

# anarchist fortnightly Freedom

Vol. 62 No. 12

16th June 2001

50p



## Pants to your polls

Over four in ten of those registered to vote cast no ballot in last week's general election. Include those who never registered in the first place, and nearly half Britain's adults didn't participate in 'the democratic process'.

But what the capitalist media portrayed as simple 'apathy' was, in many cases, the result of a considered political

position – that voting for politicians has nothing to offer us.

This was one story that went unreported in the mainstream. Where was the coverage of Bristol's Vote Nobody campaign? What about Manchester's J7?

The capitalist press had other, serious things to cover instead. Like the important story about the PM's choice of underwear, planted by Labour spin

doctors in a pathetic attempt to appeal to 'yoof'. Unsurprisingly, this didn't quite work as planned (four in five people under 25 didn't vote).

The real joke was on Blair and Hague. We didn't care about their undies, any more than we cared for them. Voting won't change the world, and nor will politicians. Bollocks to their ballots. Pants to their polls.



# anarchist fortnightly Freedom

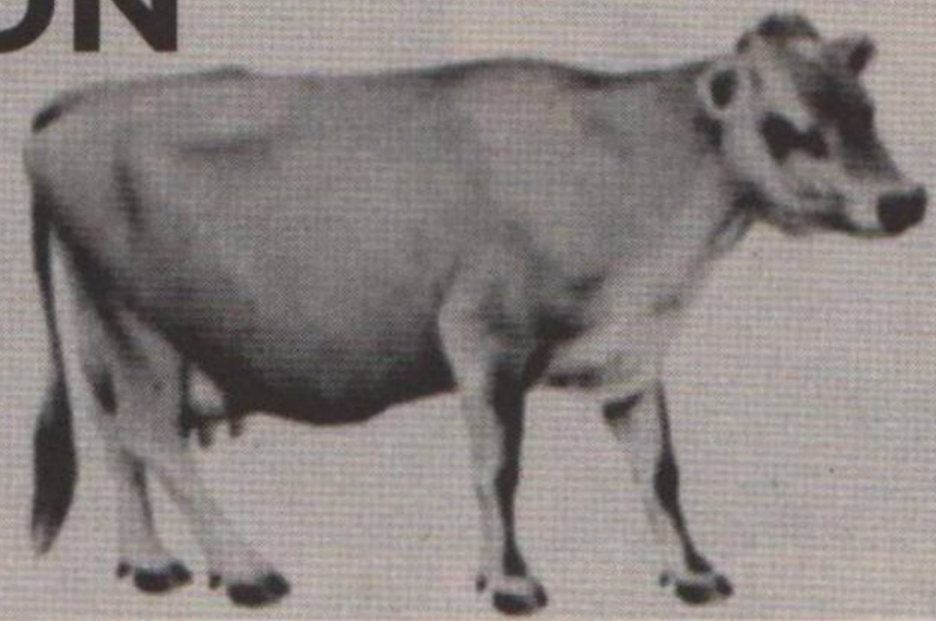
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THE LAND

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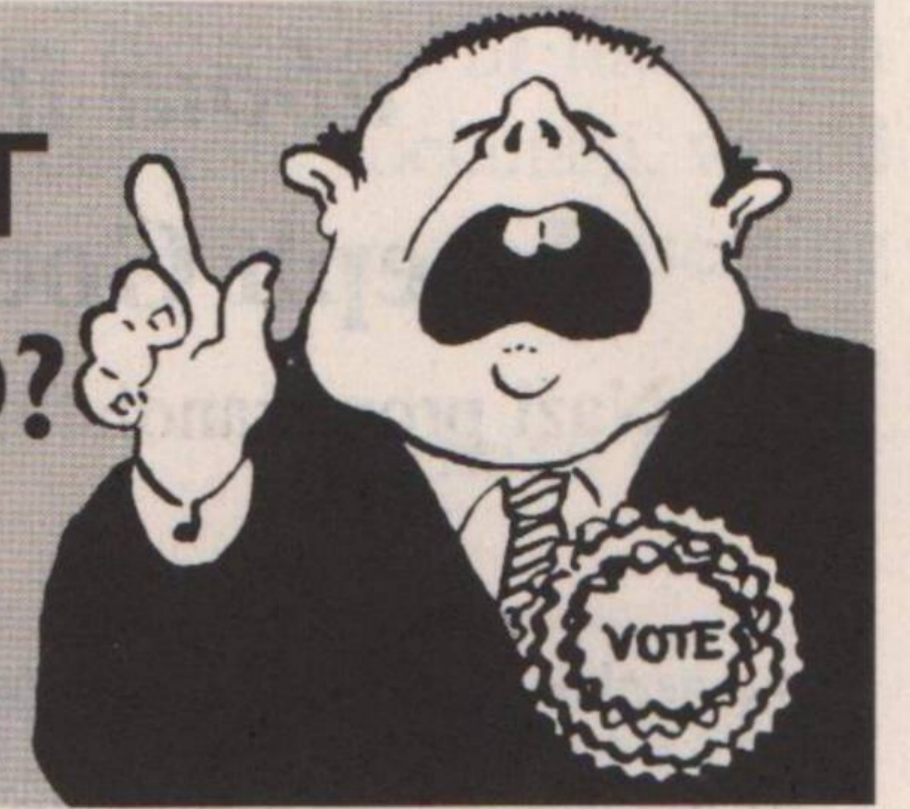


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THE 'C' WORD?

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Millions of people send the same message ...

## 'We refuse to vote'

Over four in ten electors chose not to vote in last week's general election, the lowest turnout since 1918.

Abstention, at 40.8% of those registered to vote, was 12% lower than in 1997. This figure does not include people who are not on the electoral roll in the first place. They are thought to number several million.

Even in Tony Blair's own Sedgefield constituency, official abstainers accounted for 38% of the electorate. In deputy Prime Minister John Prescott's seat, Hull East, 53.6% of registered voters did not vote.

Politicians and media pundits immediately tried to identify reasons for the low poll. Chancellor Gordon Brown dismissed it as "a trend in western industrial democracies", while new foreign secretary Jack Straw said it reflected "the politics of contentment".

The low turnout came despite government schemes designed to increase participation in the electoral process. These included moves to make postal voting much easier, advertising campaigns, and transforming pubs and chip shops into polling stations.

In the days before the poll, politicians had also put heavy pressure on potential voters. In a speech the day before the election, Tony Blair accused anybody who failed to vote of dishonouring 'Britain's war dead'.

Speaking during a pub visit in Yorkshire, he told supporters, "don't let the cynics and pessimists win. There are people, our ancestors, who lived and fought and sometimes died for the right to vote in this country. And I tell you we honour their memory when we exercise that power in our democracy. We dishonour it when we fail to do so".

But anarchists around the country were quick to dispute the official analysis. The organisers of Bristol's Vote Nobody campaign said, "time and again we are asked to trundle down to the polling station and choose between a couple of carbon-copy candidates. They campaign with near-identical policies on issues that bear bugger all relevance to ninety nine per cent of people, while ignoring the issues that have communities by the throat".

Nadia, a Birmingham-based activist, agreed. "They're all the same. Whoever you vote for, the multinationals get in. Now we've got to put our message across, that representative democracy is wrong in principle, not just in practice. We don't want to vote for representatives to dictate over us. Having the vote isn't a sign of freedom, it's a sign of slavery".



## Mainstream media ignores anti-voting protests

Anarchists were last week quick to condemn the response of the mainstream media to news that around seventeen million people who could have voted in the general election did not do so. Most pundits seemed to agree that the problem was something they called 'voter apathy'.

"Nowhere was it suggested that abstaining can be a political act" said Glasgow activist Iain. "To evaluate the options available and reject them all, and even the system itself, is clearly far more political than voting Labour just because you've always voted Labour. Not according to the media, though". He went on, "nobody asked whether a rejection

of voting and the embrace of direct action can be classed as 'apathy'. What about people who only concern themselves with politics once every four or five years, when they vote? Aren't they really the apathetic ones?"

Others pointed out that anti-voting protests have been held in cities across Britain in recent months, without being reported in the mainstream.

Following the Vote Nobody mock election in Bristol on 3rd May, election day itself saw a demonstration in Manchester city centre.

A television cameraman who came left in a hurry, saying that his station was barred by law from broadcasting anything on election day that might sway the decision of voters.

Meanwhile, in Oxford Street, an anti-voting demo was held outside the offices of the BBC in the city. "Not one microphone or camera was pointed out of the window, so the country's largest grassroots protest against the election went unreported", said an activist from the Undercurrents news service.

Other activists set up a free veggieburger stall outside a branch of MacDonalds, and distributed leaflets outside HSBC bank. One of them explained his frustration with capitalism's political process, saying, "it doesn't matter who you vote for, it all stays the same. The corporations have the power".

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## Freedom

anarchist fortnightly

*"It does not matter how many lies we tell, because once we have won, nobody will be able to do anything about it."*

Joseph Goebbels

Nazi propagandist boss, 1930s

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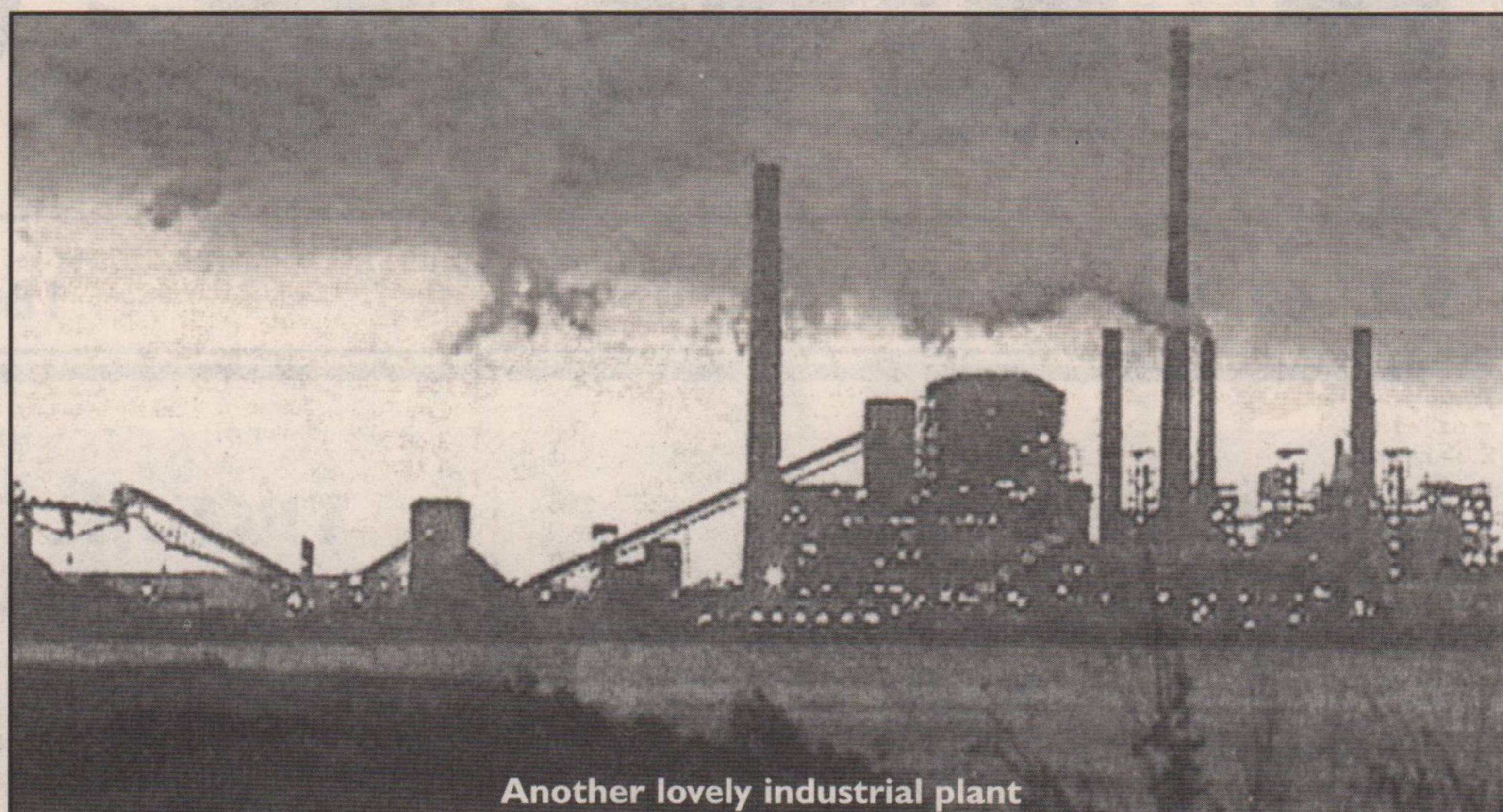
# Poisoned atmosphere

Early last year, it became apparent that an old chemical dump which the giant ICI plant in Runcorn had used between 1920 and 1970 had caused toxins to poison many houses in the village of Weston, which now forms part of the town. The Widnes MP Derek Twigg (Labour) appeared on television to assure constituents that a distinction must be drawn between 'old' ICI and the 'new' environmentally friendly ICI. Weeks later, half a tonne of hydrogen chloride gas escaped from the plant causing a gas cloud to drift across the area leaving a wake of people suffering the effects of inhalation. Soon after this incident, it was found that pollution had spread to the wildlife haven of Frodsham Marshes on the southern bank of the River Mersey.

Public meetings were called and assurances given that the chemical manufacturers were going to tidy up their act.

Government figures released recently show the ICI plant to have caused more cancer causing pollution than anywhere else in England. Data from the Environment Agency reveal that 3,325 tonnes of carcinogens were released into the atmosphere in 1999.

Halton, which covers Runcorn and Widnes, is among the twenty most deprived areas of England and Wales. According to Halton



Another lovely industrial plant

Friends of the Earth, many of the chemicals released into the atmosphere can affect the development of children in the womb. The Labour controlled Halton Borough Council remain strangely quiet on the subject of pollution within the borough. Just a few weeks ago, it was announced the corpses of slaughtered animals, killed as the result of the foot and mouth crisis were to be brought to Widnes for cremation at the Grannox incinerator. Assurances were given that the corpses were to be transported across Cheshire in sealed trucks. Days later, local

newspapers were carrying stories of lorries on the move with loose tarpaulins showing exposed bodies underneath. Within days, the first cases of foot and mouth in previously unaffected Cheshire were being reported.

With the social problems of high levels of unemployment, a hospital with no children's ward, maternity facilities or even an accident and emergency unit, added to a council which has closed down schools, one wonders how much more the people of Runcorn and Widnes are expected to take.

RW

## News in Brief

• **Bristol** Under the title 'Resistance', a conference was held at Bristol's Malcolm X Centre, St Pauls, on 26th May. Most of the organisers were from some state socialist sect or other, but a few anarchists were there, who felt it would be a good idea to get local activists together to discuss the issues.

The socialist sects attempted to control the whole event, and demanded that no Vote Nobody people should be allowed to speak. Their biggest concern seemed to be to use the conference to get a few votes and promote their parties. The anarchists fought their corner, and got Nobody in.

Shortly after one Nobody's speech, a comrade who felt strongly aggrieved at top trot Alex Callinicos ran from the audience to shower him with eggs. This action was carried out despite some pacifist therapist reading a poem to spread good karma (which the activist in question quoted as the trigger that egged him on).

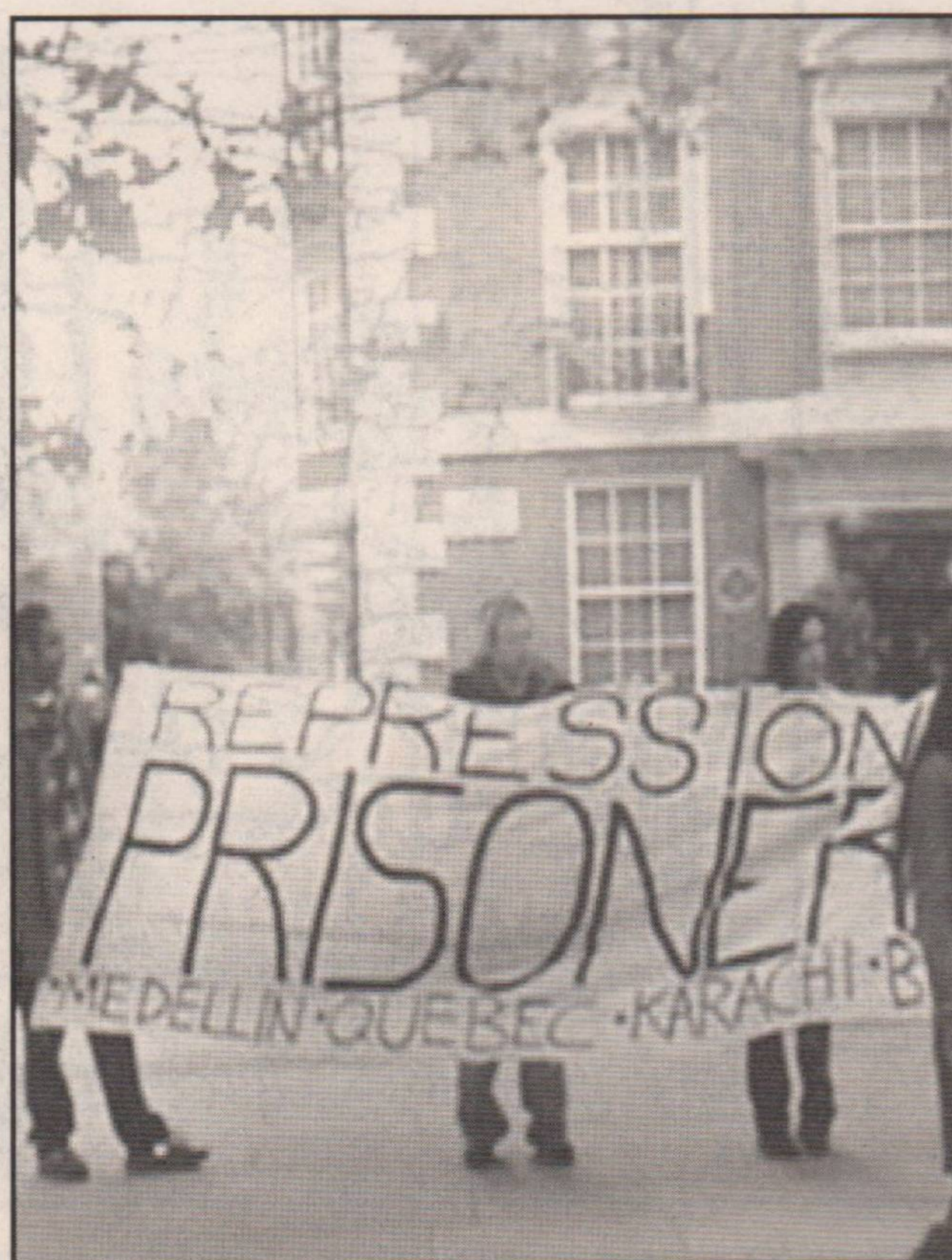
The local anarchist speaker was then asked by Callinicos's devotees if he was "satisfied now?" Callinicos was quickly ushered from the building, where he was greeted by a bucketful of rancid milk. The state socialists immediately called for an 'emergency committee meeting', and demanded the expulsion of the anarchists from the conference. Although there were conflicting attitudes to the egg-throwing among the anarchists who were there, the point was made loud and clear – the trots are the enemy of 'anti-capitalism'. They will not be tolerated. NL

• **Mayday arrests** Activists had planned to stage a march on 2nd June, in protest at the treatment of people arrested in London and Birmingham on Mayday.

They had also intended to march on the Canadian High Commission in Grosvenor Square, to show their solidarity with prisoners arrested at the Summit of the Americas in Québec City in April.

In the event, around fifty people came. Banners had been prepared with the slogans,

'drop the charges – release the prisoners' and 'end state repression – free Mayday prisoners'. The cops were present in large numbers, and they successfully prevented the march from taking place, using the legal pretext that permission had not been asked



for six days in advance. They also claimed that the march would create a security risk for the Trooping of the Colour, when lots of soldiers with guns were expected to walk around in front of the queen.

"The irony of this response to a march about state repression was not lost on us", said Ricky, one of the demonstrators.

There were no arrests.

• **London** The White Overalls Movement Building Libertarian Effective Struggles (Wombles), who grew up in the approach to this year's Mayday, held a meeting in Islington on 2nd June, designed to assess their success on 1st May and to plan for the future.

Two days later, Wombles were in action outside the headquarters of the Labour Party at Millbank. Banners were unfurled which said, 'election = farce' and 'election = crack. Corporate media = pushers'.

• **Brighton** Women Speak Out, a meeting group for women involved in autonomous political, social and environmental activities, continued a series of weekend gatherings in Brighton last week:

The weekend, which began on Friday 8th June, provided space for workshops and discussion, food and music.

"This was for anybody who wanted to meet with other women to share ideas, skill, info, support, plan projects, create a workshop, do a performance, build a network, or whatever", said one of the organisers.

• **Scotland** Activists are expected to gather in Edinburgh next week, to protest at a meeting of the so-called Global Forum for Law Enforcement and National Security (LE&NS Forum).

This is an international discussion group, designed to let senior state officials, business leaders, academics and politicians forge "an agenda for action on the difficult issues affecting law enforcement and national security in the 21st century".

Expected to attend are senior bosses from BP, Shell, BAT and Tim Spicer, one of the world's leading agents for supplying mercenaries. Tickets cost up to £2,335. The pre-meeting booklet contains a message from British prime minister Tony Blair. "We are facing new and growing threats", he writes, "which are challenging not only our national ways of life, but also the greater international order. Dark forces are assembling, which undermine law, order and stability".

The meeting begins on 19th June.

• **Bristol** Members of Direct Action Against Militarism and Depleted Uranium (DAAMDU) have organised a protest at the MoD national procurement centre at Abbey Wood, Filton, on Monday 18th June.

Accommodation is available in Bristol on Sunday night. There are communal venues as well as accommodation in people's homes. For more information call 0117 9540564 or e-mail [nabataat@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:nabataat@yahoo.co.uk).



# A new life on the land

Having escaped the UK for a week's holiday from foot and mouth, politicians' electioneering and the travail of work, I spent a deal of my time meandering through several of the twelve parishes of Jersey, including Grouville on the eastern side of the island.

On Jersey, one can see the remnants of an almost peasant scale of farming – small fields often ploughed with small tractors, and the crops lifted by hand. The main crops in order of acreage in these fields are potatoes, followed by tomatoes under glass and shallow brown-coloured Jersey cattle in the pastures.

Some farmers still bring seaweed from the seashore to fertilise the fields, as cited by Kropotkin in his accounts of the market gardening techniques used by channel islanders in his book, *Fields, Factories and Workshops*. During my previous visit, I saw fields on the land behind St Helier, covered with bladderwrack seaweed, containing live shorecrabs. Walking around a bend in Grouville, I am passed by a woman on a bicycle with a buggy trailer in tow containing two grinning boys. In a field opposite, migrant workers from Portugal are lifting the early potatoes.

But even in the Channel Islands, one cannot leave the 21st century behind. At the airport, we had to walk across disinfectant mats and sign a declaration to say we had not had contact with any likely source of foot and mouth. Jersey has changed greatly since Kropotkin's day. It suffered German occupation during the second world war, and its population has grown since 1945 through both immigration and birth-rate. As a result not only has St Helier (the main town) grown, but there are many new buildings in the rest of the island.

Tourism doubles the population in the summer months, causing strain on water resources. This is partially met by the use of a desalination plant, but this in turn creates a waste disposal problem. Car usage is also greater here than elsewhere in the UK, with around 85,000 residents owning about 65,000 cars. Apart from tourism and the products of their specialist agriculture (Jersey royal potatoes, Jersey tomatoes, Jersey milk and cream), the island is also well known as a tax haven for the rich.

Yet despite the above, when one looks at the pattern of farming in Jersey, there are still pointers to a method of land use which a future libertarian society might copy to some degree. The sheer small size of the island (about four miles by nine miles) has forced much mixing of farming with residential use – even in quite urbanised areas, there are areas of tomato growing in glasshouses and potato fields. This mixed pattern of settlement and land use is one possible anarchist response to the problems of urban decay, unemployment and poverty.

Presently, British planning regulations and the Department of the Environment determine what gets built and where, while agri-



business is firmly in charge of the landscape, together with the National Farmers Union and the Ministry of Agriculture. The results are there to see in areas such as the Midlands and East Anglia, with expensive dormitory villages are peopled with wealthy commuters and the retired, the rural poor having been squeezed out. The effect of farming practices driven by agribusiness is seen in truly massive fields, monoculture crops, commercial experimentation with GM crops and a cocktail of ecologically dubious practices.

If the drive to ever larger farms in the UK were halted, if the power of agribusiness were broken, if the ability of the powerful to control planning were removed, if unemployed and mal-employed people from the urban centres wanted to, we could create a very different pattern of land use. No small order, any of these 'ifs'. However, some people are thinking about such possibilities.

Farming in Britain currently follows an ecologically impoverished pattern. There is mostly sheep grazing on the hilltops, and mixture of sheep, dairy and beef grazing in the valleys. This contrasts with a much richer pattern of vegetable market gardening, reforestation, restoration of wetlands and increased use of woodland and forest in the hills.

The countryside of England's 'midland

plain' (all the non-upland areas) might be transformed into a myriad pattern of small farms, market gardens, allotments, low impact buildings for living, and both agricultural and small scale or industrial production. It would enable a rebirth of communities, with people who know their neighbours and work in their own localities at jobs or skills of their own choosing. Such a pattern of land use would also help address ecological problems caused by transport and road use, arising from our over-reliance on supermarkets for food, by encouraging local food production. It would reduce commuting and the waste of energy caused by cars, by providing local jobs in local collectives and the community.

It is unlikely we can fully imagine the

changes which would result if the millions of people cooped up in the terraces and towerblocks of the cities and urban areas were to demand and campaign for a meaningful share of the land their dispossessed ancestors cleared from the wastelands.

What prevents this? It is not the lack of imagination of greens, eco-activists, anarchists or groups such as The Land is Ours. It is the lack of popular demand for it. At present, people are content to live in the cities and to watch television, go to work at the nine to five job, or sign on. Anarchists need to create a demand for decentralised communities, where people can produce for themselves and their neighbours, where people can decide their own affairs. They need to create a concept of property rights based on occupation and use, not freehold.

The absentee landlords who 'own' the land at present include capitalist corporations, banks, pension funds, aristocrats, the Church of England, the monarchy and the Oxbridge universities. This cabal of landlords and owners will not give back the land to us. We must demand it, and demand the right to use it for living and production.

Away with the landowners and corporations! Away with their protectors, the state and government! Let us create a movement with its own resources and labour. A society whose economics and administration are based on localism not globalism, a mixed society where people can create their own differing lifestyles and livelihoods, and administer their own affairs without politicians and exploiters.

JPS

## Close down Harmondsworth

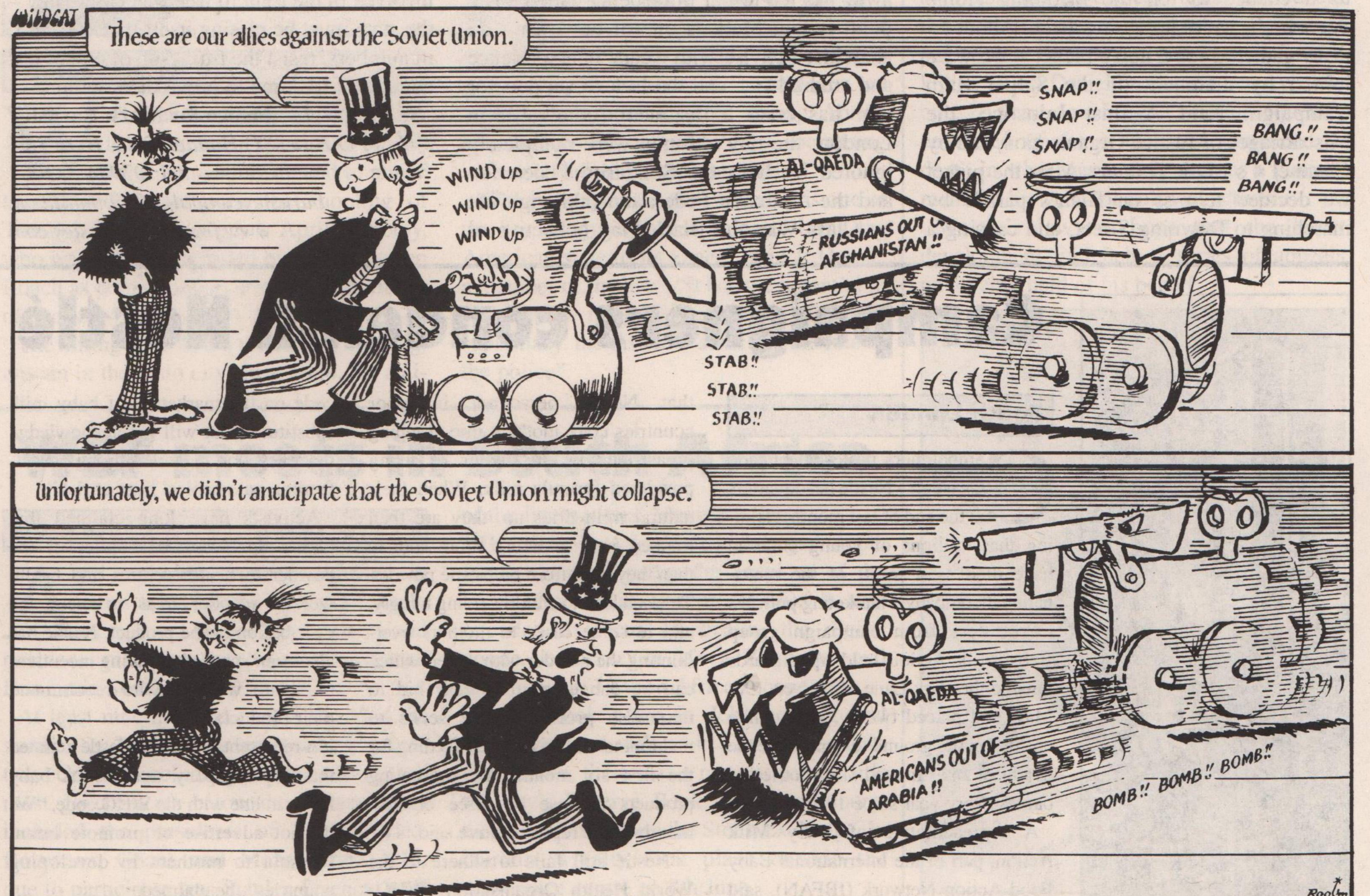
Campaigners against the imprisonment of asylum-seekers are planning to stage a big protest at the end of the month as a new detention centre opens at Harmondsworth, just outside London.

The new centre, which opens on 29th June, will be the biggest in Britain, with beds for 550 people. It has been built alongside the existing detention centre on the site, and the two will function as one complex. A bail

court has been built on site, so that detainees can be given their statutory bail hearing without having to leave the premises.

"This mass imprisonment of refugees is part of a racist competition between the main parties and a campaign of hatred by the print media", says Oliver, from the Close Down Harmondsworth Campaign.

The protest begins at 12 noon on Saturday 30th June (see advert on back page).



Readers may also be interested in reading *The Raven* number 17 on 'Use of Land', and issue number 30 on 'New Life to the Land?' (available from Freedom Press at £3 each post free worldwide).

We are also looking for contributions for a forthcoming issue of *The Raven* on food. Anybody interested in submitting an article should contact the editors at Freedom Press, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.



# Unrest in Oldham

**Freedom contributor arrested in protest against local MP**

North West

Cops intervened in Oldham last week, when local activists clashed with Labour Party officials at the offices of the MP for Oldham East and Saddleworth, Phil Woolas.

The police were called to the demonstration on 4th June, as members of the North West Unemployed Network tried to enter the Union Street office building.

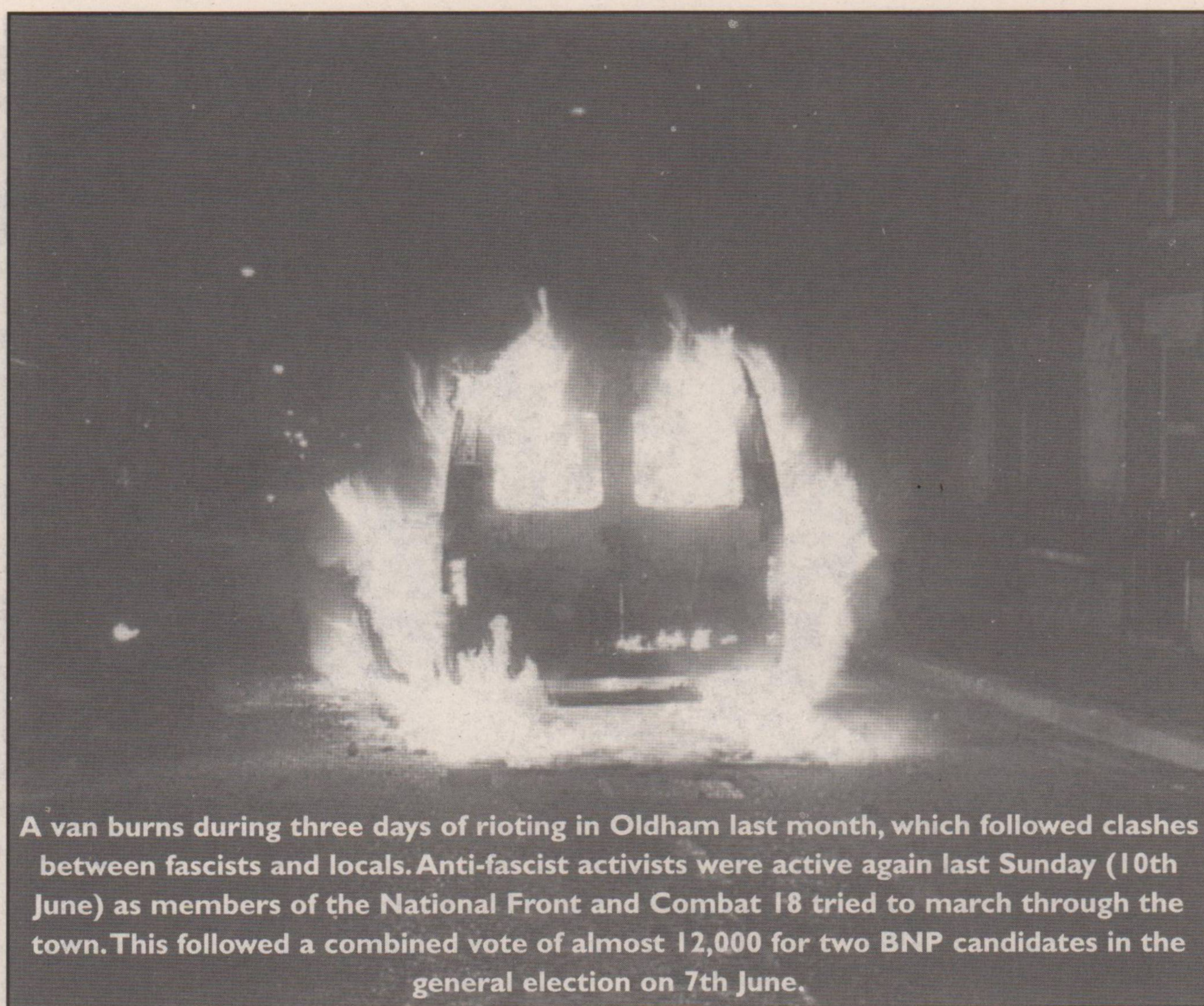
The demonstration had been called following reports that Woolas favours DNA testing for benefits claimants. He also proposed recently that the law should be changed, to deny benefits to anyone not registered on the electoral roll.

Brian Bamford, a regular contributor to *Freedom*, was among nine anarchists and trade unionists who were arrested.

The demonstration had begun outside the town's Job Centre, as demonstrators handed out leaflets which warned, "claimants of job seekers' allowance, sickness benefit, housing benefit, income support and working families tax credit will all get an extra test before they can claim their rights".

Protesters then moved to the Labour Party offices, demanding to speak to Woolas. Officials said that they decided to call cops when party workers became frightened.

The nine demonstrators arrested included members of the Solidarity Federation and



A van burns during three days of rioting in Oldham last month, which followed clashes between fascists and locals. Anti-fascist activists were active again last Sunday (10th June) as members of the National Front and Combat 18 tried to march through the town. This followed a combined vote of almost 12,000 for two BNP candidates in the general election on 7th June.

Anarchist Federation, as well as Brian, who is secretary of Tameside TUC.

Eight of them were held at Oldham police station for nine hours before being released without charge. Brian was charged with common assault on a Labour Party official, criminal damage and a public order offence, and bailed to appear in court on 4th July. The criminal damage charge was later dropped.

Witnesses said that he had been taking photographs of the demo when he was

arrested. The cops confiscated his camera as evidence in the case.

One of the demonstrators said, "Woolas is trying to promote his career on the backs of people on the dole and other claimants, the kind of people he thinks can't speak back. He says the government pays our benefits, so we have a duty to vote. Many people at the Job Centre took umbrage to this. This area has two of the poorest wards in Britain, and he wonders why people don't want to vote".

## Mark Barnsley update

Report from the Justice for Mark Barnsley Campaign

On Friday 8th June, friends and supporters of Mark Barnsley held a picket outside the Home Office to mark the seventh anniversary of the Pomona incident, the attack on Mark by a gang of fifteen drunken students, which led to his frame-up and imprisonment. The picket gave us a chance to tell the incoming Home Secretary – we're not going away! About 35 of us gathered for a noisy picket – we were joined by members of the Satpal Ram Campaign, Kent Against Injustice, the Miscarriages of Justice Organisation, and by Channel 4's Mark Thomas. After the picket we decided to piss on Blair's parade by marching to Downing Street, and causing a

bit of traffic disruption on the way.

Pleased as we were with the attention we got for Mark's case, the turnout, given the amount of publicity, was appalling. Either the anarchist movement doesn't take prisoner solidarity seriously (a disgrace in itself) or – behind our glossy magazines, and beyond the fantasies of the *Evening Standard* – the anarchist movement doesn't really exist in any numbers, and having one of our own put away has led to our bluff being called. The point is that Mark is one of our own – an anarchist activist with years of experience and credibility – and the lack of support for him has been a disgrace. As always in London, the day's events were completely ignored by both the Solidarity Federation and the Anarchist Federation (although not by Class War, the Black Flag collective or

Earth First!). In the next five years, New Labour intends to push the prison population to 85,000 and is determined to rig the courts to hit its target. If we can't defend one of our own, what chance do we have of standing up for those likely to be railroaded through the criminal injustice system after him? As one supporter put it: "Maybe we should tell people he's a rabbit, and they've put soap in his eyes!" Every anarchist activist should be involved in the fight to free Mark Barnsley – the state must be pissing itself that we can't, in numbers, resist the fitting-up of one of our comrades. It's time to prove them wrong.

**Justice for Mark Barnsley**  
PO Box 381, Huddersfield, HD1 3XX  
tel: 07944 522001  
barnsleycampaign@hotmail.com  
www.freemarkbarnsley.com

## Campaigners condemn Nestlé

South London

Campaigners protested outside Croydon's Nestlé headquarters at the end of last month, claiming that millions of young children have died as a result of the multinational company's marketing policies.

Protesters from campaign group Baby Milk Action held up placards outside the Park Lane offices on 19th May, and placed twenty small white coffins on the ground to symbolise the deaths of an estimated 1.5m bottle-fed babies every year since 1981.

A representative of Baby Milk Action, part of the International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN), said

that Nestlé personnel in poor countries coax mothers into stopping breast-feeding, in favour of using powdered formula milk. When their natural milk dries up, they are then trapped into spending more money than they can afford on Nestlé powder. This can lead to children going hungry, and in some cases to mothers over-diluting the powder with water, which can be dangerous. "In their bid to maximise profits, Nestlé seeks to undermine exclusive breast-feeding for the first six months, by promoting products for use by three or four months", the representative said.

"Nestlé still fails to adhere to the World Health Organisation (WHO)

code on the marketing of baby milk substitutes, but will not acknowledge that they don't. Undermining breast-feeding puts babies' lives at risk".

Activists have long claimed that Nestlé donates free supplies of the powder to health centres and health workers in poor areas, to encourage distribution of the product. Nestlé has also been accused of giving incentives to health workers who recommend their products.

A representative from Nestlé claimed that the company markets its baby foods in line with the WHO code. "We do not advertise or promote infant formula to mothers in developing countries", he claimed.

## Demand justice for Jimmy Ingram

Report from Kent Against Injustice

On 25th August 1991, an elderly woman named Edith Barrow was murdered in her home in Paddock Wood, Kent. She was asphyxiated, and there was clear evidence of a break-in. In late September 1991, police arrested Jimmy Ingram, having found a palm print that matched his on the kitchen door.

Jimmy knew Edith Barrow through his relationship with her grand-niece, Lyndsey Cockell. Jimmy and Lyndsey had tried to burgle the house on a number of occasions in the past, and on one of the attempts to rob Edith Barrow, Jimmy had probably left the palm print that placed him in her home.

Jimmy and Lyndsey Cockell were arrested and interviewed. Lyndsey made a false statement implicating Jimmy, following a threat from the police that she would be charged with a series of cheque book offences if she failed to cooperate.

A footprint was discovered at the house on the windowsill of the kitchen. The footprint was from a size 9 Ligerò Fono boot. Jimmy took a size 8, and denied buying such a boot. He was identified by a member of staff at Trueform in Maidstone, but subsequent checks of till receipts reveal that no such boot was ever sold in the shop!

No forensic evidence was produced to connect Jimmy to the murder. There were distinctive green fibres found on Ms Barrow's clothing and bedding and under the fingernails of the deceased, and no trace of the fibres was found on any of Jimmy's clothes. Ninety six sets of fingerprints were found at the house, two of which remain unaccounted for.

The police originally had a number of other suspects, including one who they interviewed on nine occasions, whose alibi changed constantly, and who changed his appearance the day after the murder. This suspect – who has since disappeared – was allowed to make a phone call from police custody to set up an alibi for the night.

Jimmy Ingram was fitted up because at the time he was a local petty criminal with a fair amount of form, who was easy to put away because the one person who could have stood by him was coerced into making false statements under pressure from the police.

Jimmy tried to appeal his conviction, arguing that the trial judge had not drawn the jury's attention to the fact that Lindsey Cockell was a suspect witness, but his appeal was refused.

Jimmy has fought his conviction all along, refusing to cooperate with the parole board and to participate in offending behaviour courses. He has spent a fair amount of time down the block as a result. He has also been a good friend to others inside, and was on the roof at Gartree with Jimmy Robinson for 82 days in 1993.

Sadly Jimmy hasn't received much in the way of solidarity from anyone outside, being let down more often than he's been helped.

Jimmy is currently at HMP Maidstone, and to raise the profile of his case again, the group Kent Against Injustice are picketing the jail from 1pm to 2pm on 23rd June, nine years on from his conviction. Join us to fight for justice for Jimmy Ingram.

**Kent Against Injustice**

PO Box 781, Canterbury, Kent CT2 7FB

• Write to Jimmy Ingram (ND 0228) at HMP Maidstone, County Road, Maidstone, Kent ME14 1UZ

• Picket HMP Maidstone. Assemble from 1pm to 2pm on Saturday 23rd June 2001



Nestlé in Croydon



# Sierra Leone: it's oil

## North West Africa

Senior government officials in Sierra Leone have revealed that substantial oil reserves have been discovered off the country's coastline.

The discovery of a new potential source of wealth for the country's bosses comes after international boycotts of Sierra Leonean diamonds. These have been labelled 'conflict diamonds', because of the extent to which their trade has financed all sides in the country's civil war.

Following a six-week offshore survey by US-based exploration company TGC, which explored the seas off Pujehin and Bonthe in the south, the government at the start of the month announced plans to invite foreign oil companies to bid for extraction rights.

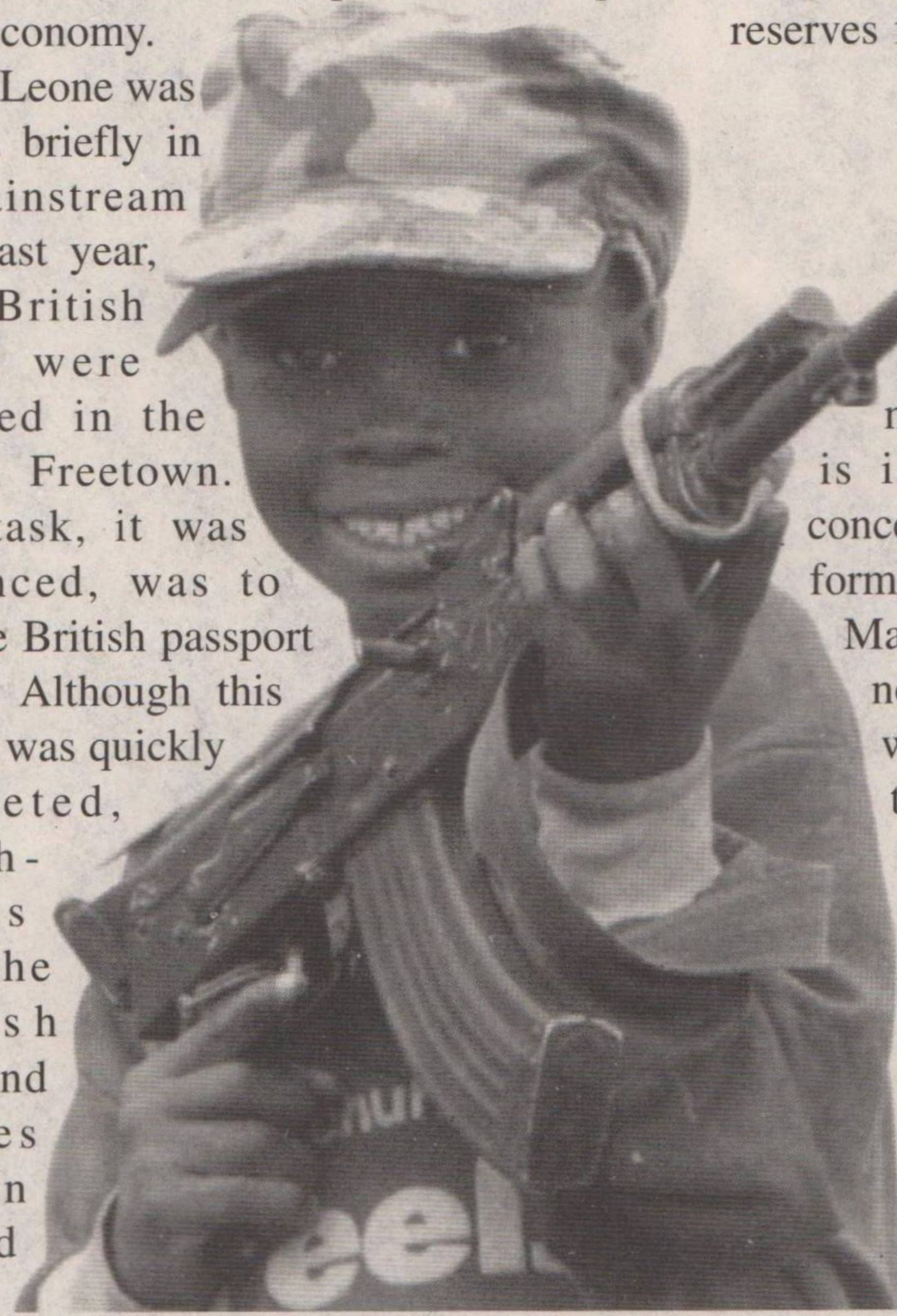
AMOCOSierra Leone Exploration Co Ltd, a member of America's Esso group, had already carried out a series of seismic surveys in the 1980s. The results of these have never been made public.

Senior government official Victor George said, "there is evidence of oil and gas in fairly large quantities, in up to 3,000m of water".

At present, the mining industry, principally

diamond mining, is Sierra Leone's main source of foreign exchange. Its downstream oil industry is already well developed, however, and forms an important minor part of the economy.

Sierra Leone was featured briefly in the mainstream media last year, when British troops were deployed in the capital, Freetown. Their task, it was announced, was to evacuate British passport holders. Although this mission was quickly completed, detachments from the British army and marines remain stationed there.



One British anarchist said at the time, "the British government says its interest in Sierra Leone is humanitarian. We'll see. They sent troops to the Falklands, and then there's oil reserves found nearby. The Australians sent

troops to East Timor, and then there's oil in the Timor Gap.

What are the chances of a big oil field appearing near Sierra Leone?"

Reports from observers in Freetown now indicate that the British state is interested in oil and diamond concessions, the Americans in rutile (a form of titanium), the French in oil. Issa Mansaray, who fled the civil war and now lives in Vienna, says, "that's why the British troops came, to keep the peace at all costs. There's the technology now to exploit these reserves, particularly against the backdrop of recent high oil prices. Now after 'conflict diamonds', it seems as if the conflict for 'blood oil' is on the drawing board in Sierra Leone".

Editorial on page 7

## Indonesia arrests

**Jakarta:** Indonesian cops raided a meeting of the Asia Pacific Solidarity Conference Against Neoliberalism in Jakarta last week, arresting 32 foreign participants and beating up Indonesian nationals who had attended.

"Maybe 50 or 60 police stormed into the meeting room with guns", said Max Lane, an Australian who was present. "This is was a brutal assault on human rights", added an American, Paul D'Amato.

The foreigners who were arrested were held for over a day. They were later told to expect deportation. At least two Indonesian participants needed hospital treatment for the injuries they received.

## Barcelona protests

**Spain:** Although the World Bank was forced to call off its annual conference, which was due to begin in Barcelona on 25th June, British anarchists said last week they would still travel to the Catalonian city as planned.

Anti-capitalist activists, including many in the UK, have set up a network, the J25 Mobilising Network, to co-ordinate an international mobilisation.

One member of the network, Blossom, said, "we were excited by the possibility of doing something positive, something on our terms, an action that celebrated the creative possibility of our movement".

A series of local rallies was planned to start across Spain from today, leading up to an anti-capitalist conference in Barcelona itself at the end of the week. A mass demonstration is due to be held in the city centre a week tomorrow.

## Miners occupy Bolivian capital

### South America

The Bolivian capital, La Paz, was occupied at the end of last week by around 12,000 miners demanding state support to cushion them from the results of globalisation.

The miners, who come from mining co-operatives in the Altiplano region of the country, said that they would remain in the city until the government agreed to finance the cost of reviving their industry.

After marching north from Oruro, in the Altiplano region of the country, they entered La Paz at lunchtime on Friday 7th June. The next day, they launched an occupation of the Supreme Court building, letting dynamite off inside. A similar attempt was made to reach the parliament building, but two miners were seriously injured when riot cops beat the demonstration back. Many other protesters were arrested.

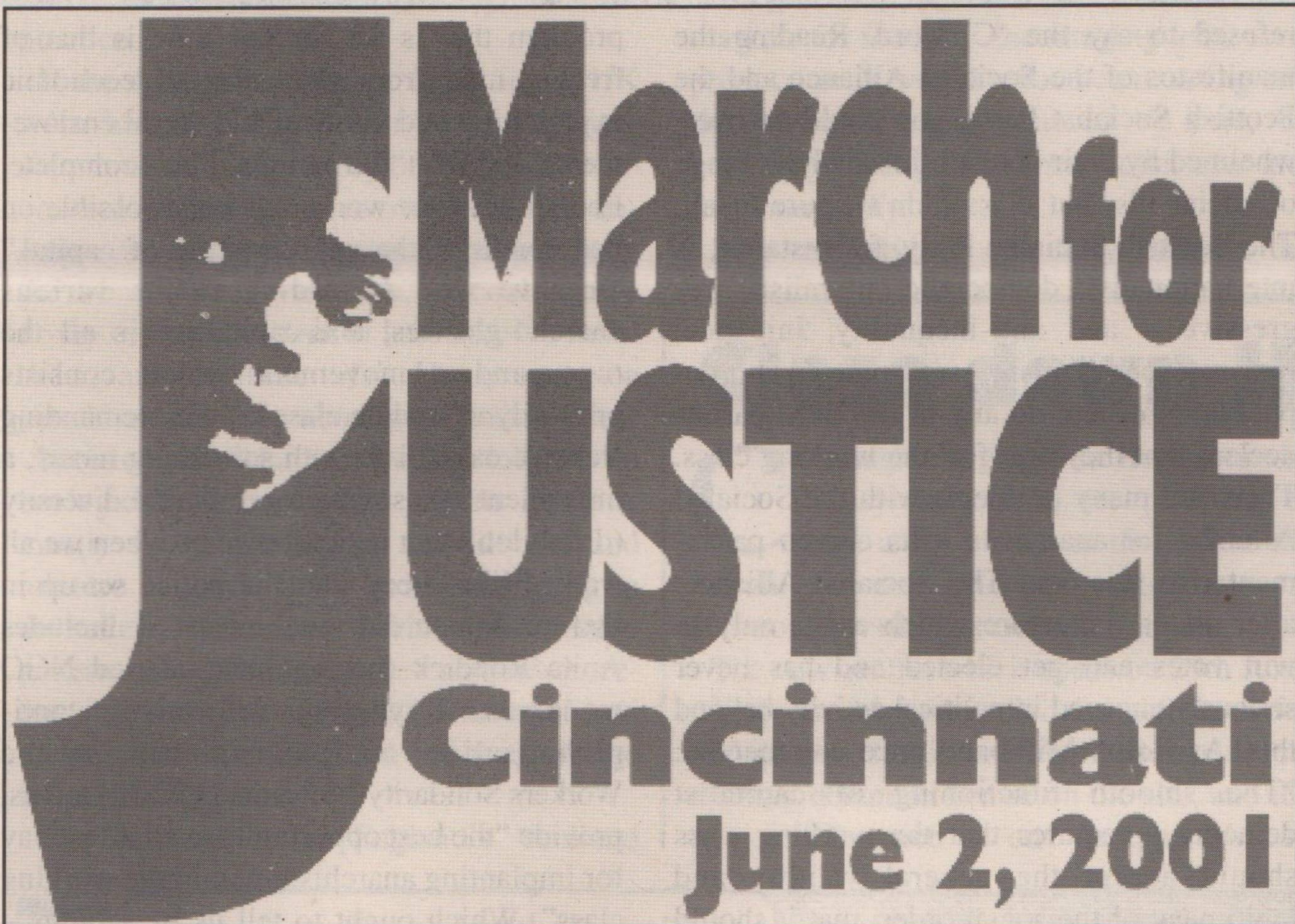
The miners were demanding \$100m to finance the revival of Bolivia's mining co-operatives, which number over 500 nationwide. The co-operatives have over 50,000 members, and provide an income for 300,000 people. They produce tin, silver and gold, and account for over a third of the country's mineral exports.

The miners also demanded new rights to state-owned land, and similar concessions to those which multinational companies in Bolivia already enjoy, together with improvements in electricity provision, housing and social insurance.

Fifteen years ago, miners' groups were heavily involved in major protests which which nearly brought down the government of the day. "We have come back to La Paz, just as we said we would in 1986", said Cresencio Huanca, a trade unionist who took part in those protests as well as the latest march.

Other demonstrations have broken out in Bolivia in recent months, as the government of President Banzer has tried to attract multinationals to invest by granting them credit preferences. At the same time, it has imposed a stringent liberalisation programme.

## Troubled city wants justice



### United States

Well over two thousand people took to the streets of Cincinnati on 2nd June, demanding an end to police brutality. This followed the shooting of Timothy Thomas by cops in April. Timothy, who was black, was killed by officer Steven Roach as police tried to arrest him for minor offences.

The killing provoked a week-long uprising, unseen in the Ohio city since 1968. An anti-

authoritarian bloc of around 200 activists joined the demonstration, calling for an amnesty for those arrested during April's disturbances and an end to cops' socialising with declared white supremacists.

"The fight against police brutality is one of the key struggles that is going to bring the American state to its knees", said J. Uprise, a member of the bloc. "It has the potential to split open the contradictions of white supremacy, the justice system and the role of the police".

## WEF meets in South Africa

### Durban

Anti-capitalist protests occurred in cities across South Africa last week, as regional bosses from politics and business met for the Southern African Economic Summit.

At least nine hundred people attended the summit in Durban's International Convention Centre, including representatives of most governments below the Sahara. They included the presidents of South Africa, Botswana, Ghana and Mozambique. Also due to participate was Stanley Fischer, head

of the International Monetary Fund.

The three-day summit, which began on 6th June, was held under the auspices of the World Economic Forum (WEF). It was intended to focus on health, the digital divide, democracy in Africa, Zimbabwe and the impact of HIV on African economies.

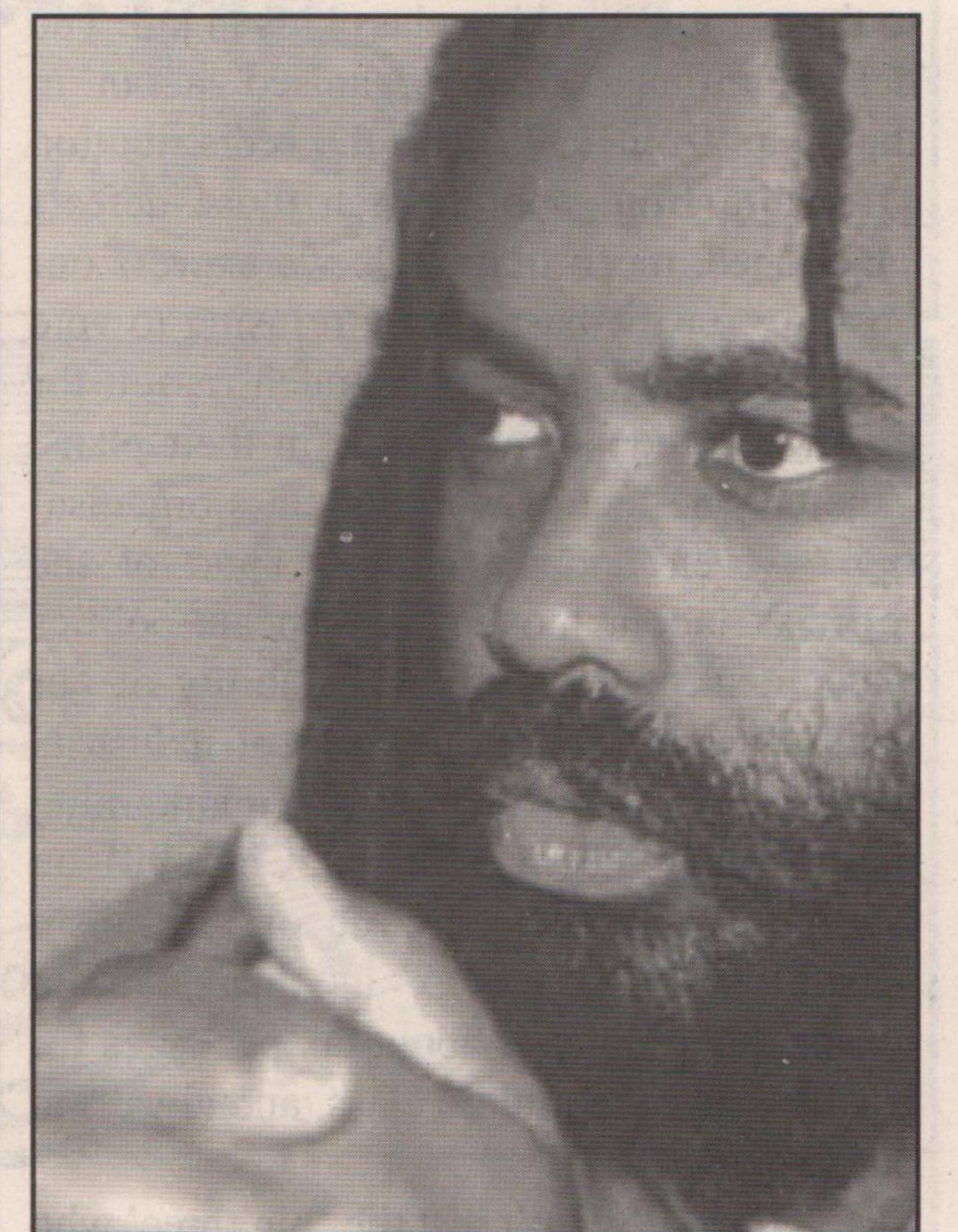
Rallies took place in Johannesburg and Cape Town, as well as in Durban itself. In Cape Town, there was a mass action outside the city's Reserve Bank. In Johannesburg, there was a march on the Stock Exchange. In Durban, a rally took place outside the conference centre on 8th June.

## Mumia: a new development

**USA:** Results of a lie-detector test corroborate the confession of Arnold Beverly, prime suspect in the murder case for which radical journalist Mumia Abu-Jamal remains on death row in Pennsylvania, it has been revealed.

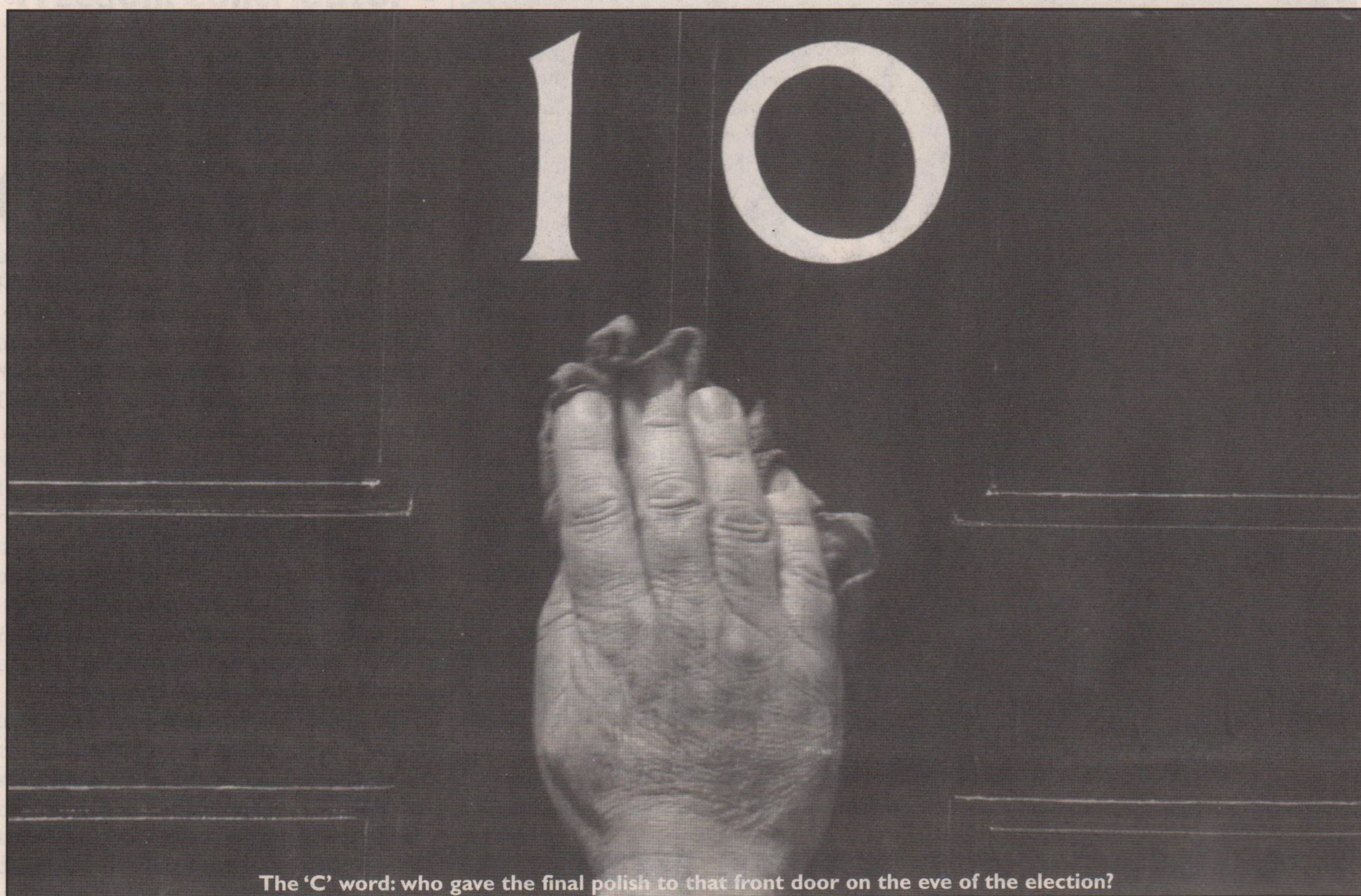
Charles Honts, an acknowledged expert in administering lie-detector tests, carried out the test in May with Arnold Beverly's permission. Beverly has previously admitted killing officer Daniel Faulkner, a Pennsylvania cop, 20 years ago. Mumia was subsequently convicted of the crime, and sentenced to death in what was widely seen as a punishment for his years of political activism.

Mumia's lawyers hope that the latest development will help a series of appeals now being held of his behalf.





# The great unmentionable



The 'C' word: who gave the final polish to that front door on the eve of the election?

So there we have it. Another New Labour term, and the press trying to pass off 44% of the vote as a mandate. Moreover, four out of ten didn't vote at all. According to one BBC/ICM poll, 77% of non-voters didn't vote because the election did not matter and 65% said they didn't trust politicians. More of us didn't vote than actually voted for New Labour. In a range of former New Labour strongholds the turnout fell below 50%. In John Prescott's Kingston Upon Hull the turnout was 46%, and in Sunderland South – seat of Chris Mullin, former miscarriages of justice campaigner now slick New Labour hack – the turnout was 48%. Perhaps Mullin's boast of 'military style planning' to declare a result 43 minutes after the polls closed was simply because there were so few votes to count? Across the country the vote was lowest in working class areas, suggesting that the link between Labour and the working class is smashed for good and that parliamentary democracy has little credibility in working class communities and is recognised by large numbers of us as a sham.

But 'class' was the great unmentionable as far as this election was concerned. The only time there was any discussion which touched on the issue was when the main contenders competed for middle class votes by bidding to throw more working class kids in jail. The defeats inflicted upon organised labour in the years from 1979, and the redistribution of wealth from poor to rich those defeats sanctioned, mean that while we express our hostility for the bastards by refusing to vote for them, there is, neither, much reason for them to bother to include us in their plans. Whereas the fact of working class organisation – even under the dead hand of the 'official' labour movement – meant politics was about "increas(ing) the stability of our institutions by giving the mass of industrial workers a direct interest in maintaining them" (quote from Winston Churchill on National Insurance, but true of reformism generally) – the fact of its disintegration means that politics is about tax packages for business and the middle class, and always at our expense.

Moreover, it wasn't just the 'big three' who

refused to say the 'C' word. Reading the manifestos of the Socialist Alliance and the Scottish Socialist Party, you could be overwhelmed by their concern for a whole range of social ills, but class didn't figure at all. The Scottish Socialist Party, for instance, is internationalist, democratic, pluralist, progressive – and anti-inequality, injustice, racism, sectarianism, sexism and homophobia. Nowhere do any of the 'left' parties declare that they are 'for' the working class. There are many problems with the Socialist Alliance for anarchists – its craven parliamentarism for one. The Socialist Alliance, after all, is a creature which exists only to win votes and get elected and has never seriously engaged in political activity beyond this. As Ralph Milliband once commented: "The smooth functioning of capitalist democracy requires that the working class should accept the general validity and legitimacy of the social order: that it should believe that any grievance or demand that it may have is remediable within the confines and by the traditional procedures of the political system" (*Capitalist Democracy in Britain*, Oxford, 1982). Just when that 'validity' has been brought into question by New Labour's open hostility to its former constituency, along comes the Socialist Alliance to plug the hole back up, by offering another vehicle by which to travel the 'parliamentary road'. Except that the Socialist Alliance and the Scottish Socialist Party don't really talk about class. 'Socialism' becomes a wish-list ('injustices we would seek to wish away' on the way to a 'nicer' world). The idea that any project of radical transformation requires an active force organising to bring it about – more specifically the idea that socialism was a project of working-class self-emancipation (an idea at least formerly honoured in the breach by the Trot left) has been ditched. 'Socialism' is now a desire for a better world that anyone can embrace – Anita Roddick or her till staff (who can't join a union because she'll sack them if they do). Class doesn't enter into it.

Thank God for the anarchists then. At least we've always believed that parliamentary democracy was a farce. At least we've always contended, that, as Rudolf Rocker put it, "the

problem that is set for our time is that of freeing man from the curse of economic exploitation and political and social enslavement" and that "the serious, final, complete, liberation of the workers is only possible on one condition: the appropriation of capital." Or have we? According to the various anarcho-glossies, anti-capitalism is all the rage, and a movement which consists primarily of middle class kiddies demanding 'replace capitalism with something nicer', a movement whose much celebrated diversity (didn't look that fucking diverse when we all walked like sheep into the police set-up in Oxford Street did we) means it includes Anita Roddick (her again!), salaried NGO managers, Keynesian reformists, 'anti-globalisation' nationalists, can, so the Workers Solidarity Movement (WSM) tell us, provide "the best opportunity available today for implanting anarchism within the working class". Which ought to tell us two things – that the WSM are honest enough to admit the gap between the anarchist movement and the working class and haven't a clue how to bridge it! The best that can be said of the anarchist elements who have rushed to celebrate the anti-globalisation/anti-capitalist movement is that they have confused Debord's analysis of 'capital as spectacle' with some kind of notion of 'resistance as spectacle', a shallow circus irrelevant to the lives of those actually exploited by capital. The anti-globalisation movement refuses a coherent analysis of capitalism (what it is, who gains, who loses, upon what social relations it is predicated) in favour of loose talk about placing legal restrictions on corporations, and organising consumer boycotts. The likes of Naomi Klein and George Monbiot will never mention the 'C' word, and those anarchists rushing uncritically into the anti-globalisation swamp will have to forswear their use of it too. (Even those who think events like Mayday or N30 represent at least a chance of a good ruck with the cops might have begun to realise that it might be better to engage the Old Bill when you're not surrounded by groups of middle class dogooders as likely to tout you up as support you!) Daniel Guerin once described Daniel Cohn-Bendit as having "libertarian fire" on

the back of his involvements in the 1968 student protests. 'Danny the Red' is now a Euro MP. Some of us are in danger of mistaking middle class revolt for 'libertarian fire' in the rootless anti-capitalist protests this time round.

Either anarchism is a movement made up principally of capital's exploited, a movement for working class emancipation, or it is, as Bakunin recognised, one more variant on the "individualistic, egoistic, shabby, and fictitious liberty extolled by the school of J-J Rousseau". Post-election, we have a window of opportunity – to seek to turn the antipathy to parliamentary democracy represented by the boycott of the elections in working class communities into open revolt. The condition for doing so though, is that we have to recognise that the only place a militant anti-capitalism can actually develop is within the workplaces and communities of the working class, and that anarchism has no real, meaningful life outside that class. At present the vacuum is being filled by the far right. The British National Party is effectively the fourth party in London now, and took over 16% in Oldham, where it beat the LibDems into third place. The Socialist Alliance stood against it in Dagenham (and bottled it elsewhere). The BNP took 1,378 votes (just under half that recorded for the LibDems) the Socialist Alliance 262. The BNP are winning votes in working class areas because they can capitalise on working class disillusion with parliamentary democracy, but what they offer is a fascist simulacrum of radical anti-parliamentary politics, and one that will end in the suppression of even those limited freedoms capital in its 'liberal' form allows. One BNP voter in Oldham told *The Guardian* (9th June 2001): "I feel like nobody is fighting for us. The other parties don't know what it is like to live in poverty." The BNP are able to racialise class issues because no class line is ever put by the 'left'. Those of us who are working class anarchists need to go back to our class, and leave the globetrotting to those who can (always) afford it.

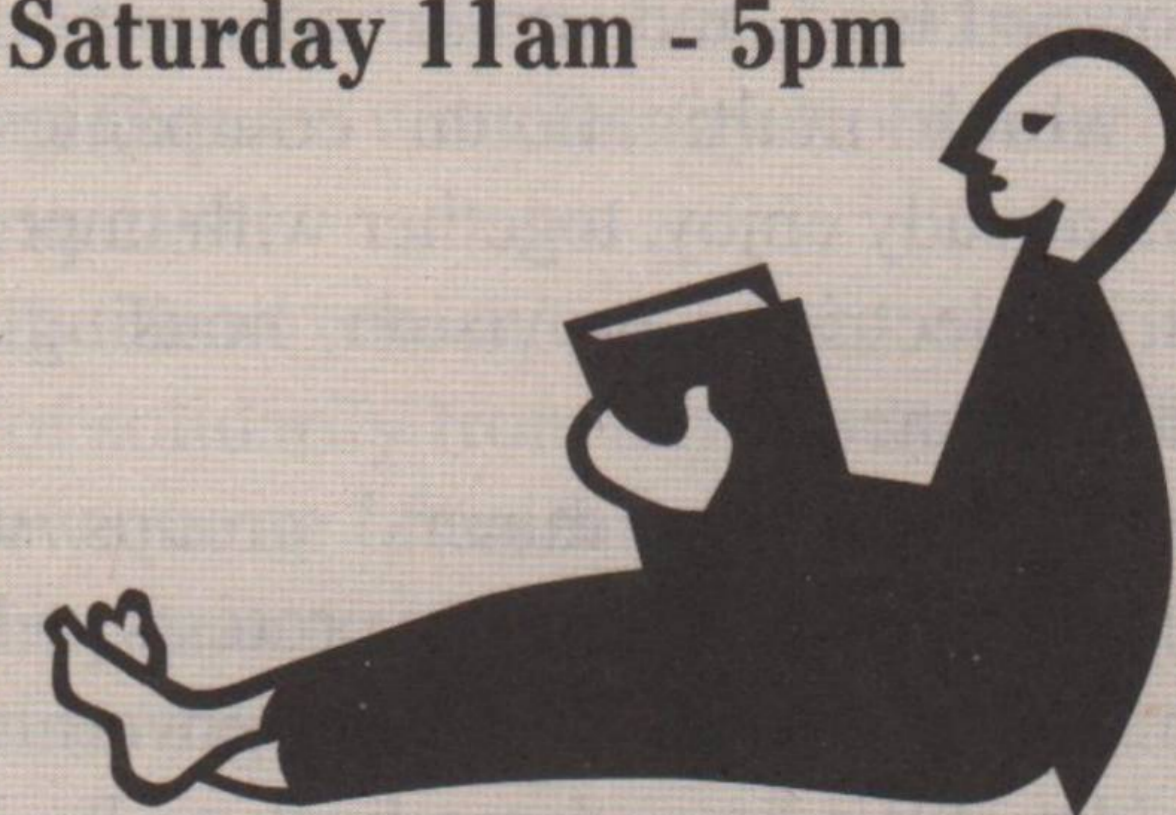
Nick S.

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## What we say ...

### Legitimacy denied

Some political systems are maintained by force alone. But any system that is intended to survive for more than a few years must have something else – a legitimacy in the eyes of the people who live under it.

The days of kings with a god-given right to rule are long gone. The legitimacy of the west's modern political systems is provided by something called 'consent'. The fact that we live in a democracy, it is said, implies that we give our consent for our rulers to rule over us.

This means that to undermine democracy is to undermine the system itself. It is this which explains the response of the mainstream media to news that a whole lot of people did not vote in the election.

The newspapers, television, radio, internet – all these things which make up the mainstream – do not, after all, exist in a vacuum. They are part of capitalism, and they are owned just like any other business. Moreover, their owners are the very people who are the system's biggest beneficiaries. So we shouldn't be surprised when the 'free' press turns out to be anything but.

Why couldn't any space be found to report on Manchester's J7 anti-voting protests? Why did mainstream analysts fall back, almost without exception, on lazy assertions about an 'apathetic' public, when some of them, at least, knew how far this was from being the whole truth?

Could it be, just possibly, because journalists are employees of huge (and in many cases highly profitable) companies, who do what they're told because their livelihoods depend on it?

Could it be, just possibly, because it suits the bosses to cultivate the myth of 'freedom' under capitalism? Just as it suits them to tell us that their ruling over us is fine, as we give our consent for it to be so?

But for this to happen, for this consent to be maintained, their poodle pundits in their media outlets can't possibly tell us what's really going on. They have to tell us instead only what it is in the bosses' interests for us to hear.

### Cavalry charge

It was like a modern cavalry charge. British warships and troops galloped in to rescue Sierra Leone from the cruel thugs of a revolutionary army. This, at least, is the story we were sold last year. It was, surely, only cynics who could wonder what lay behind Britain's allegedly 'humanitarian' intervention.

Or was it? We remember on page five what one of these cynics said. "What are the chances", he asked in May 2000, "of a big oil field appearing near Sierra Leone?". But even he can't have expected one to appear quite so soon.

There's oil, we are now told, a lot of it, right off the country's coast. Possibly, just possibly, some politicians did have humanitarian concerns. Probably, there were strategic interests at play in Britain's intervention too, about shoring up Nigeria as a regional power. But we can now safely say that the promise of black gold must have been a hefty weight in western governments' thinking.

We talked, a year ago, about 'conflict diamonds' in this tragic country. Nobody ever talks about 'conflict oil'. We don't need to. We call it, simply, 'oil'.

## Readers' letters

### All communist?

Dear *Freedom*,

Nel Finn (letters, 5th May) argues that anarchism must be communist.

Personally I'll wait until we have a working anarchist society to see if that is necessarily true. (Certainly the experience of the anarcho-syndicalists in Spain 1936-38 seems to show that anarcho-communism and individualism can co-exist, and that in any society based on voluntary association they would have to.)

One can certainly be anarchist and not be a communist as the following quote from Proudhon shows: "What I sought for as far back as 1840, [when *What is Property?* was first published] in defining property, what I am wanting now is not a destruction; I have said it till I am tired. That would have been to fall with Rousseau, Plato, Louis Blanc himself, and all the adversaries of property, into Communism, against which I protest with all my might. What I ask for property is a balance".

The slogan 'property is theft' relates to the exclusive possession of the means of production and survival by one class against all others. Proudhon seems to have had no problem with the private ownership of property provided it was shared equally and everyone had the right to the product of their labour and nobody profited from the labour of others.

Of course Proudhon can be self-contradictory (or if you prefer paradoxical) and I wouldn't necessarily argue that Proudhon's position is correct but he shows that anarchism can be based on private property (i.e. possession) and that it need not be communist.

I am sure that *Freedom's* readers can find plenty of other examples of non-communist anarchism which do not necessarily imply any

form of capitalism. However, one would find it difficult to define any form of society based on capitalism as anarchist in any meaningful and acceptable (to anarchists) way.

One could also add that it may be possible to argue that it is logically true that anarchism entails communism, but sadly societies do not appear to work on the basis of logic (alone.)

Richard A.

Dear *Freedom*,

I hope that you will grant me some space to respond to the tirade of criticism levelled at me in your letters column of 5th May.

I will start off by pointing out that I did not defend capitalism. I described briefly the workings of a society that a previous correspondent had called anarchist, but which in fact has a broadly capitalist economy.

Nel Finn's letter argues that anarchism implies communism. Nel says that under capitalism, people will be obliged to work for a boss. This blatantly isn't true. Many people belong to workers' collectives, are self-employed, or work as subcontractors. The empirical evidence simply counters Nel's assertion.

Nel seems to think that any restriction on people's freedom to "get the things they need to live" is inherently a bad thing and unjust. But what might present such a restriction? An obvious answer is "the unwillingness of workers to provide them". If a worker felt she did not want to do the work necessary to give Nel the things Nel needs to live, inevitably the freedom Nel values so highly would be restricted and diminished. Either Nel should propose that workers be prevented from being able not to work for those that demand it, in which case Nel's freedom would be preserved and slavery would be the conse-

quence; or Nel must relax the importance of the freedom to acquire the things one needs to live, or even reject the concept of such freedom.

I finish with two questions to Nel. First, in your anarchist communist society, would you permit workers to exchange their labour amongst themselves by means of their own money? Second, under your socialism, would you ban "capitalist acts between consenting adults"?

Richard Garner

### Anarchist prisoner

Dear *Freedom*,

Warmest of anarchist greetings to you all. I'm still in the hole (until 2008), and have been transferred to a super-max for being an anarchist who fought the pigs physically and on paper!

I have been faithfully reading your paper since receiving it, and I share it with my fellow prisoners. We love it!

A quick comment on your new face for *Freedom*. I like it, but I didn't see anything wrong with the old way either... Your paper is informative. I devour all articles on the pigs and their militarisation, and how they abuse folks. And Wildcat, I love her too.

Could I ask you to pass on my name, address and wishes for contact with anarchist brothers and sisters.

Stay strong, refuse and resist.

Robert J. Duffey

DS-9682, 175 Progress Drive,  
Waynesburg, PA 15370, USA

Correspondents are asked to keep their letters short. Letters may be cut for reasons of space.

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We also have an ambitious publishing programme, but it all depends on the finances available. Unlike the political parties, large or small, we do not have an income from membership, nor do we have any rich benefactors – we just keep going from year to year, cutting our coat according to our cloth, so please keep on sending in whatever you can afford. CC

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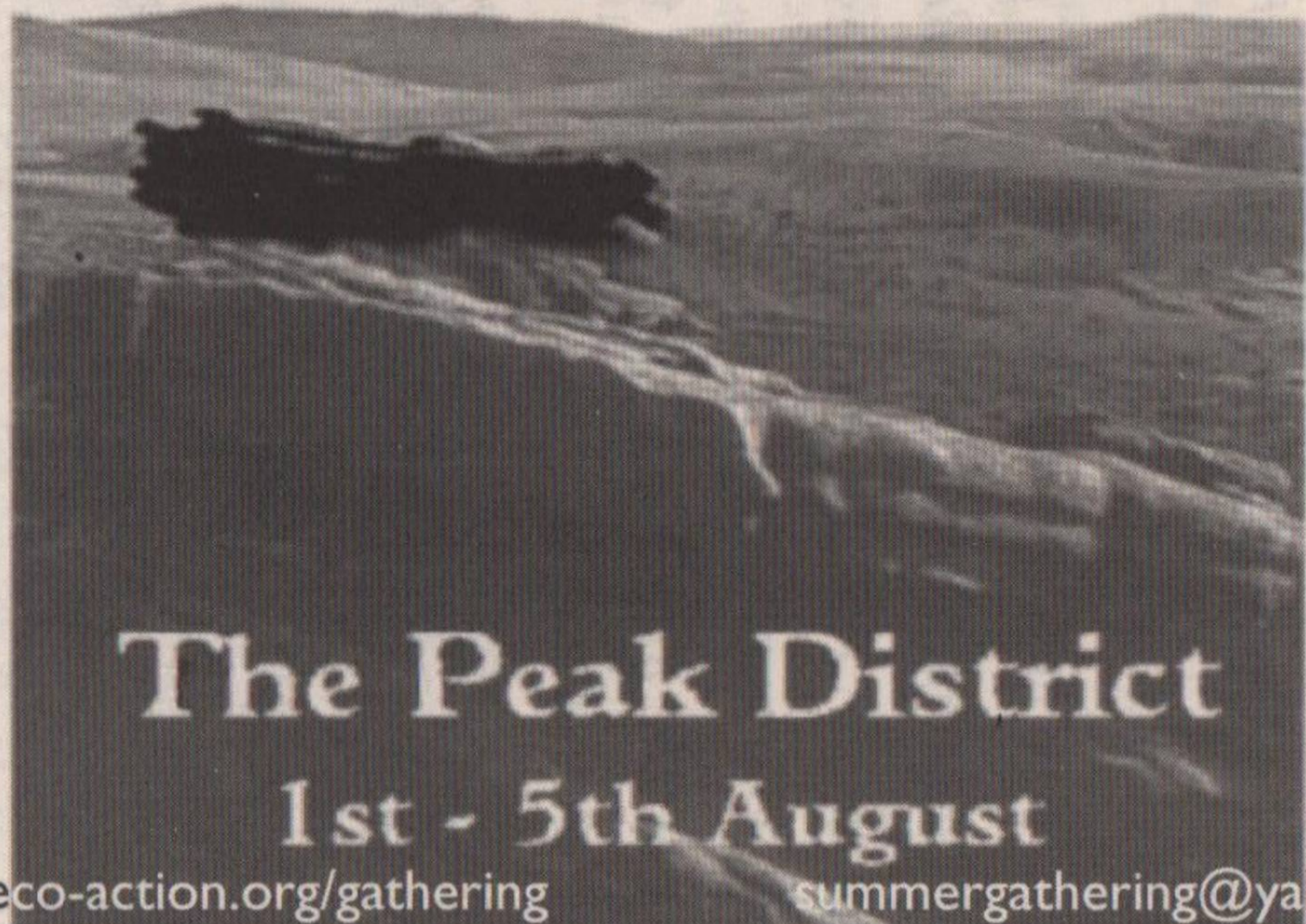
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[www.eco-action.org/gathering](http://www.eco-action.org/gathering)

[summergathering@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:summergathering@yahoo.co.uk)

### Public meeting on the Zapatistas

Monday 18th June in the Arthur Anderson Room,  
Students Union, Sheffield University

Mexican and British activists to speak and film to be shown  
all welcome, free (donations to cover costs)  
organised by Sheffield Environmental Action

### STOP STAR WARS

Blockade the Ministry of Defence on Friday 22nd June

Meet 11am at Nelson's Column in Trafalgar Square for  
short briefing before proceeding to MoD in Whitehall  
More info from ARROW (Active Resistance to the Roots of War)

020 7607 2302

### Anti-sanctions conference

A gathering in solidarity with the people of Iraq  
on Friday 29th June to Sunday 1st July 2001

Kingsley Hall, Powis Road, London E2

Further info from Glenn, 020 8351 6736

[glenn@voices.viwuk.freemove.co.uk](mailto:glenn@voices.viwuk.freemove.co.uk)

organised by Voices in the Wilderness 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](http://www.cannabiscoalition.org)

for info tel: 020 7637 7467 or 020 7738 5148

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### London Anarchist Forum

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

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### 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](http://www.statewatch.org)

### Northern Anarchist Network

Summer conference in Hebden Bridge

**Saturday 7th July**

**from 10.30am to 5.30pm**

for details contact Martin on 0161 707 9652 or visit

<http://perso.libertysurf.co.uk/northernanarchistnet/index.html>

### Close Campfield – Saturday 30th June

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

### Close Harmondsworth demo on Saturday 30th June

The Close Down Harmondsworth Campaign and several other organisations are  
calling for a mass protest from 12 noon to 2pm at the Harmondsworth  
Detention Centre, Colnbrook by-pass (on A4 north of Heathrow)

Car cavalcade meeting 10.30am, M4 westbound Heston Services (contact Elane 08958 508492)

Public transport: U3 bus from Heathrow or 81 bus from opposite Hounslow West tube station

contact [oliver.new@btinternet.com](mailto:oliver.new@btinternet.com) or [raybarkley@tesco.net](mailto:raybarkley@tesco.net)

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