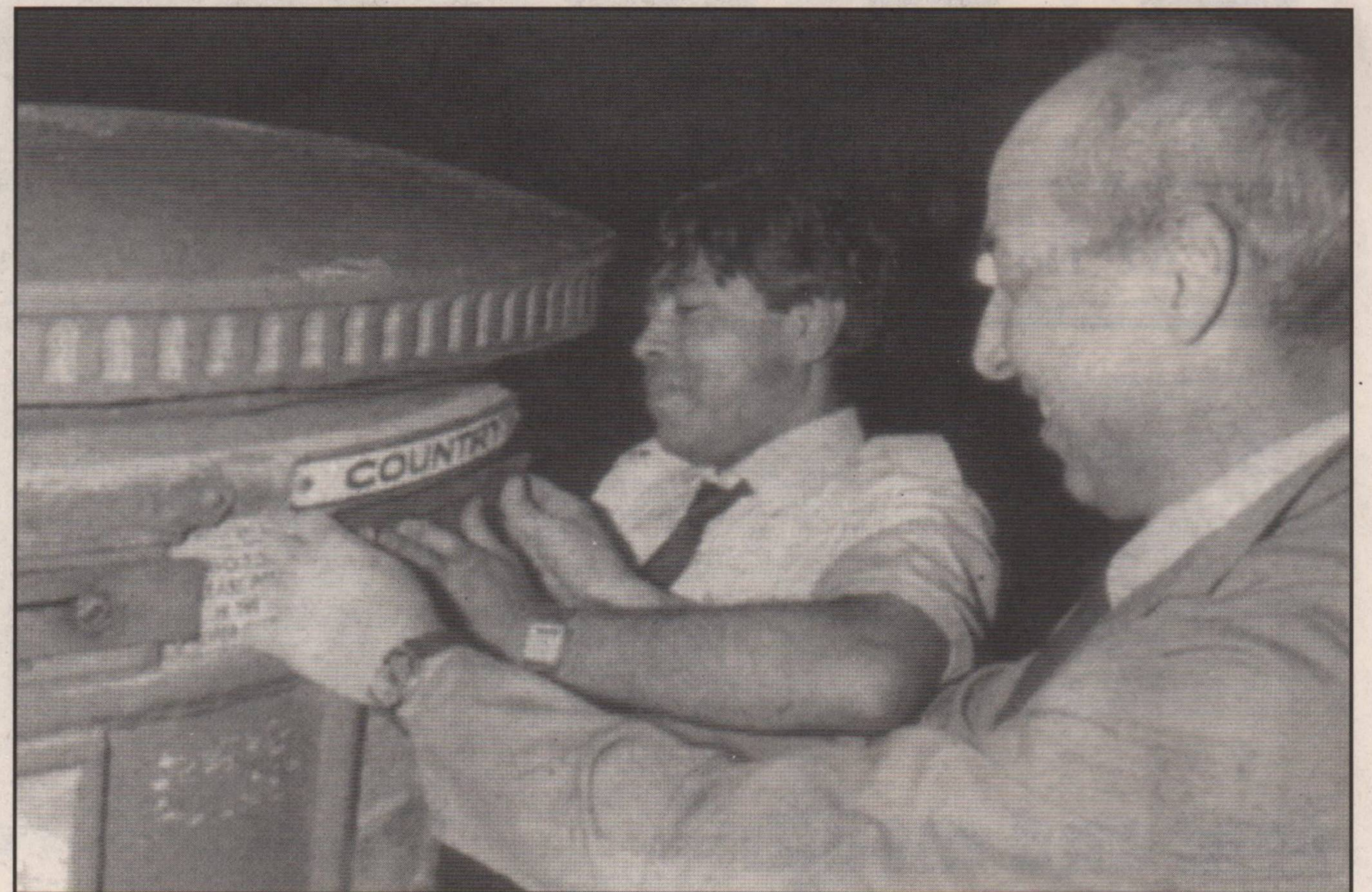
During the summer of 1997, Royal Mail announced the closure of Liverpool's main sorting office at Copperas Hill and the removal of the work to a site on the outskirts of Warrington.

Opened in the 1970s, Copperas Hill occupies acres of what has become prime land in the city centre. The revitalisation of Liverpool in the last couple of years has left developers crying out for land for hotels and other leisure amenities. The site would bring a fortune for Royal Mail coffers. After a campaign lasting almost a year and involving national support from other postal staff, Royal Mail relented and rescinded the decision to close Copperas Hill. The back down was not without some cost to Liverpool staff, as targets were agreed between Royal Mail and the Communication Workers Union (CWU) which had to be met on condition of the office remaining open.

Obviously, Royal Mail had hoped these targets would not be met, but it soon became apparent that workers had risen to the challenge and the work would stay at Copperas Hill.

Management then began to employ heavy-handed tactics in order to intimidate staff and instigate industrial action. A walk-out occurred in January after staff were victimised by managers. This spread with such speed that Royal Mail were forced to order an investigation into management intimidation across the whole of the postal service, which would pay particular attention to Oxford, Cardiff and Liverpool.

On 18th May, an official 24-hour stoppage at Watford was used as an excuse to get



Liverpool staff to sort Watford mail. A handful of workers were suspended for refusing to carry out the task, and this in turn led to a walk-out across Liverpool which spread to other towns in north west England and North Wales. The huge mail sorting centres at Manchester and Preston were affected and this in turn spread to London. Predictably, managers condemned the action as 'unlawful' which seems to be their favourite word lately. In truth, over six thousand staff do not simply decide to hit the streets for no reason and the whole affair is symptomatic of failing industrial relations within Royal Mail. Heavy-handed management has seen staff given warnings for absences which have

included hospitalisation for meningitis, and injury caused by accidents on duty. 'The Way Forward' deal, which management and union leaders forced through last year, has added to the problems faced by workers who face mounting workloads, but reduced overtime rates because of the deal.

The sooner workers realise their hopes will not be met by 'sweetheart' deals struck between union leaders and managers who do not have the interests of the rank and file at heart, the better it will be for postal workers. The sooner union leaders realise there is more to life than cosying up to the Labour Party, the better it will be for all workers.

Liverpool Postie

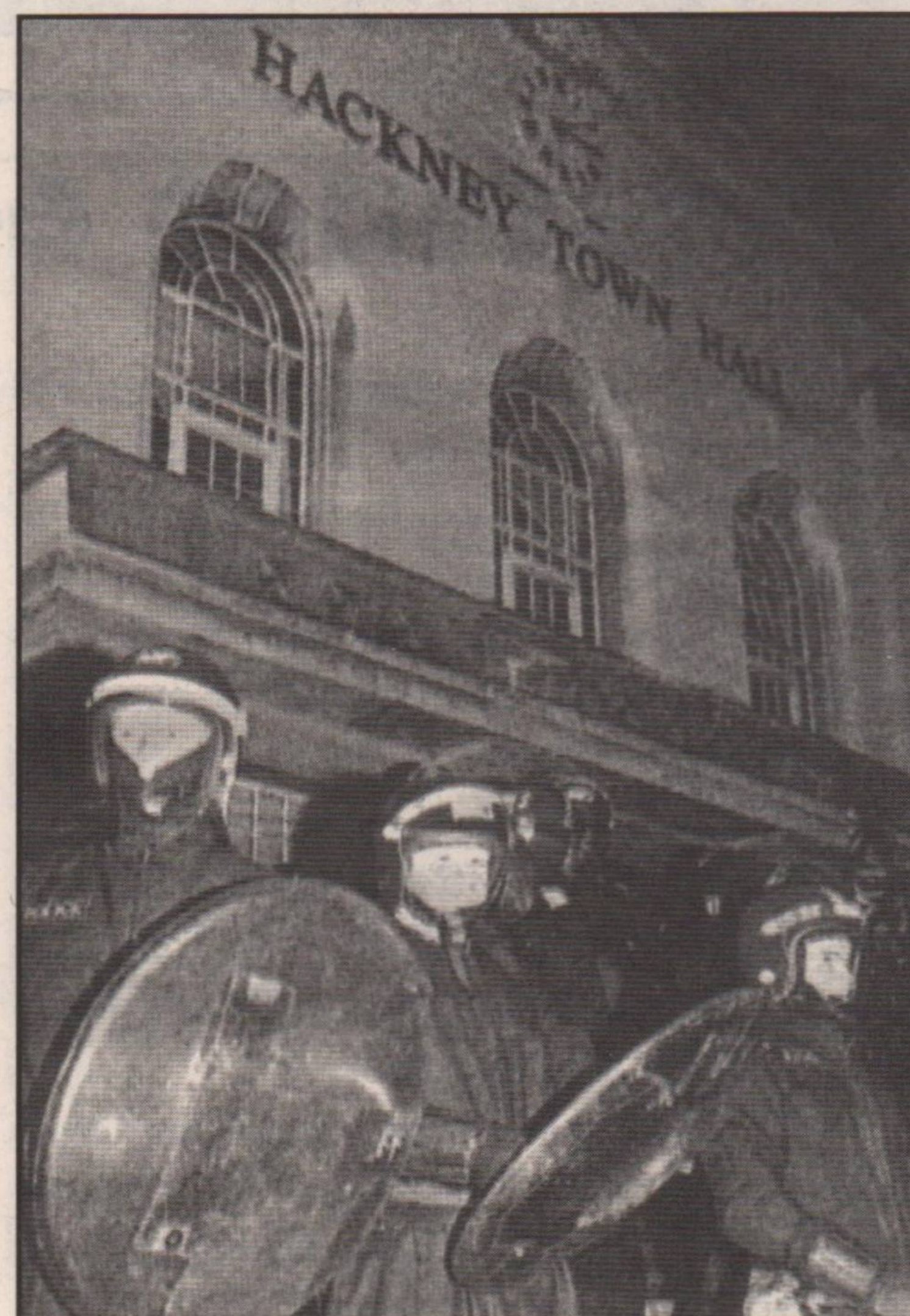
News in Brief

• **Garf Gabbard** Our comrade, imprisoned after protesting against the World Trade Organisation in London, has been moved. He can now be contacted at: Garfield Marcus Gabbard, Political Prisoner, FT9062, HMP Camp Hill, Newport, Isle of Wight PO30 5PB.

• **Sheffield** The William Cook steel firm is starting to fire workers in two of its three foundries, who are striking after suffering their second pay cut in a year. Around ninety workers, all members of the engineers' and electricians' union, the AEEU, began a series of one-day strikes in April. They were then told that they could not return to work unless they renounced their union membership, which they have unanimously refused to do. Shop steward Martin Fiddler says, "William Cook is employing new workers at the cheaper rates we won't accept. It's a disgrace, and it will send a bad signal to every other company in the area". Another striker, Kim, says of working conditions in the plants, "you earn your money just by walking through the door, there's so much dust and crap and noise in there". The strikers say that their appeals for help have been ignored by AEEU leaders.

• **Cardiff** Activists campaigning against racism and the mistreatment of asylum-seekers gathered outside Cardiff Prison on Saturday 19th May, to protest against the decision to allocate fifty places there for the imprisonment of refugees. Members of the Wales Assembly against Racism (WARR) point out that even the 1951 Geneva Convention on Refugees, drawn up by liberals shocked by the nazi Holocaust, recommends that refugees only be detained in exceptional circumstances.

• **Hackney** Around fifty residents of the east London borough briefly occupied the town hall early in the morning of Sunday 20th May. They were supported by around 300 people, who gathered in the square in front of the building. Publica, a local activist, says, "the action was directed against Hackney Council's corrupt business practices that led to its bankruptcy, the selling off of public space, and the ongoing gentrification of the borough". Cops quickly arrived, and riot police with dogs and pepper spray threw the demonstrators out of the building. There were several arrests. Loop, another activist, says, "the violence of the police was shocking. More and more police vans arrived with fully kitted-out riot police, to the extent that they eventually outnumbered the crowd. At no point did they announce instructions to



the crowd, instead they proceeded to spend an hour and half clearing the area, military-style. The police weren't interested in fighting crime, but in playing soldier and intimidating people". The occupation followed the London Fields Festival on the Saturday.

• **Haringey** Around sixty people turned out in north London on Tuesday 22nd May, to defend the home and office of McLibel activist Dave Morris. This followed a threat from Haringey Borough Council to evict Dave, along with his son Charlie, aged 12. Officials at the council said they could now offer only bed and breakfast accommodation, even though Dave has lived in the house since Charlie was born. But friends, supporters and neighbours, together with a samba band, outnumbered police and bailiffs, and the senior cop on the scene decided to withdraw. Dave is demanding that the council agree to let him stay in his home until a permanent replacement can be found. Mail protests to the leader of the council at george.meehan@haringey.gov.uk. Please copy your message to the housing boss, scott.reeve@haringey.gov.uk, and to Dave himself at mclibel@globalnet.co.uk.

• **Faslane** Anti-Trident campaigners are planning to mark the 19th anniversary of the Faslane Peace Camp this week and next, with a series of workshops and actions. Workshops have been planned on a wide range of topics, including designing banners, herbal medicine, wind power, tree climbing, gardening and sustainable communities, etc. On 8th June there will be a wind-powered film night, with an acoustic party on the Saturday. For more info: 01436-820 901 or mail faslania@faslanepeacecamp.org.

Triumphant activists enjoy party in ... Crystal Palace park

South London

Local residents and campaigners flocked to a park in south London last week, for a party to celebrate the defeat of a building attempt on the site of a Victorian landmark.

Development group London and Regional Properties had intended to build an eighteen-screen cinema multiplex on the foundations of the Crystal Palace, which burned down in a fire in 1936. But on 11th May, Bromley Council, which had previously supported the developers, withdrew its backing.

This followed four years of protest, which saw an encampment of environmental activists forcibly removed in a massive police operation in 1998.

Ruby, an opponent of the scheme, says, "basically, negotiations between the council and the developers collapsed, and the plan to build a monstrous multiplex on the highest spot in south London lies in ruins".

Philip Kolvin, of the Crystal Palace Campaign, says, "Bromley's capitulation is a victory for the local community, a tribute to the tens of thousands of people who stood together for what they knew to be right in the face of aggression and greed. I want Crystal Palace to stand as a symbol of what can be achieved when ordinary people unite. Let it be a lesson to those, be they councils or



Crystal Palace protest, 1998

corporations, who believe they can ignore the human voice".

Activists say that they will continue their struggle to safeguard the future of the park. Ruby explains that, as the current planning permission does not expire until March 2002, an alternative developer could still be found. She also points out that Bromley's Unitary Development Plan, which governs future planning decisions for the borough, contains

proposals for the status of the land to be changed, removing any further protection from development. But Ruby is hopeful for the future. "This was not the first development plan for this land, and it may not be the last. But if anyone ever tries to tell you that direct action doesn't work, you've now got something to throw back in their faces".

Editorial on page 7

Frivolity in Manchester

North West

Election day, 7th June, will be a day of festival in Manchester, as activists there celebrate anti-government and anti-corporate frivolity with music, theatre and direct action.

The city centre will feature street entertainment and free stalls in the afternoon, leading up to a critical mass bike ride, which leaves All Saints Park at 5pm, and a demo against the power of corporations in Sackville Park at 6.30pm.

Coordinators from the Carrumba Collective say, "rather than following the pattern of recent bigger demos, where a lot of hanging around and inevitable confrontation occurs, it will be fluid, autonomous and serious, whilst silly and colourful".

"Needless to say, the Socialist Alliance, Green Party and other political faiths that are busy canvassing for votes on election day are not going to participate in an event that asks you to abandon the spectator sport we know as 'representative electoral politics'."

They urge everyone to join in. "Everyone needs to get on the case and start thinking how they can contribute and spread the message".

Contact: The Carrumba Collective, Box 23, c/o Bridge 5 Mill, 22a Beswick Street, Ancoats M4 7HS, 0161-226 6814 (e-mail june7@corporatedirtbag.com).

Mayday march

London

Activists were planning to stage a march in London today, Saturday 2nd June, in protest against the treatment of Mayday demonstrators by the British state. This is part of an ongoing programme of resistance to the actions of police and courts, which have been heavily criticised for their role in attacking anti-capitalist demonstrations in cities around Britain at the start of last month.

The protesters were due to meet outside the headquarters of the Crown Prosecution Service in Victoria at 11am this morning. In another move, designed to show solidarity with prisoners taken by the Canadian state after April's demonstrations in Quebec, they were then due to march to the Canadian High Commission in Grosvenor Square.

Police arrested 96 people during London's Mayday Monopoly protests, of whom over fifty were later charged with offences. Six were remanded in prison, awaiting trial.

In Québec City, cops fired teargas, plastic bullets and water cannon as up to 50,000 people demonstrated against a summit designed to draw up a new free trade area.

Today's march was called by the London Mayday Collective, with support from West London Anarchists and Radicals (WAR) and the WOMBLES. One activist from the collective says, "all of these arrests are part of an attempt to criminalise the anti-capitalist movement, and all of those arrested deserve our support for fighting back against the state. Those in prison are inside for us".

Meanwhile, other activists were planning to attend the next meeting of the Metropolitan Police Authority in Westminster on 14th June, and to stage a demonstration outside.

March: Saturday 2nd June. Meet at 11am at the CPS, Portland House, Stag Place, off Bressenden Place (nearest tube: Victoria).

Demo: Thursday 14th June. Meet at 9.30am

at the MPA, Romney House, Marsham Street (nearest tube: Westminster)

• Did you see anyone being arrested or injured on Mayday? The Legal Defence and Monitoring Group (LDMG), which supports arrested activists, is appealing for witnesses to come forward. Any information provided could help a legal defence or a claim for civil damages. The LDMG need an accurate time and location of any incidents witnessed, and if possible the name of the person involved. Mail ldmg@altavista.com (please include your telephone number).

Justice for Mark Barnsley

Report from the Justice for Mark Barnsley campaign

In solidarity with Mark Barnsley's struggle for justice, and to highlight the seventh anniversary of the attack on him (known as 'the Pomona Incident'), we will be holding a day of action on Friday 8th June. We strongly urge everyone committed to fighting injustice to join us as a show of strength in support of Mark.

Please make every effort to take part in the main event of the day, at the Home Office in

London. In light of the increasing level of harassment against Mark and his campaign, it's crucial that we send a clear message that we are determined to see justice done.

Picket the Home Office at 50 Queen Anne's Gate, London (nearest tube: St James's Park) from 1pm. Bring banners, placards, friends and family.

The campaign is organising transport from Leeds. For further details, phone 0113-262 9365 or e-mail leedsef@ukf.net

Letter from Mark Barnsley on page 7



Barcelona victory

Spain

Anti-capitalist protesters in Spain last week vowed that protests would go ahead in Barcelona later this month, after the shock decision to cancel a meeting of the World Bank in the Catalonian city.

In what was being hailed as a major victory for the anti-capitalism movement, officials from the bank announced on 19th May that their annual conference on economic development would be called off, after Spanish police said that they could not guarantee to stop any protests from taking place.

"Despite our efforts to reach out to some of the groups planning demonstrations at the conference, the intention of many of them is to disrupt it", said Caroline Anstey, a World Bank representative.

The conference, which was due to begin on 25th June, had been intended to improve the international image of the World Bank. More than 200 economists and officials had been due to discuss topics such as 'a global economy for all'.

But up to 25,000 protesters from around the world had been expected in Barcelona, despite Spanish plans to draft in thousands of riot police and to close Spain's borders with France and Portugal.

"We think this will be a great opportunity to show a great resistance to capitalism", said Silvia, a Spanish activist, before the World Bank decision was announced.

Activists quickly agreed that their protests should continue, however. "We think that the reasons we had to protest against the World Bank still stand", said one.

The original programme of direct action, demonstrations, workshops and concerts has now been modified. A counter-conference will begin on 22nd June, and a concert will go ahead the next night. There will be a



Anarchist armoured car in Barcelona, 1936.
This time it wasn't needed.

demo on 24th June, and a massive street party the next day.

Some anarchists argued that the real victory behind the cancellation was a symbolic one. "The World Bank will make the same decisions online as they would have at a physical meeting", said Poma, a British activist. "Even if the whole institution was

abandoned, capitalism would continue regardless. The true significance of our opposition to the institutions of global capitalism is not in our effect on their meetings, but in the promise of a brighter future that is born of our international solidarity".

Editorial on page 7

Support builds for Québec prisoners

Canada

Support continued to build around the world last week for activists arrested during the Summit of the Americas, held in Québec in April.

For two days, from 22nd May, there were solidarity actions within Canada and beyond, during an international mobilisation called by Québécois group, La Convergence des Luttes Anti-capitalistes (CLAC).

At one demo, in Québec City itself on 23rd May, around fifty demonstrators stormed the City Hall and replaced the city flag with an anarchist black flag.

Another demo took place in Toronto and led to tension after the crowd marched on an office owned by the province of Québec.

On 24th May, a march in Montréal passed off peacefully, until a small group of local shopkeepers objected forcibly to anti-capitalist graffiti, which was being sprayed along the route. The marchers later halted outside the offices of SNC-Lavalin, who sponsored the summit in April, then moved onto the courthouse.

During the April summit, which lasted two days, 463 activists were arrested. The cops deployed over 3,000 canisters of teargas, and fired more than 800 plastic bullets. One of the demonstrators has been left unable to speak, after being hit in the windpipe. Another now has only partial sight, after being shot in the eye with a plastic bullet.

Most of those arrested were quickly bailed or released without charge, but six were kept



Throwing back a teargas cannister

in prison for much longer.

Jaggi Singh, a member of CLAC, was arrested by cops dressed as protesters on Friday 20th April. He was held on remand for

seventeen days, before finally being bailed. The case against him has been condemned as "ridiculous" by Toronto's Anti-Racist Action group. "Jaggi was arrested and detained because of his role as a political thinker and organiser", the group says.

Five members of the Germinal group were arrested in their homes even before the summit began, after being watched for several months. They were detained after police raids found masks, firecrackers and smoke bombs in their possession. They now face trial on charges of possession of explosives and theft of military equipment.

"These people are victims of a plot, aimed at the justification of the security measures by the Canadian state in Québec, reinforcing the climate of fear" says a representative from CLAC.

'We demand our rights' say Nigerian workers

West Africa

Nigeria's umbrella union, the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), barricaded the head office of the west African state's largest bank last week.

This followed the announcement by First Bank of Nigeria that workers who refused to leave the union would be sacked. Around 2,000 protesters blocked the entrances to the Lagos building, bringing business to a stop.

The courts were quick to issue an injunction against the protest, but the demonstrators ignored it.

"We are here to send a signal to First Bank of our intention to close the bank down unless they allow the workers' right to trade unionism", said Adams Oshiomhole of the NLC. He said that the protests would soon extend outside the capital, and warned that staff would close down 150 large branches around the country.

Bilderberg Group

Sweden: Enlargement of the European Union, the EU's military role, the future of NATO and developments in Russia and China were thought to be the topics for discussion when senior western bosses met in Sweden last weekend.

The so-called Bilderberg Group, a forum for the west's most powerful people, was due to hold its annual secret meeting in the Swedish coastal town of Stenungsund for four days from 24th May.

A 900-metre metal fence was built round the town's main hotel, where the meeting was due to be held, to keep protesters away from Bilderberg members such as former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. Bosses of many well-known multinationals were also thought likely to attend.

"This group has contributed towards shaping the kind of capitalism we have today, and has cemented the world's business elites together", said one Swedish observer.

Live bullets

Indonesia: The Indonesian cops were authorised to fire live bullets at any protesters who tried to disrupt this week's G15 summit in Jakarta.

"In the first instance, we will use teargas, then rubber bullets, and if those steps fail, we will use live bullets", said police representative Dede Widayadi.

Around 27,000 police and soldiers were deployed around the city, ready for the two-



Now the bullets are live

day summit. This was due to be attended by six heads of state from so-called developing countries in the region.

"If anarchist groups try to occupy or damage the G15 venue, we will take harsh action", said Widayadi.

African target

Durban: Anti-capitalists in southern Africa are preparing to protest next week, as senior politicians, diplomats and business people travel to Durban for a conference of the Southern African Economic Forum (SAEF).

"The SAEF will attract the region's top business, financial and government bosses", says Nicolas Dieltiens, a Zambian activist. "As proponents of privatisation and neo-liberal policies, the Forum should be a target for all anarchist organisations".

EU summit

Sweden: Three weeks after the meeting of the Bilderberg Group (see above), activists in Sweden are planning demonstrations at the EU summit in Gothenburg.

The summit begins on 14th June and will be attended by US president George W. Bush. Its main topic will be EU enlargement into eastern Europe. Over 20,000 activists are expected to take part.

Floating abortion clinic visits Ireland

Women making waves

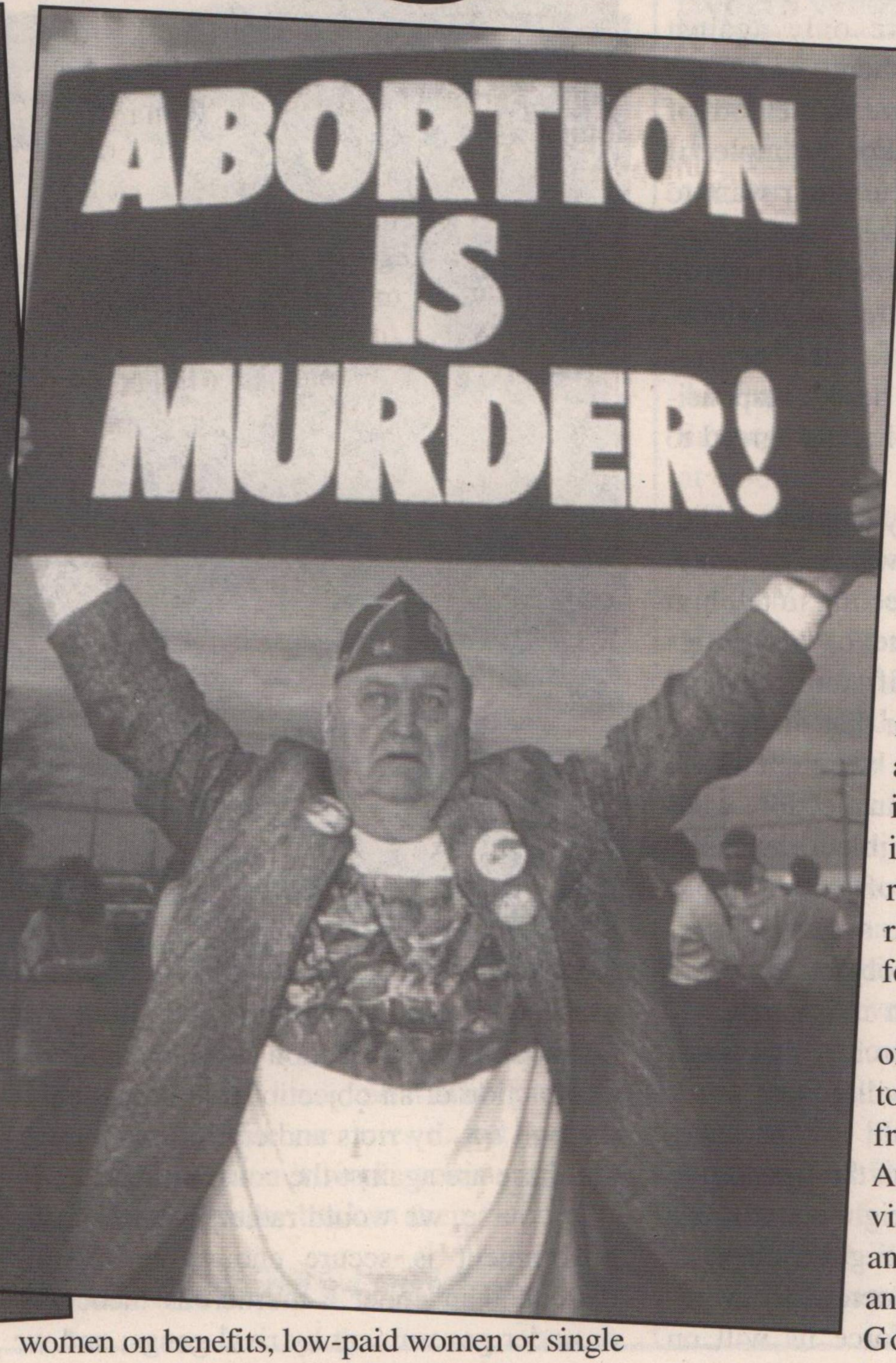
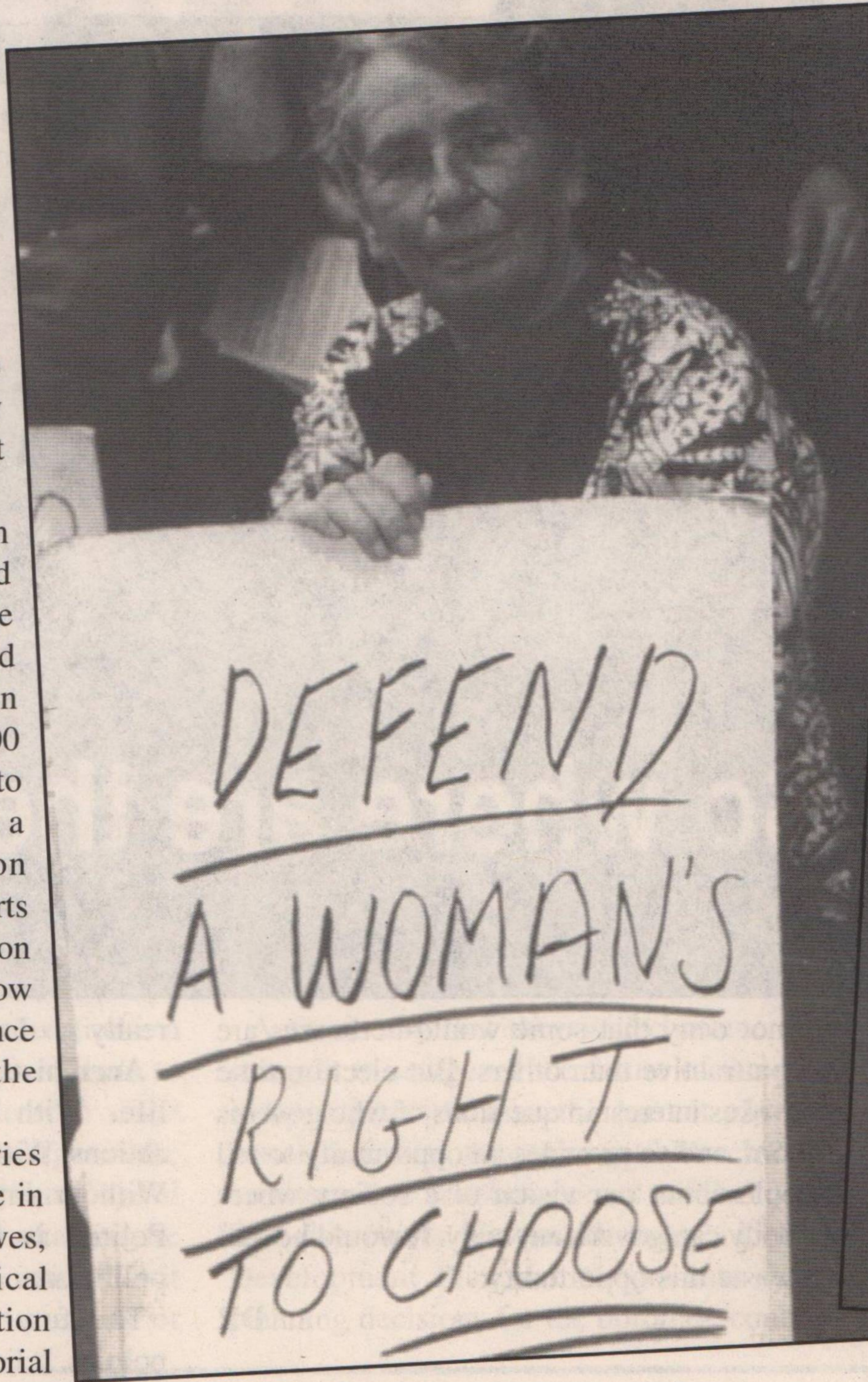
An innovative new pro-choice campaign, the Women on Waves Foundation (WoW), is set to become international news. Founded in 1999 by a Dutch medical doctor, Rebecca Gomperts, its mission is to prevent unwanted pregnancy and unsafe abortions throughout the world.

The World Health Organisation estimates that every year around twenty million abortions are performed under illegal and unsafe conditions, resulting in the deaths of an estimated 70,000 women annually. In response to this, Women on Waves has built a reproductive health clinic on board a Dutch ship. Dr Gomperts was formerly the ship's doctor on the Greenpeace vessel Rainbow Warrior, and from her experience developed the concept of the floating clinic.

The ship will go to countries where abortion is illegal. While in port, it will provide contraceptives, information, legal and medical training. Safe and legal abortion will be provided outside territorial waters in countries where abortion is illegal.

Working in close co-operation with local organisations, Women on Waves aims to draw public attention to the consequences of unwanted pregnancy and illegal abortion.

So how does this apply to Ireland? Dr Gomperts recently appeared on *The Late Late Show* to explain the international mission of the Women on Waves Foundation. After her appearance, the Irish pro-choice group DARG (Dublin Abortion Rights Group) issued an invitation to the Foundation to bring the ship to Ireland. Since then, pro-choice activists here have set up Women on Waves Ireland, whose members are working with the Foundation to bring the ship to Ireland this month.



At present Irish women who wish to end a pregnancy have to go to Britain to do so, because abortion is illegal here. If the ship were to come to Ireland, it would highlight the hypocrisy of the situation where over 6,000 Irish women go to Britain for abortions every year, yet cannot avail of the same service in their own country.

Abortion is never an easy choice, nor one that is taken lightly. But to force women to travel to Britain, away from friends and family, makes matters worse. It means that they have later abortions and the whole process is more stressful, traumatic and threatening to the health of the woman.

And the choice is made much harder for particular women. Young women, students,

women on benefits, low-paid women or single parents face greater difficulties. There are the added problems of raising money for the fare, travelling alone, getting time off work and keeping the matter confidential. The 'Irish solution' – of exporting the issue to Britain – makes a difficult choice much more difficult.

During the ship's visit to Ireland it will have a fully equipped abortion clinic and will make abortion services available to women where medically appropriate. In other countries the ship plans to visit, abortions will be performed where sought by women, but outside territorial waters.

By performing abortions outside territorial waters, women and abortion providers cannot be prosecuted when returning to port. This is

because national penal legislation, and thus abortion law, extends only to territorial waters. Outside that 12-mile radius Dutch law applies on board a Dutch ship. And since abortion is legal in the Netherlands, it is possible to sail to international waters to perform legal abortions.

WoW plans for the ship to get wide media coverage. So the general public in the countries it visits will be made aware of the social and medical issues concerning unwanted pregnancy and illegal abortion. It will also raise debate about women's right to control their own fertility.

It has been said that the idea of the floating clinic is likely to provoke fierce opposition from anti-abortion groups. Attempts to disrupt the ship's visit to Ireland by extreme anti-abortionists are expected and are being prepared for. Dr Gomperts regards this as

inevitable and says that the campaign must continue nonetheless. She cites research showing that when abortion becomes legal, death rates fall dramatically, and she emphasises the desperate need for safe legal abortion worldwide.

The Women on Waves Ireland group already has the support of a range of organisations, including the Dublin Abortion Rights Group, Abortion Reform, the Union of Students in Ireland Executive, the Workers Solidarity Movement, and the Dublin Council of Trade Unions.

Ivana Bacik and Brendan Young

Contact: Women on Waves Ireland, PO Box 8306, Dublin 1 (tel: +353 87 9220902), e-mail ireland@womenonwaves.org or see website at www.womenonwaves.org.

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Moral objections and the right to choose: an anarchist viewpoint

An anarchist society will be one where people are free to make choices about their own lives. It will be a society where decisions are made at the lowest effective level. For women, this includes the decision about whether or not to become pregnant, whether or not to remain pregnant, whether or not to have children.

It is possible to be an anarchist and to have a moral objection to abortion. It is not possible to be an anarchist and not support the right of women to choose. For if the right to choose does not rest solely with the pregnant woman, where would it lie? With the state? With lawyers and the courts? With the police?

The logic of the anti-choice position is that women would be coerced into continuing with unwanted pregnancies. To anarchists, this would be unacceptable.

Women consider many different issues when they make the decision to have an abortion. They consider the views of their partner, parents and the society they live in.

They consider the effect it will have on their career or studies. They think about whether they are ready for motherhood. They look at the relationship they are in. They examine their financial and economic situation.

The decision is complex, and not an easy one. For anarchists, the best person, indeed the only person, with the right to make that decision, is the woman who is going to have to live with the consequences. So for us, the right to abortion is a basic human right.

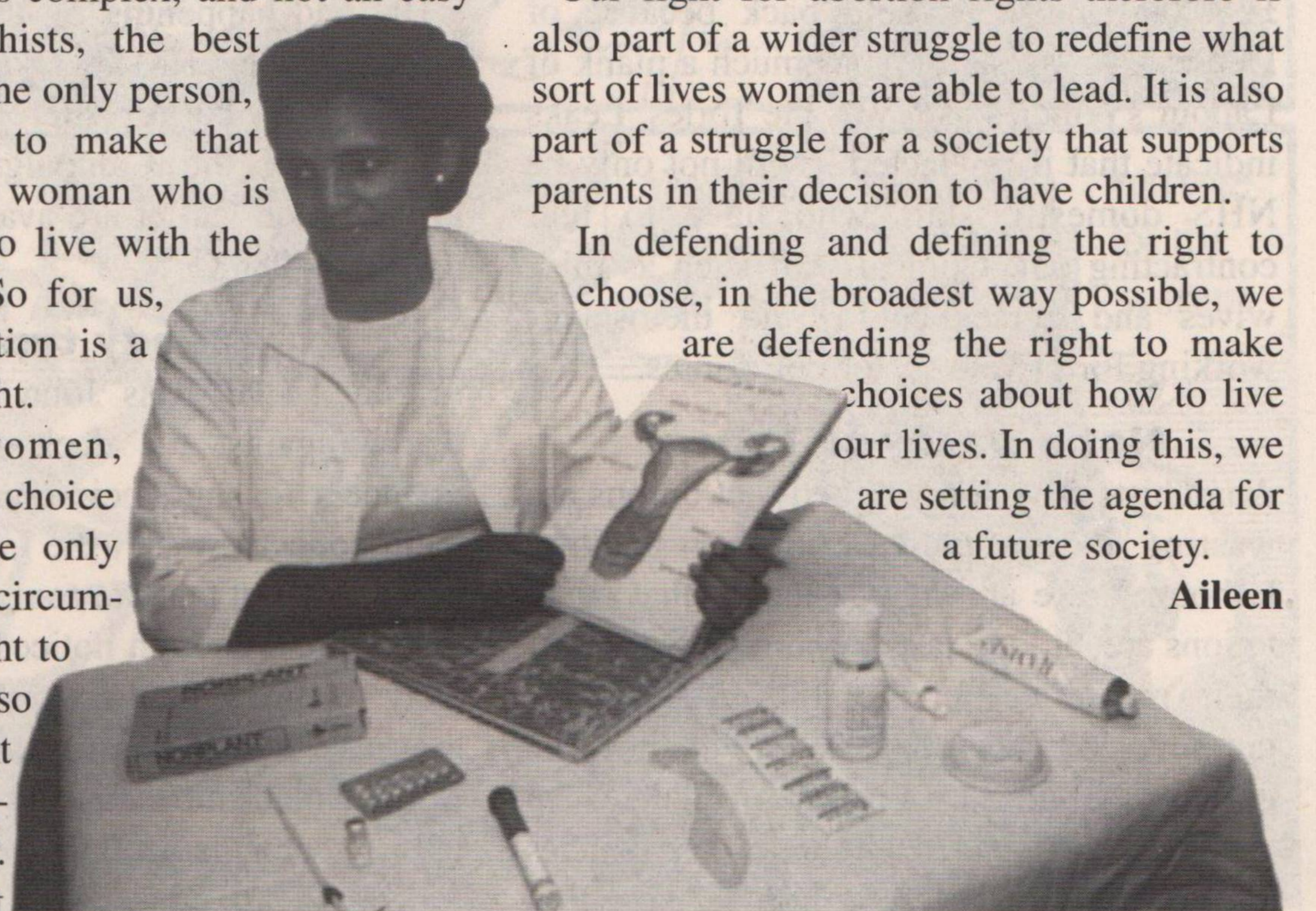
For many women, abortion isn't a choice at all. It is the only option in their circumstances. The right to choose should also include the right to choose to become a mother. While we fight

for abortion rights on one hand, we also fight for the removal of barriers and stigma, which prevent some women from carrying through a pregnancy, which they would like to continue with.

Our fight for abortion rights therefore is also part of a wider struggle to redefine what sort of lives women are able to lead. It is also part of a struggle for a society that supports parents in their decision to have children.

In defending and defining the right to choose, in the broadest way possible, we are defending the right to make choices about how to live our lives. In doing this, we are setting the agenda for a future society.

Aileen



Don't vote ... organise

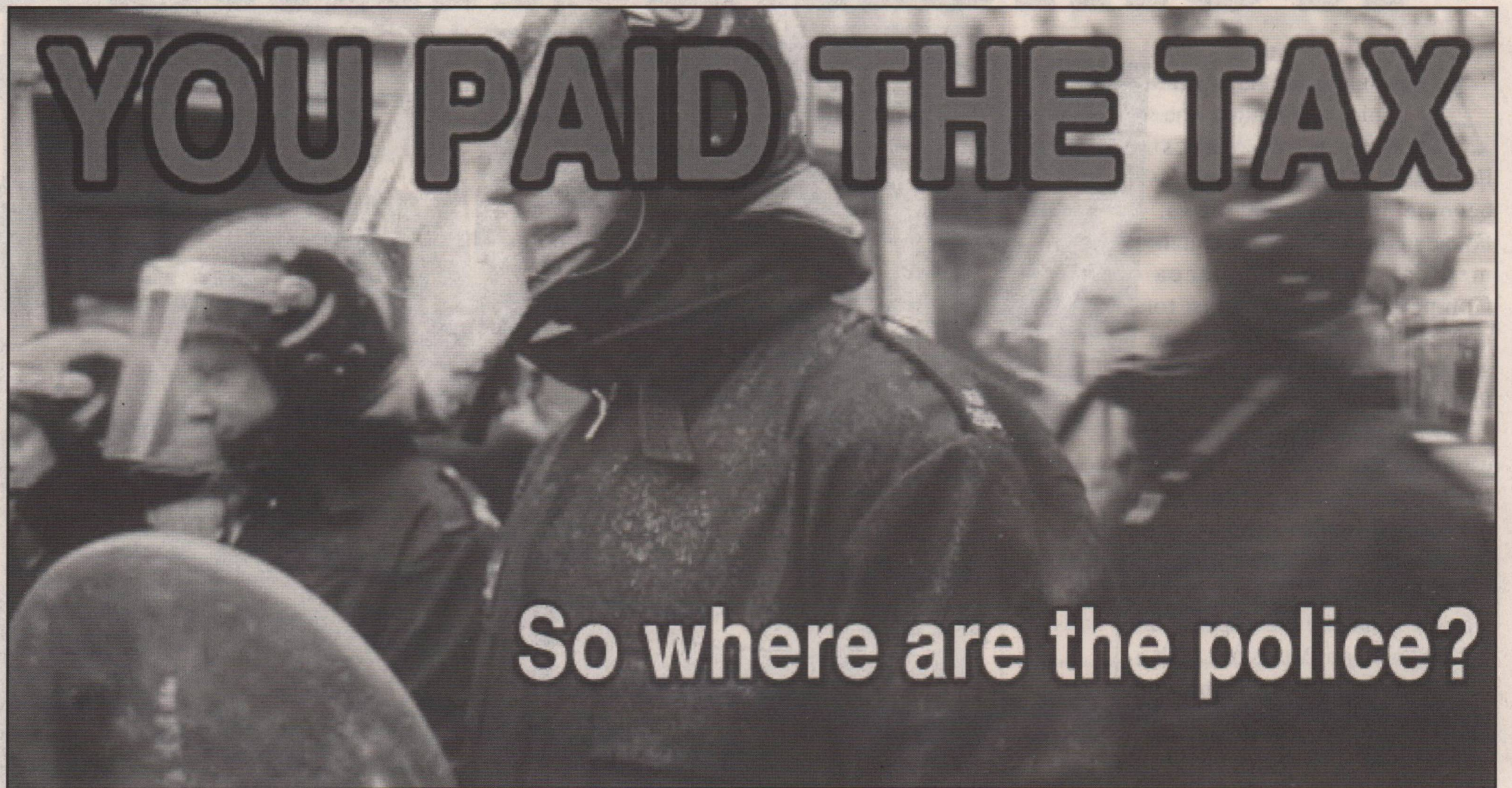
Anarchists are not against voting on principle. They are only against voting for a government.

Voting can be a convenient method of making group decisions. For example, if some members of an amateur choir want to sing *Cherry Ripe*, while others want to sing *Strawberry Fair*, they may decide to vote on it and sing the majority preference. Whichever way an individual choir member may have voted, she or he must accept responsibility for the group choice, having agreed to accept the majority vote.

If the choir has a crotchety neighbour with sensitive ears, who does not want any singing, it would not answer his objection to tell him he is free to vote for one of the songs proposed, or to propose a different song and try to get a majority vote for that.

Voting for a government has similarities. Every person who votes in an election, whoever they vote for, is responsible for whoever wins because in the act of voting for a candidate, they vote for the system. And if there is an anarchist who objects to being governed by anybody, then it is obviously preposterous to tell the anarchist that he or she is free to vote on who will govern.

But the similarities should not be overstated. Choir members retain the freedom to resign, and the crotchety neighbour to move out of earshot. But once a government is voted into power, the democratic constitution gives it the right to force its will on



everybody, subject only the possibility of defeat at the next election (people may force a retraction of an objectionable law, such as the poll tax, by riots and civil disobedience, but these are against the constitution).

Of course, we would rather live where the government is secure enough to tolerate dissent, than under a murderous theocracy, or under government by rival gangs; and we

do not deny that some would-be bosses are less attractive than others. But election time provokes interest in questions of who governs whom, and so provides an opportunity to tell people about our vision of a society where nobody can govern anybody. It would be daft to waste this opportunity.

DR

really go down that road yet again?

Anarchists do want to participate in public life. With our organisations. With our actions. With our solidarity. With our papers. Without intermediaries or representatives. Politics is far too important to be left to politicians.

The future does not lie with electoral politics. It lies in direct action – protest movements and demonstrations, civil disobedience, strikes and boycotts—using all of the power people have to fight against governments and corporations for improvements in their lives and, ultimately, for an anarchist society.

We have to impose from the streets and workplaces that which politicians are incapable of realising in parliament. We must create that part of libertarian communism which can be created within capitalist society and do so precisely to combat that system by direct action and solidarity. With a strong direct action movement we can get what we want no matter who is in office.

At election time we must raise the anarchist message and show that there is an alternative to voting—direct action, solidarity and self-management. There are plenty of

Industrial commentary

Dudley PFI

“Bad news for patients and worse for workers” said David Prentis, Unison’s General Secretary as the Dudley Group of Hospitals slipped out the news that they had signed a Private Finance Initiative (PFI) deal with Summit Healthcare. The hospital now plans to start transferring 600 hospital staff, including porters, cleaners and cooks, to the private sector company. The PFI deal will also result in the loss of 73 hospital beds.

Prentis spelt out the reality of privatisation saying, “the problems of contracting out are well documented. The deal will hand loyal staff over to an untested private sector.”

The Dudley strikers, who have been taking action for ten months now, remain defiant and have vowed that the dispute will continue. A mass picket was held at the hospital at the end of May. The workers are now calling on Unison to step up the campaign nationally.

Political levy

The news about Dudley leaked out on the same day as the General Election was announced. Unison handed Labour £750,000 for the election campaign (although £250,000 has been held back because of Dudley). Privatisation is as much a plank of Labour’s policies as it was the Tories. Leaks indicate that if re-elected it will not only be NHS domestic staff who have to fear contracting out. Clinical staff such as midwives and nurses could find themselves working for private sector companies.

Not a penny to Labour

Anarchists have long argued that unions are wasting their member’s money backing Labour. There are signs, though, that some unions are, at long last, waking up to this. At their recent conference the fire-fighter’s union voted by 27,000 to 23,000 to allow the union to fund non-Labour candidates in elections as long as “they support the policies and principles of the union”. A motion

moved by Bedfordshire FBU went on to say that this may mean backing candidates who “stand in opposition to Labour”.

As disillusionment with Labour grows the call to disaffiliate will get louder. Anarchists welcome this. Will ordinary union members be any better off if money, rather than being given to the Labour Party, is handed over to the Socialist Alliance or the Socialist Labour Party instead? Handing money to any Parliamentary party simply props the system up. Funding real campaigns to defend workers’ rights or to support other actions would be a far better use of members’ hard-earned subs.

Rail Safety

The day before the next planned tube strike the RMT union has called a demo for rail safety and against privatisation (see back page for details).

Earlier in the month Blair joined the *Evening Standard* in slugging the planned strike off, saying there was no justification for the one-day action. No doubt if train workers had done the same before rail privatisation, Blair would have slugged them off as well. The tube strike is about stopping a Hatfield happening on the tube. Like the Dudley strikers RMT workers aren’t striking for more pay but for safety and services.

Copies of the Campaign Against Tube Privatisation leaflet are available from John (07961 440868).

Bloody typical

In May, TUC boss John Monks joined a march against the decision by Marks & Spencers to shut their non-UK stores. His main concern wasn’t the fact that jobs were being lost, but that the company hadn’t given the workers enough notice. That’s right: it’s okay to throw workers out of their jobs as long as you tell them in advance. Is it any wonder that union membership (outside the public sector) is declining?

Richard

Voting for a government means transferring your will and decisions to another, which is contrary to the fundamental principles of anarchism. It cannot teach people to govern themselves and so cannot be considered as a means of advancing the anarchist cause.

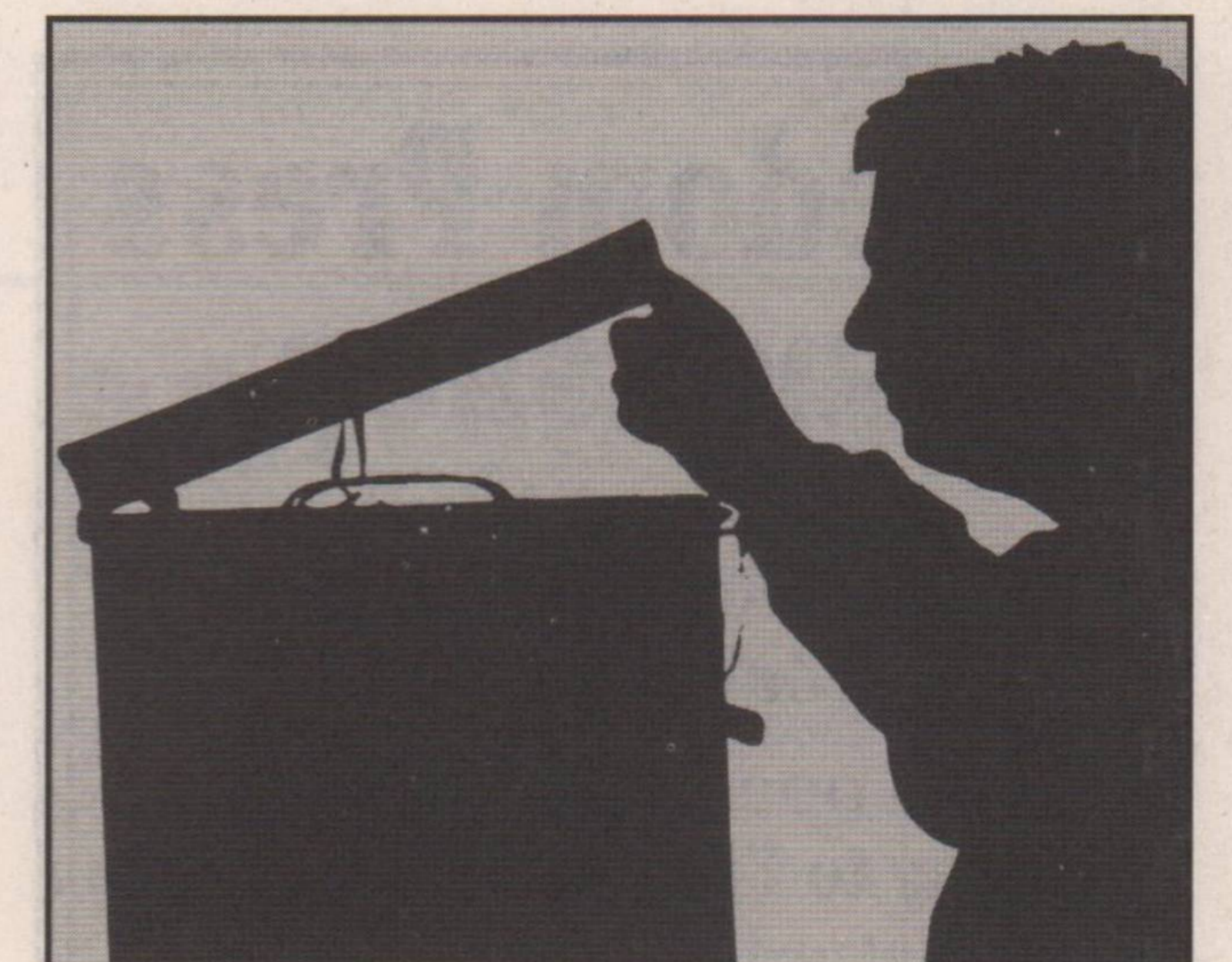
Direct action, on the other hand, is. Direct action is any form of activity which people themselves decide upon and organise themselves which is based on their own collective strength and does not involve getting intermediaries to act for them. As such it teaches people how to manage their own affairs, directly and without rulers. Unlike voting, it can generate alternative forms of social organisation that not only fights capitalism and the state but can also end them.

Voting cannot achieve that. In fact, the reverse as people remain as isolated and individualistic after voting as they were before. No social alternatives have been created nor can be. Voting cannot empower people and give them a sense of power, confidence and ability. It disempowers them by creating a ‘leader’ figure from which changes are expected to flow.

Perhaps we should listen to the Socialist Alliance and Greens, and combine voting with direct action? It is amazing that after over 100 years of radicals using elections some people still argue this!

The state exists to defend minority rule, it cannot be used to destroy it. Participation in bourgeois politics has not brought us any nearer to Socialism. It has, however, affected the radicals who have used it, turning them into reformists and politicians and their organisations bureaucratic. It has destroyed the belief in constructive Socialist activity and the impulse to self-help by encouraging the delusion that salvation comes from above.

I need only point to German Social Democracy and the Greens to show the failures of this approach. Both started with a commitment to using elections and direct action. Soon, however, the only commitment was getting votes. Direct action was opposed and the party became respectable. Must we



people urging us to alienate our power, why join them? Anarchism can only come about when people want it. They will not want it if they have never heard of it. That is why we should use the opportunity of the election to raise our politics and not waste it by joining the voices who want government.

To combat and abolish hierarchy, it is of no use changing the rulers, we need to get rid of them. Only a social movement, built and run from below, using direct action and solidarity, can do that. And electioneering diverts time, energy and resources away from building that movement.

A new world is possible, but only if we create it in our struggles against the current one.

So don’t vote, organise!

Iain McKay

What we say ...

Another cover-up

The bosses' hold on power is built on a lie. They deserve to be powerful, the lie says, because only they can run society. We can't do it ourselves.

So it's natural that the first reaction of the establishment to any crisis beyond its control is to hide what's going on. Let the wage-slaves know the bosses are fallible, the thinking goes, and who knows where it might all end.

This is at the root of the foot and mouth affair. But there are additional, complicating factors. Blair had an election to call, which he could hardly do in the middle of a crisis which he had personally pledged to solve.

Powerless to stop the disaster on Britain's farms, he's following plan B instead. He now has to pretend it isn't happening. He has to cover it up.

The other factor is the usual one: official incompetence. Nobody outside the Ministry of Agriculture thinks the state's response has been anything other than woeful. Many say that it has actually made the problem worse.

We predict this will become increasingly clear in the years ahead, just as it did with the BSE epidemic. The bosses screwed up. And what is the invariable response of the bosses under pressure? Naturally, to try and cover it up.

Echelon spies

We've known for years about the existence of the Echelon spy network, even though its existence has never been acknowledged by the governments that run it, Britain's included.

The ability of the state to listen in on every word we say – whether by telephone, fax or e-mail – is a terrifying prospect.

Maybe Echelon isn't being used against us (though on previous experience of state surveillance, it probably is). But as all these operations of the secret state are done covertly, we'll never know.

We can't any longer afford to treat our private lives as, well, private. Any communication we send electronically might be written on a postcard, for all the security we have.

We don't know what information is being gathered, nor the use to which it is being put.

But what is the state for, if not to oppress its citizens? And to do that, it must first know what they're doing.

Protest works

Politicians and pundits got themselves in an awful lather over Mayday, jabbering on about how the protesters should use 'the democratic process', instead of taking to the streets.

But they overlooked one thing. Protest and direct action work. Following the proper channels does not.

We report in this issue two cases where committed activists have helped make their world a better place.

In Crystal Palace Park, south London, a vast and ugly development has been cancelled. In Barcelona, a cynical propaganda rally by the World Bank has been called off.

People could have used 'the democratic process' against both, and they would have been ignored.

Instead they launched occupations, parties, pickets and demonstrations, or (in Barcelona) threatened to do so.

Capitalism is the problem, we know. But even within capitalism, we can make a difference. It's no good waiting for politicians to do it for us. We've got to do it for ourselves. Protest works.

Readers' letters

More on Mayday

Dear *Freedom*,

What a complete and utter wash-out this year's Mayday protest turned out to be. The manner in which the protesters played into the hands of the authorities must be unparalleled, transforming the whole disorganised event into nothing more than an intelligence-gathering exercise for the police, who are the only ones who can claim the day was a success. Then what do we hear? A chorus of whinging about being hemmed in at Oxford Circus for seven hours, and how our various freedoms were curtailed. What do people really expect from the state?

If some of us were to spend a little less time sitting by our PCs, decorating our websites, and a little more time getting organised, then perhaps the era of effective street protests will not be, as I fear, at an end.

Derek Barrow

Dear *Freedom*,

Just as undercooked bread has an unpleasant, cloying texture in the mouth, so every representation of revolutionaries in the capitalist media is unpalatable to those portrayed. In the tabloid press, outright hostility towards the Mayday protesters was expected and delivered in spades. Much worse was the critical appraisal of those who positioned themselves as 'belonging to the same side as the anti-capitalists'. The media 'experts' on extra-parliamentary political activity spoke as if they are entirely familiar with, and no doubt a little wearied of, the typicalities of protest. They claimed to judge, not ignorantly, but only after much accumulation of information. They did not condemn rashly, but evaluated rationally, or so they wanted to appear.

Of course, those in the anarchist scene will

see through this kind of trick at once – the flimsy objectivity, the lazy press cuttings trawl and the stringing together of groups and arbitrary events, but there was no place in the mainstream where refutation might appear, and anyway this stuff was not intended for the already-committed, but for those who were tempted, those feeling a bit anarchistic.

The lesson is this: whenever anything political happens outside of parliamentary procedure, the state will use certain apparently radical voices, *Red Pepper*, or radical journalists in the *Guardian*, to condemn these events as undemocratic, or anti-environment. It is a lesson to be learned well, because it will be used increasingly in the future.

Monsieur Dupont

Homophobic term

Dear *Freedom*,

I must comment on your edition of 5th May. On the whole, I thought that it was a very good issue, dealing reasonably with anarchist issues. But I was turned off by the heading of the editorial on the front page.

When I received the paper, and took it out of the envelope, the first thing that greeted me was the heading under the photo, 'capitalism sucks'.

I objected to this heading, because the expression 'sucks' has its derivation in the virulent anti-gay attitudes that are still common here in the USA. When someone detested another person, they would call him a 'no-good cocksucker'. During the 1960s, the young people who populated the hippy environment dropped the word 'cock'.

When I used to challenge people about the phrase, they would admit that they either

really couldn't tell me what it meant, or would guiltily admit that its roots were in the old anti-gay familiar phrase.

So, I'll ask whoever decided to use the phrase in *Freedom*, what exactly does the phrase 'capitalism sucks' mean?

David Koven

It means that we don't like capitalism and that we think there are better ways to live. We weren't aware of the homophobic roots of the term and we apologise if its use caused offence.

Anarchism is the desire to abolish coercion from human relationships. We think that being an anarchist entails the acceptance of each individual's right to sleep with who they choose, if their choice is reciprocated. Homophobia and anarchism are incompatible.

Seven years on

Dear *Freedom*,

Just a few lines to thank you for the recent coverage of my case, which is appreciated.

I'll have been inside for seven years this month, and as you know the harassment I am subjected to only gets worse. In April, I carried out a 48-hour hunger strike in protest at my conditions and ongoing ill-treatment.

Despite my situation here, I remain strong and determined, and absolutely committed to the struggle for justice – for myself and others.

Mark Barnsley

Mark is currently in Wakefield Prison. For contact details, see page 3.

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

Donations

May 2001

Freedom Fortnightly Fighting Fund

Faversham, RM, £3; Liverpool, PH, £4; Newport, NF, £5; Bristol, RS, £6; Pontypool, TB, £6; London E1, DR, £83; Ipswich, BW, £20; London E11, TB, £2; Beckenham, DP, £10.

May total = £139.00

Total for 2001 = £641.00

Freedom Press Overheads Fund

Lincoln, MB, £6; London NW6, PC, £2; London E1, DR, £82; Ipswich, BW, £20; Beckenham, DP, £10.

May total = £120.00

Total for 2001 = £759.00

Raven Deficit Fund

Wolverhampton, JL, £2; London E1, DR, £83; Ipswich, BW, £10; Beckenham, DP, £10.

May total = £105.00

Total for 2001 = £504.00

COPY DEADLINE

The next issue of *Freedom* will be dated 16th June, and the last day for copy intended for this issue will be first post on Thursday 7th June.

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

A HEARTWARMING TALE FROM FREEDOM PRESS

On Mayday a shop assistant at a branch of Waterstone's telephoned Freedom Press on behalf of a customer, to inquire about the availability of one of our books (Tony Gibson's *Love, Sex and Power in Later Life*, which had been mentioned in *The Guardian* of 30th April). We explained that we prefer not to deal with Waterstone's as they require a 50% retail discount, which is more than we can afford. So the shop assistant gave the customer our address and the advice to buy direct from us (£3.50 post free in UK). Good for her. Nice to learn of shop assistants who value the requirements of their customers above the profits of their employers.

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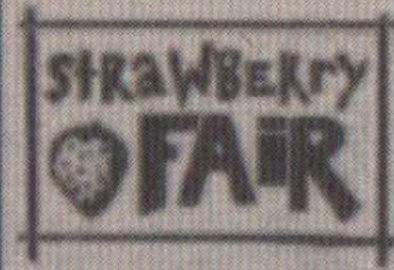
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Always one of the best
free festivals of the summer



Strawberry Fair

in Cambridge

Saturday 2nd June 2001

www.strawberry-fair.org.uk
for info tel: 01223 560160

Rail safety demo

The day before the next planned tube strike the RMT union has called a demo for rail safety and against privatisation

Meet 12.45 on Saturday 2nd June
at Temple Place (by Temple tube) and then
march to Railtrack's headquarters at Euston

Revolutionary Socialist Network

Conference on 9th and 10th June in Bristol
Great Western Staff Association Club
Station Approach, Temple Meads Station

Saturday 9th June: General election debate • Exodus Collective (raves, class and squatting in Luton) • Where next? (planning session including possible conference with Northern Anarchist Network) • Saturday evening 'Bristol Riots Walk'

Sunday 10th June: Privatisation (speakers from rail and postal industries) •

Revolution (what, how, when?)

Conference fee: £6 (£3 low paid/unwaged)

More information from:

Dave Backwith on 01638 669551 (davback@supanet.com)

or Glen Burrows / Dave Chapple 01278 450562

(glen@redsw.fsnet.co.uk)

The London Cannabis march from Kennington Park
for festival in Brockwell Park

live bands • sound systems • hemp expo • stalls • kids area

Saturday 16th June 2001

www.cannabiscoalition.org

for info tel: 020 7637 7467 or 020 7738 5148

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London Anarchist Forum

1st June Monthly free discussion (debate, analyse, plan or just gossip in a convivial setting with free food and drink)

8th June Women and Anarchy (symposium 3)

15th June Political Correctness (a provocative talk by Peter Neville)

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

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

Glasgow Peace Carnival

June 2nd at George Square, Glasgow

Stalls, speakers, live music from midday to 6pm

www.cndscot.dial.pipex.com

Northern Anarchist Network

Summer conference in Hebden Bridge

Saturday 7th July • 10.30am to 5.30pm

for details contact Martin on 0161 707 9652

www.perso.libertysurf.co.uk/northernanarchistnet/index

Public meeting: Resistance at Work

Stop 'accidents at work' – a discussion and chance to put your views on how to fight for safer workplaces, direct action to improve safety, rank and file organisation

Tuesday 19th June at 7.30pm

Wood Green Labour Club, Stuart Crescent, London N22

organised by Haringey Solidarity Group

<http://hsg.cupboard.org>

Statewatching the new Europe 2001

international conference on the state, civil liberties and secrecy at University of London Students Union, Malet Street, London WC1

Saturday 30th June 2001

Statewatch, PO Box 1516, London N16 0EW

www.statewatch.org

Red Rambles 2001

Red Rambles walks and rambles for Radicals, Libertarians, Anarchists, Greens, Socialists, Syndicalists, et al. Walkers are reminded to wear walking boots, appropriate clothing and to bring waterproofs, food and drink. See <http://members.tripod.co.uk/ainema/index-2.html>

Sunday 2nd July 2001

Cromford Canal to Scarthin Promenade for lunch and return, 6 miles. Meet at 11am at Whatstandwell railway station car park on the A6 north of Amblegate. Also on route of R1 Manchester to Nottingham Trans-Peak bus. Walk leader Mike.

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