

anarchist fortnightly

Freedom

Vol. 62 No. 21

3rd November 2001

50p



Free the weed

The government has promised to relax Britain's ridiculous laws on cannabis. The drug will now be reclassified as class C. Possession will still be illegal, but cops can no longer arrest people for it. They'll have to get a court summons instead.

Is this 'a small step in the right direction', as several campaign groups have said? If it is, it's an eye-blinkingly

small one. Announcing the change, home secretary David Blunkett said it would free cops to do other jobs. But that was the only good thing about the law as it stood – it wasted lots of police time, which was mostly spent on issuing cautions any way. So we won't get hassled for possession, but the cops will have more time to hassle us for other things. It's swings and roundabouts.

The reason for announcing the change now is to cover up the biggest attack on human rights in Britain since 1945. By changing a law that everyone ignored anyway, Blair and Blunkett can parade their 'libertarian' credentials while they systematically remove what freedoms we've got. The only step that would satisfy us is full legalisation. And that's something we'll smoke to. Cheers.

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Government plays down fears as officials confirm the worst ...

Bin Laden has nuclear capacity

Downing Street officials effectively admitted last week that Osama bin Laden had acquired the materials necessary for building a nuclear bomb. *Channel 4 News* reported on 25th October that he had gained possession of the material. The programme said that 'western intelligence sources' had provided the information.

Government officials did not deny the truth of the story, but said that obtaining the materials did not necessarily mean that bin Laden's scientists would have the skill to utilise them.

"We have always known that Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda have the motivation to acquire nuclear weapons", a Downing Street publicist said. "But you should be sceptical about any suggestion that he could develop such a capacity".

Pakistan, although it is part of the US-led coalition against 'terrorism', was said by the programme's informants to be the source of the material.

Bin Laden is also suspected of owning several 'suitcase bombs', around twenty of which went missing as the Soviet Red Army broke up in 1991. These are suitcase-sized tactical nuclear weapons, powerful enough to produce devastation on the scale created when aeroplanes flew into the World Trade Centre in September. In addition to the initial destruction these would cause, the wreckage of any target would remain highly radioactive for several years.

Even if bin Laden's agents are unable to construct a full nuclear bomb, they might be able to create so-called 'dirty' conventional weapons. These would explode like normal bombs, but would then scatter radioactive material over large areas of land.

Bin Laden acknowledged in 1999 that he wanted to acquire nuclear weaponry. "If I seek to acquire these weapons, I am carrying out a duty", he said.

Freedom revealed last month that US forces around Afghanistan have themselves been equipped with tactical nuclear weapons. American military strategists insisted that these would only be used as a 'last resort'.

As well as the growing fears of a nuclear dimension to the Afghanistan war, anti-militarist activists have expressed alarm at the risk of a renewed arms race in the Middle East. Oman has already placed major arms orders since Washington began to allow unrestricted sales to states which support its coalition against 'international terror'.



Old technology: tanks line up to fight the Taliban in northern Afghanistan

Thousands face internment in new prison camps

Thousands of refugees seeking asylum in Britain will be held in new 'reception centres', under government plans to abolish the voucher system. Vouchers have been given to asylum-seekers in place of cash benefits since 1996. Their use has been criticised by activists on refugee issues, who say they stigmatise people forced to obtain goods with them.

The abolition of the voucher scheme, which home secretary David Blunkett was due to announce this week, has been welcomed by refugee support groups.

But activists said they would oppose his proposals, if (as expected) abolition were to depend on a massive increase in the use of

detention instead. "Reception centres have to be better than the existing system", said Sally Price of Refugee Action. "The concern is that reception centres can easily turn into detention centres".

Government officials insist that, if the state were to reinstate the cash benefits that refugees were entitled to before vouchers were introduced, then Britain would become a 'magnet' for asylum-seekers.

They said that the new centres would be modelled on ones in countries like Denmark and Holland. In those countries, inmates are not locked up, but they receive only a small cash allowance, and have to stay at the centre to obtain food and accommodation.

It was expected that Sodexo, the multinational company attacked by anti-detention activists for its role in running the voucher system, would be allowed to see out its current contract. This is not due to end until April 2003.

The government has overseen the building of new detention capacity in recent years. A 500-bed complex was opened last month at Harmondsworth, near Heathrow. A second, with 900 beds, is due to open at Yarl's Wood in Bedfordshire before the end of the year.

Opponents of the detention programme say that the centres are indistinguishable from prisons. They argue that refugees are effectively imprisoned without trial.

Freedom

anarchist fortnightly

“What’s your brother up to these days?”

The Prince of Wales,
on meeting Bakr bin Laden,
the brother of Osama

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Chemical spillage warning

North West

Earlier this year, the giant ICI plant at Runcorn was bought out by Ineos Chlor, a chemical manufacturer with interests in mainland Europe. Almost immediately, the new owner announced over five hundred redundancies.

Any hopes the local population might have harboured about Ineos making improvements on the appalling safety record of ICI were dashed with the news that they have been issued a warning by the government’s Environment Agency.

A wall designed to retain chemical spillages should have been completed by June this year. Perhaps in keeping with the lack of concern shown by the chemical industry in the past, a representative of Ineos Chlor said, “it was concluded that there was no immediate need to carry out the work”. Under orders from the Environment Agency, however, Ineos must now submit a programme and begin to carry out the necessary construction work within weeks.

A recent report on health in Runcorn and Widnes showed an infant mortality rate higher than anywhere else in the country, the highest death rate for all forms of cancer, and a life expectancy four years shorter than the national average.

Dr Paula Gray, the director of public health for North Cheshire said, “once again this year, many questions have been posed about the effect of environmental pollution on human health”.

We will be a long time waiting for answers to these questions from a local and national government intent on lecturing us all about the benefits of private industry – benefits



which include putting profit ahead of public safety. Those of us who live in proximity to these polluters will continue to have the equivalent of the annual death toll from rail disasters here on our doorstep, but without

the coverage of the mainstream media to highlight the situation. That must be left to those papers that have a real interest in putting people before profit.

Ronnie

News in Brief

• **East London** After two years of protest from local people, Newham Council’s experiment in privatised Housing Benefit was scrapped last month. Council bosses ended an agreement with the CSL group just 24 months into a seven year contract. This follows the sacking of three CSL workers a year ago. The three, who were all UNISON shop stewards, had exposed working conditions and practices within CSL. An employment tribunal was due to start hearing the case on 16th October, but this was re-scheduled at the last minute. The hearing will now take place at the start of next year.

• **Salford** Activists demonstrated outside an ‘enforcement office’ in the city last week, in a protest organised by the Manchester Committee to Defend Asylum-Seekers.

Demonstrators gathered on 25th October outside Dallas Court, which has been used since September as a reporting point for asylum-seekers within a radius of 25 miles. This replaced the old system of reporting to local police stations.

The office on South Langworthy Road is run by Wackenhut UK, the British arm of detentions multinational, Wackenhut.

• **Sheffield** Free food was distributed to about 200 people in the Barkers Pool area of the city last week, in a rally organised by Food Not Bombs.

The distribution on 27th October, which took place outside outlets of fast-food multinationals, coincided with a Critical Mass cycle ride in protest against the war in Afghanistan.

• **London** Grieving families marched on Downing Street last week, in a remembrance procession for those who have died at the hands of police since 1969.

More than 200 people joined the silent procession from Trafalgar Square on 27th October, which was organised by the United Families and Friends Campaign.

Four-year-old Kyle Stanley, whose grandfather Harry was shot dead by Hackney cops as he walked home from a pub in September 1999, was among those who delivered a letter to the government, demanding fresh investigations into the deaths. Harry Stanley was killed when cops allegedly mistook the table leg he was carrying for a gun.

The Crown Prosecution Service refused to prosecute the two cops involved in the killing, but that decision is being re-examined after



An earlier protest against police killings

the Stanley family applied for a judicial review.

Bernard Sylvester, whose brother Roger was killed in Tottenham in January 1999, said “everyone in this campaign shares the same interest. Our loved ones died in custody, and no-one is held accountable”.

• **Newcastle** The Tyneside Radical Film Festival began this week, with a look at the growing anti-capitalism movement.

The Side Cinema in Newcastle Quays showed three short films on Wednesday 31st October: *Crowd Bites Wolf* (about the Prague protests last year), *London Mayday 2001* and *Genoa*, a film by Indymedia. There was also a showing of *The Pies the Limit*, about San Francisco flannels, the Biotic Baking Brigade.

The next film in the festival is *Injustice*, which documents the struggle for justice by the families of people who have died in police custody. This will be shown on Wednesday 14th November at 8pm. For more information, ring Paul (0191-272 4635) or mail paul.chatterton@ncl.ac.uk

• **West Yorkshire** Activists from the Zion Housing Co-op are trying to buy the old Zion Chapel in the town. The building has a large hall attached, and organisers would like to contact people and groups who have projects that need space.

According to Tomas, a member of the group, “there is a large church hall, high ceilings, with a capacity for 250 people, toilet and kitchen facilities”.

Please contact Zion Housing Co-op, 1, Garden Street, Hebden Bridge HX7 8BL or mail tomasremiarz@ic24.net

Anti-militarist actions continue

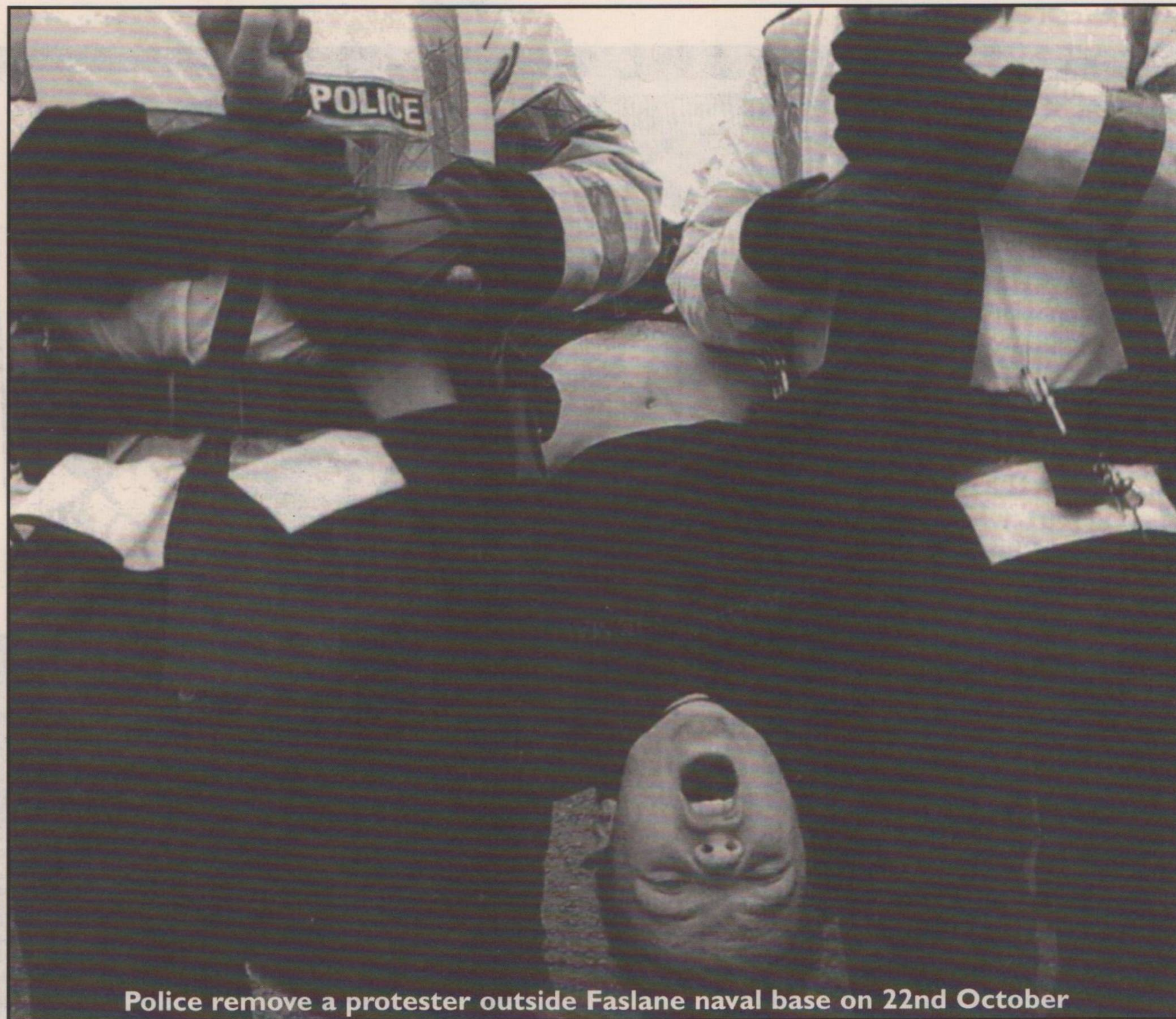
Actions against war and militarism have continued around the country as British warplanes bomb targets in Afghanistan. The deployment of UK ground forces is expected to follow soon.

• **Colchester** We marched in the town centre on 20th October, followed by a short rally. The events were run by Colchester Peace Campaign. Despite heavy rain, there were 200 marchers who blocked all traffic for a considerable time, with singing and chanting against Bush and Blair. With one or two exceptions, we were well received by shoppers and bystanders. There were no arrests. Further actions are planned.

Tim Oxton

• **London** It was a cold and windy day on 21st October, as Whitehall protesters registered their opposition to the war. As many as 500 people staged a two-hour sit-down in the road, despite the pouring rain. Cops were forced to divert south-bound traffic, but there were no arrests.

The demonstrators came from a variety of groups, including ARROW, CND and the Campaign Against the Arms Trade. One of them, Gabriel Carlyle, said "unless the bombing stops and a massive aid effort is launched immediately, thousands – if not hundreds of thousands – of people will die".



Police remove a protester outside Faslane naval base on 22nd October

• **Strathclyde** Cops made 170 arrests at the Faslane military base on 22nd October, as hundreds of people staged the annual blockade. Organisers from anti-nuclear groups Trident Ploughshares and Scottish CND said

that this year's action at the base, which houses Britain's Trident submarine fleet, had been given 'additional sharpness' because of the war against Afghanistan. A Trident Ploughshares representative estimated that

almost 1,000 people had taken part. "We have made our point", he said.

• **Hereford** A small group of anarchists and other anti-war protesters met outside the Armed Forces careers office in Commercial Road on 24th October, to oppose the war and educate people against it. They distributed leaflets and other anti-war materials.

• **Glasgow** Hundreds of demonstrators gathered in Argyle Street on 27th October, before forming a human chain around the MoD offices in Kentigern House. They then staged a rally in George Square. There were no arrests. The action was organised by the Coalition for Justice Not War.

• **Surrey** Activists from the Campaign Against the Arms Trade were set to protest outside the COPEX arms fair this week.

COPEX, which stands for Contingency Operations and Procurement Exhibition, was due to be held on Sandown racecourse on Thursday 1st November. It has been exposed in the past as a selling point for electric shock batons and other torture equipment.

Please keep sending in reports and photographs from anti-war actions around the country (all photographs will be returned). For more information, contact FreedomCopy@aol.com

Eyewitness account of protests last month at US bases

A very British protest?

North Yorkshire

Several hundred people gathered outside Menwith Hill last month, in support of a protest organised by the Campaign for the Accountability of American Bases (CAAB). The US spy base, which is near Harrogate, is an important component in the US Star Wars missile defence programme.

But, overtaken by more immediate events, most of us were there to protest against the murderous blanket bombing of Afghanistan, as many of the banners and placards showed.

In a specially-provided corralled space near the main entrance, we gathered to hear speeches and music under the eyes of the Ministry of Defence Police. They had arranged parking space nearby for press and disabled, but even the rest of us only had to walk a few hundred yards from our own free parking facilities.

We were all given a leaflet by the police, headed 'Notice for Protesters', informing us that the MoD Police force "recognises the rights of people to protest peacefully", and that it was their intention "whenever requested, to permit a peaceful demonstration outside RAF Menwith Hill, conducted lawfully" etc., etc.

Our cars' number plates were recorded, and we were repeatedly videoed – only for our own protection, a constable told me. "Protection from whom?", I asked but got no answer. We could even individually have a copy of the bit of tape we were on, but only if we told them where we lived (as if they didn't know) and provided them with a good photograph of ourselves.

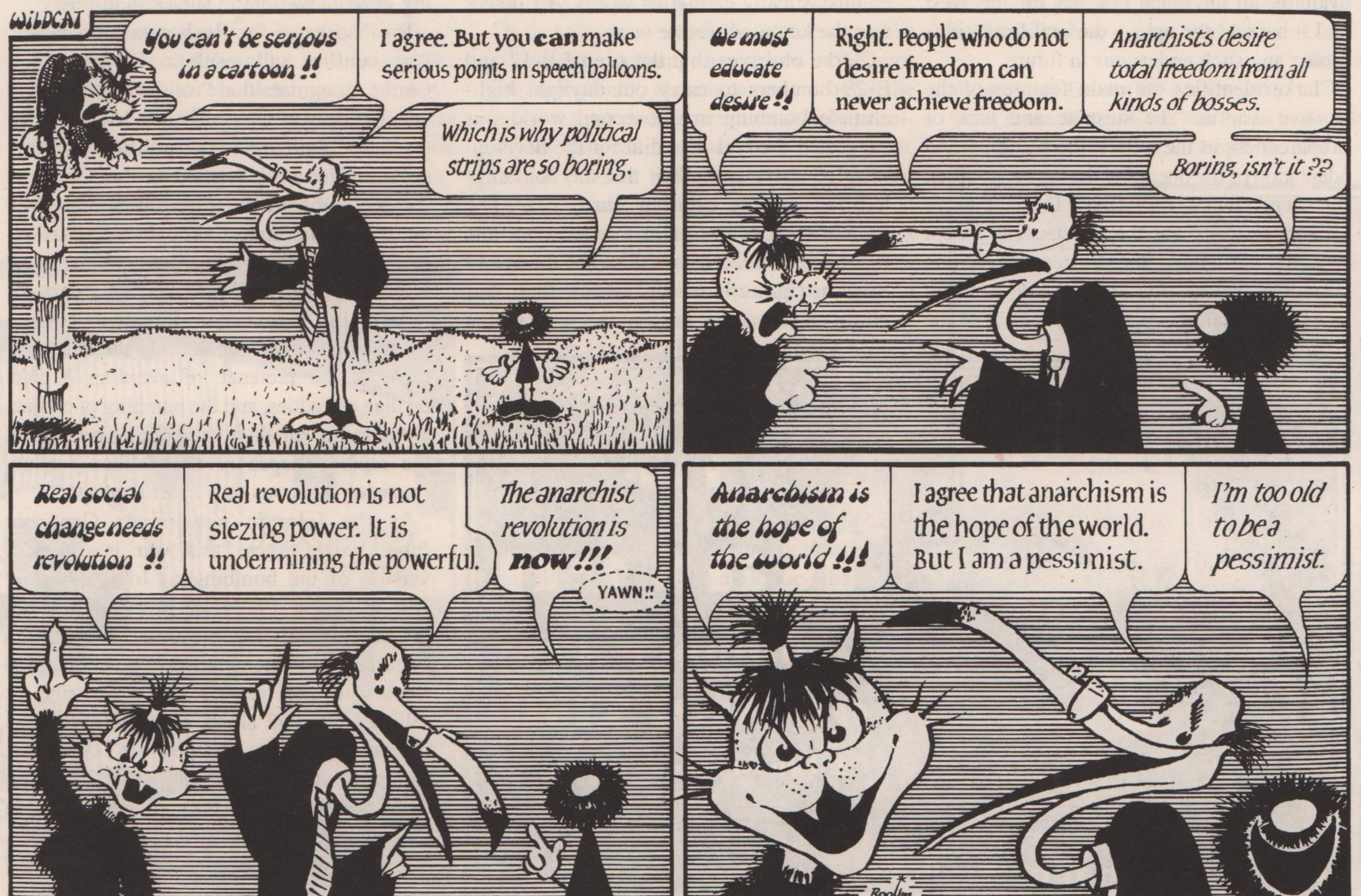
Lindis Percy, one of the most active and adept peace protesters, who had intended to speak at the demonstration, was unable to be there. Conveniently (for the state) she had been arrested at her home the day before, detained overnight and then taken to Oxford to appear before magistrates on a trumped-

up charge of breaking bail conditions.

On the same day, a similar protest took place at Fylingdales, a US base in a remote part of the North Yorkshire Moors National Park. This had been called by CND, and although it was attended by only a few dozen protesters, it elicited a surprising amount of support from drivers passing on the adjacent main road. Perhaps these were also recorded by bored police, who otherwise had nothing to do except chat to protesters. In both places, the main police presence was kept well out of sight.

These protests achieved little, as much a part of the Establishment as Private Eye, an innocuous safety valve, emphasising that opposition to the war is limited to 10-15% of the population. Yet the government is concerned, with talk of 'losing the propaganda war'. When hundreds of thousands come out on to the streets, the authorities will stop talking about the right to protest peacefully and the mainstream media will start reporting our activities. Then we will know that we are getting somewhere.

HS



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The health of the state

According to Michael Ignatieff, recent military interventions by the west have been examples of 'virtual warfare', partly as a result of technological superiority and partly due to a fear of the costs of engagement. In Kosovo, to use his example, war was waged with impunity. "Technological mastery removed death from our experience of war. But war without death – to our side – is war that ceases to be fully real to us: virtual war".

After the events of 11th September, the notion of war without death – of war as spectacle – can no longer be sustained. Now every anthrax hoax reminds us that there is a price to be paid for seeking to sustain a world where the richest fifth of the people receive over 80% of total global income, and the poorest fifth less than 2%.

In relation to the Algerian War of Independence, Jean-Paul Sartre called this "the moment of the boomerang", the moment when "the colonised cure themselves of the colonial neurosis by driving out the colony with weapons", when the violence used to underpin a world where eighteen million die of hunger every year is thrown back in our faces. If 11th September showed how little some in groups like al-Qaeda value life, then the lesson that life comes cheap and is easily surrendered is one taught them by the death each month of 4,500 Iraqi children as a result of UN sanctions, and the 700 killed and 16,000 injured by Israeli forces in the year of the second intifada.

This realisation makes the prospect of sustained conflict in Afghanistan and the Middle East a less welcome one than the rhetoric from George Bush about a war without end against 'the evildoers' allows. In his new book *Waging Modern War*, General Wesley Clarke (former Supreme Allied Commander, Europe) seeks to draw a balance sheet of the NATO intervention in Kosovo. He concludes that, as one defence minister put it, "the most fundamental lesson was that 'we never want to do this again'." If Kosovo was an example of what Clarke calls 'coercive diplomacy' ("the use of armed force to impose the political will of the NATO nations"), then it showed the limited gains available in any such conflict for the west and – beyond the spin – the real limitations facing any such endeavour in future.

Clarke identifies the main features of the Kosovo war as "the surprise and lack of preparedness at the outset, the planning and adaptation of the operation during the conflict, the dependence on allies, the exclusive reliance on air power, the reluctance to accept friendly casualties, the horror of civilian casualties on any side, the struggle to move to a ground campaign, and the impact of the



cartoon by Mark Kavanagh

media". All these factors are in place again for Operation Enduring Freedom.

As regards lack of preparedness, the Taliban are an enemy created by the US, armed, trained and let loose by those now faced with having to put them down. As regards goals and planning, Clarke notes that, "military thinkers like to plan for perfect operations, in which there are clear objectives, unambiguous political guidance, 'mission-type' orders, a defined exit strategy, and popular consensus at home". The defining feature of Operation Enduring Freedom, though, is precisely that it lacks any exit strategy at all.

After Kosovo, the exclusive reliance on air power was hailed as a turning point in military strategy. At the start of the war, *Daily Telegraph* correspondent and military historian John Keegan was loudly proclaiming the impossibility of winning a war by air power alone. By the war's end, he was enthusiastically eating his words. Air power was the key to all future wars.

Clarke observes that the use of B-17 and B-29 bombers to carry out daylight high-altitude bombing in the second world war suggested the real potential for the development of air power, albeit that the bombings led to massive civilian casualties. The development of precision weapons, and the flexibility offered by the likes of the F-117 Stealth fighter-bomber, meant that "air power and the cruise missiles that were part of

a precision strike could hit targets accurately, so accurately that the results seemed guaranteed. This was real 'action at a distance', it kept the attacker far away from the effects of the weapons ... and dramatically limited the likelihood of friendly losses".

And here's where Operation Enduring Freedom comes unstuck. Essential as 'action at a distance' might be, it isn't possible in Afghanistan. To achieve its aims, ground intervention is essential. But, as Clarke makes clear, much of the land-based technology available is, unlike its airforce counterparts, effectively obsolete. "The equipment was either too heavy (like the Abrams tank) or wearing out and underdesigned (like the Apache)". Thus the coalition faces the prospect of a ground war in the worst of the Afghan winter, in the worst possible terrain for the military equipment available to it, against an enemy with years of experience of conducting guerilla warfare in such conditions.

The bad news for Bush gets even worse. Any conflict will result in US casualties. Clarke recognises that "for the Americans, it was the drawn-out conflict in Vietnam that defined contemporary political-military culture. The weekly grind of the American losses, long after the government had given up its aim of winning, brought a disillusionment similar to that afflicting the British and French in the post-World War One period". Winter in Afghanistan threatens such a prospect again. Hence already the abandonment of the pretence of avoiding Afghan civilian casualties, and the bombing of civilian areas and hospitals in the hope of prompting the rapid collapse of the Taliban regime. Precision weapons don't easily go astray.

As the Islamic newspaper *Crescent International* notes, "this 'war' is a modern version of the bombing of Iraqi tribes by Britain in the 1920s, or France's periodic destruction of troublesome villages in Algeria. The demonstration of power is more important than getting the right tribe or village". In 1942 alone, around 37,000 tons of bombs were dropped on Germany, primarily at night, and in residential areas. The next year, 50,000 people died in Hamburg in a single night (27th July 1943). The bombing of Dresden on 13th February 1945 killed 100,000 civilians and resulted in

a firestorm which reached a temperature of 1,800°F.

Terror-bombing of civilian areas, from Hamburg to Hiroshima, has always been part of Allied strategy. The bombing of civilian areas of Kabul is more of the same. But, as Clarke makes clear, in the age of 'humanitarian intervention' and wars against terror, this isn't so easy. As he points out in relation to Kosovo, "it was difficult to defend the intervention logically and politically if it was causing more harm and damage than it was preventing ... For a prolonged campaign, of indeterminate length, you must retain public support". A task which becomes more and more difficult if that support is predicated upon both the maintenance of a fictitious moral highground which the reality of warfare won't allow, and upon the limiting of Allied casualties – a strategic impossibility if the aims set are to be realised.

All of which suggests that the anti-war movement has much to play for. The size of the demonstrations to date has already indicated the real extent to which the aims of the war are distrusted by a substantial minority. We should be seeking now to take opposition to the war beyond the left and into our communities. The message ought to be a simple one – that the 'terror' which the war is ostensibly being fought against is caused by the west's contempt for human rights and democracy when they conflict with the pursuit of profit; that the state which moves now to define political Islam as an enemy both without and within will deny all of us the right to political expression in the name of an abstract 'freedom', which is the freedom only to be quiescent.

The globalisation of "the right to be all you can be", which Wesley Clarke claims underpins all western military interventions, is in fact about the maintenance of conditions of profitability for capital. Those who seek to maintain a permanent instability in the Middle East to insure the interests of oil multinationals – with Israel as America's armed and sanctioned rogue cop – will as happily throw thousands out of work here if their interests demand it. We are told this is a war to defend 'freedom and democracy' at the same time that David Blunkett moves to

(continued on page 5)

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Orwell's nightmare vision

It's as if the US and UK governments have read George Orwell's novel *1984*, and are using it as a blueprint. For the rest of us, the book stands as a warning.

The downgrading of cannabis to a class C drug, the legalisation of hardcore pornography, extended pub opening hours, relaxing of the gambling laws – these seem sensible in themselves, but taken together they begin to look like a deliberate attempt to provide distraction for the proles. The state is happy for people to amuse themselves (so much the better, if it leads to higher revenues); in return, it expects to be left alone to conduct important business (like wars), without too much scrutiny or opposition. Some opposition will still be allowed to exist openly, however, as it's much easier to monitor (and control) that way.

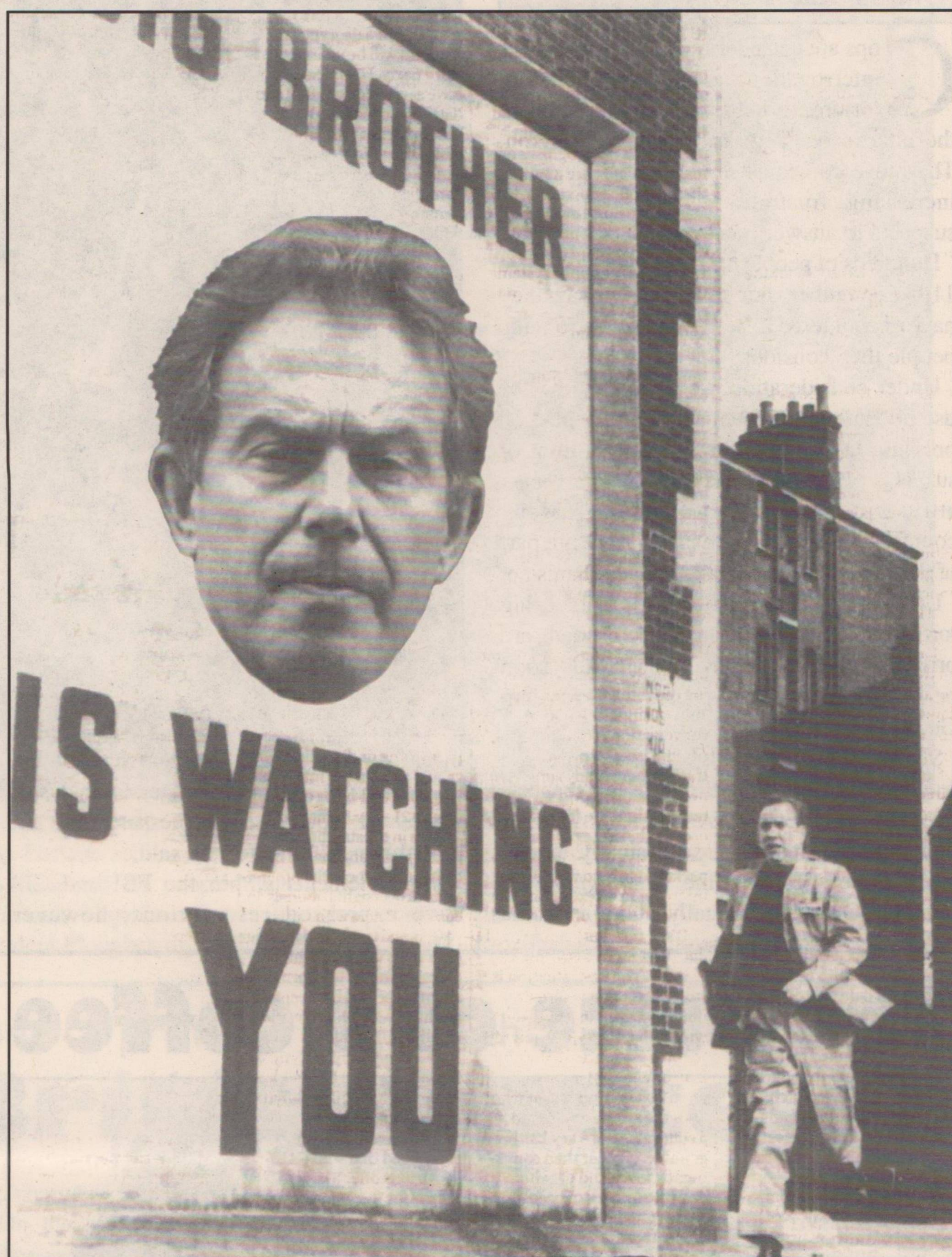
There's some evidence to suggest that the attacks of 11th September, the war on Afghanistan and now the anthrax scare have all been pre-planned in a bid to attack civil liberties, increase state control and create a permanent war scenario. This would handily justify increased military expenditure, with never-ending imperialist wars abroad guaranteeing the necessary resources to enable the capitalist machine to continue expanding. At the same time, most of the world would be denied the opportunity to be anything more than a source of cheap labour, goods and resources.

Not that this is news to most of us, it's just that the pace and brazenness of the attacks on us have suddenly increased. Could it be that we're being railroaded into this with such haste so that reasoned objections don't have time to solidify into effective opposition?

R

The first time I read *1984* was when I saw it on a school bookshelf. I devoured it, and a couple of days later realised it linked up to my own mistrust of all authority.

The recent talk of 'infinite justice' and 'permanent war' has a real Orwellian menace



to it. This was coming, after all, from the 'leader' of the most powerful military force in the world, who cheated his way into office before announcing with surprising speed his intention of making huge increases to military spending and capability. Of course, this is going to line the pockets of the shady

characters who financed him into office in the first place.

While the hollow sloganeering of political parties in last year's presidential election successfully dazzled a minority of US voters into thinking they had a choice, the military and industrial elite at the heart of American

power and domination must have been pissing themselves laughing at the spectacle laid on for Joe Public.

That's the same Joe Public that was slaughtered in the events of 11th September, and which is now being brainwashed by the mainstream media into a numb acceptance of more slaughter in Afghanistan, and of the horrific idea of never-ending war.

In the immediate aftermath of 11th September, I remember thinking that the headlines heralding 'the day the world changed' were ridiculous. After all, the vast majority of people were still being cynically exploited by the few who rule over them.

But the more I hear the Doublespeak from Bush and 'his people', particularly Blair, the more concerned I become. I don't quite believe the idea that 11th September was a conspiracy, but I do believe our rulers will coldly and cynically exploit any opportunities they see. There's some very dark times ahead, unless the people who oppose war, capitalism and all forms of exploitation seriously start to organise themselves. Forewarned is forearmed.

Sol

The rulers of Orwell's Oceania try to abolish knowledge of the past. History, after all, is power. "We, the Party, control all records, and we control all memories", O'Brien tells Winston.

It's a society which knows only the present, and the present will never change. "If you want a picture of the future, imagine a boot stamping on a human face – for ever".

Whether the events of 11th September were part of a giant conspiracy is largely irrelevant (though certainly not impossible).

It's what governments will now be able to do that matters. And what could speak more of abolishing past and future alike, in favour of an everlasting present, than 'indefinite' and 'enduring', the names Bush has chosen for his war campaign. Time itself is under attack. I am more than a location!

JM

(continued from page 4)

curtail our freedoms. Building a militant and effective anti-war movement is the best opportunity we have for re-establishing a secular anti-capitalist project that can exist as a real threat to those we claim to oppose.

This isn't a war the coalition will easily win, and its support is already open to question. Building an anti-war movement allows us to put into question more than the precise aims

of the war. If, as Randolph Bourne had it, "war is essentially the health of the state" then, in time of war, it becomes easier to point out the state's intent to become "the inexorable arbiter and determinant of men's businesses and attitudes and opinions" and to expose the way in which, as Bourne describes it, the "machinery of government" is used to "blot out" the "impeding distinction between society and the individual". In any

time of war, the psychology of the state is well and truly laid bare.

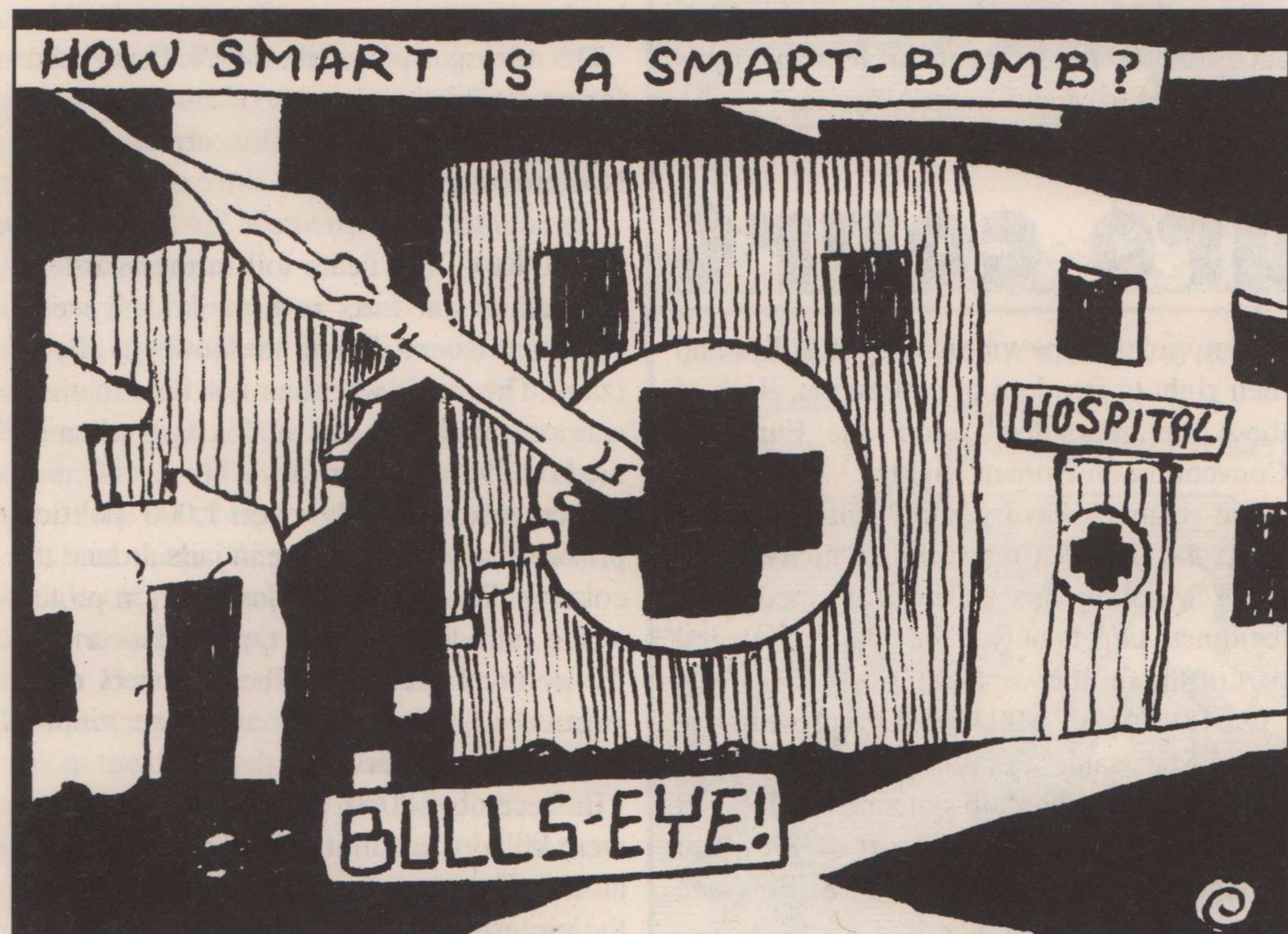
It is sad to see elements of the anarchist movement sidelining themselves in the anti-war movement, chasing angels around the head of a pin and carping that anti-imperialism is support for bourgeois nationalism. Political Islam exists as "the only non-western world view that survives to offer an alternative to western hegemony, to Muslims and non-Muslims alike" (according to the Islamic scholar Iqbal Siddiqi), in part because too many of us in the west committed ourselves to a secular anti-capitalist project while using our Stalinophobia as an excuse not to offer practical solidarity to secular anti-imperialist forces elsewhere (such as the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine).

We behaved as if practical solidarity would have had no impact on the political choices such organisations made, and then nodded to ourselves when the dialogue that was conducted took place with forces to our right. In the name of internationalism, we sought to build elsewhere carbon copies of our own tiny sects, and ignored the real forces thrown up by the struggles of the times. We cannot afford to make such mistakes again. We have to build a movement to oppose this war; we have to win ordinary working class people here to the view that their interests and those of Blair and Bush have nothing in common; we have

to support such militant secular alternatives as exist to political Islam. To fail to do so is not to make history, but to abandon it.

Nick S.

Michael Ignatieff, *Virtual War* (Vintage, 2000)
Wesley Clarke, *Waging Modern War* (Perseus Books, 2001)
Randolph Bourne, *The State* (See Sharp Press, 1998)



cartoon by Mark Kavanagh

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Attack on civil liberties

Australia: Activists have accused the federal government of launching a concerted attack on civil liberties, under cover of a 'war on terror'. The army's Counter Terrorist and Incidents Response Group, set up to prevent protests at the Sydney Olympics last year, has been re-established. Officials have refused to confirm claims that its size has doubled, saying that this would compromise 'national security'.

Meanwhile, in a move condemned by anarchists as 'draconian', the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) has been granted new powers. Officers from the country's domestic spy network now have power of arrest and the right to detain suspects without charge for up to 48 hours. No right to silence has been introduced in these cases, and suspects face heavy prison terms if they refuse to answer ASIO questions.

Attorney-General Daryl Williams said that the new measures were necessary in the light of the attacks on New York and Washington eight weeks ago. He said that ASIO would use their new powers, not just to question people suspected of 'terrorist activities', but also those who "may have information that may be relevant to ASIO's investigations".

One Australian anarchist, Marcus, said, "the attacks in the US have added to the momentum of a whole agenda that has little to do with terrorism and everything to do with clamping down on opposition to government policies at home".

Editorial on page 7

Refugees in boat tragedy

Australia: As many as 400 refugees drowned in the Java Sea while attempting to reach the Australian coast, it was announced last week. Most were thought to be Iraqis, trying to escape the dictatorship of Saddam Hussein.

Their boat, an 18-metre vessel owned by Indonesian people-smugglers, sank on 19th October. Survivors said it had broken apart under the weight of the passengers.

Some refugees had refused to board in Sumatra, alarmed at the overcrowding. But survivors said that others had been forced on board by Indonesian cops.

In Australia itself, the sinking led to attacks on state immigration policies from anarchists and humanitarian groups, who said that tragedies would continue as long as the state refused to allow asylum-seekers to enter Australia legally. William Maley, from the Refugee Council of Australia, said, "the government is very lucky this boat didn't sink after it had been pushed away from Australia by a naval vessel".

BOYCOTT AUSTRALIA

360 asylum seekers drown
 Almost all women and children
 Many recognised legal refugees
 Neither the Liberal or Labor parties
 accept the blame for a bipartisan crime

We ask civil society to make public their
 opposition to Australia's racist laws
 Refuse trade with Australia
 Until the borders are reopened
 and the camps are closed

FBI torture moves

United States

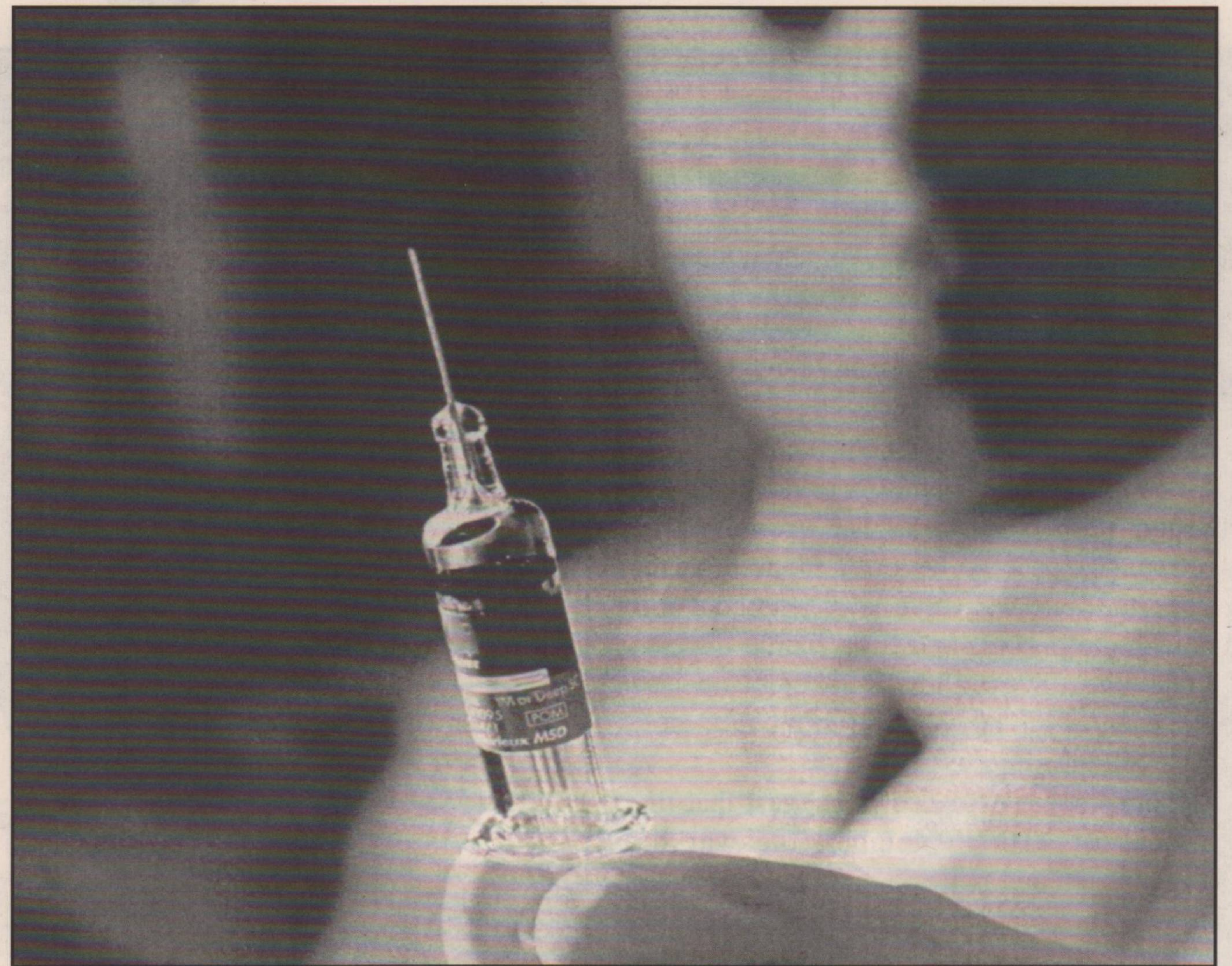
Cops are considering the use of tougher interrogation techniques, including torture, to help their investigation of the attacks on New York and Washington. The move comes as senior officials express increasing frustration at the refusal of suspects to answer questions.

Hundreds of people have been arrested since 11th September, but investigators say they have encountered a 'wall of silence' from the people they consider 'key suspects'.

Under consideration are thought to be the use of 'truth drugs' such as sodium pentathol, pressure tactics and even the extradition of suspects to friendly states with more robust attitudes to the use of torture. Many countries which routinely use torture are part of the US-led coalition attacking Afghanistan.

Under American law, investigators using torture could be prosecuted. But officials are privately predicting that its use could soon be deemed acceptable in pursuit of President George Bush's 'war on terrorism'.

Senior FBI officials have expressed frustration at the unwillingness of suspects to talk to them. "We are known for humanitarian treatment, so basically we are stuck", one agent told the *Washington Post* on 21st October. "Usually there is some



incentive, some angle to play, what you can do for them. But it could get to that spot where we could go to pressure. We are probably getting there", he said.

Other elements within the FBI and CIA have expressed reservations, however.

"Chances are you are going to get the wrong person, and risk damage or killing them", said Robert Blitzer, former head of the FBI's 'counter-terrorism' section.

Editorial on page 7

The price of a coffee



Uganda

Over 1,500 people in Mubende district have been displaced by German coffee firm Kaweri Coffee Plantation Ltd, it was reported in African newspaper *New Nation* last month. The villagers were reported to be living in the forest 80 miles east of the capital, Kampala, after their homes had been demolished by hired labourers trying to clear the land for coffee plantations.

They were said to be living without access to food, shelter or medicine. Health officials

from non-governmental organisation Action Aid Uganda said an outbreak of cholera, dysentery or malaria was imminent.

Coffee is widely planted in Africa, usually for export to north America and Europe. As well as being a valuable source of cash for bosses in the countries where it is grown, its planting is often a condition of the restructuring programmes imposed by the International Monetary Fund and World Bank.

The coffee trade has frequently been accused of involvement in human rights abuses in Africa and Latin America.

News in Brief

• **Ireland** Over 100 activists marched on Derry's Raytheon factory on 20th October. They were protesting at the use of the facility to make armaments. The guidance software for Tomahawk cruise missiles, currently being used to bombard Afghan targets, is developed at the plant.

The march was organised by the Foyne Ethical Investment Campaign. Many of the marchers afterwards travelled to Scotland for the protest outside the Faslane Trident submarine base (see page 3).

• **Spain** Eduardo Garcia Macias was released from Madrid's Soto del Real prison last week, a year after the Spanish state first accused him of sending letter bombs.

Eduardo was released on 22nd October, after High Court judges ruled that there was no evidence to justify his continued detention.

Around 50 of his supporters were waiting outside the prison to greet him. "Eduardo is another victim of a media, judicial and repressive campaign by the fascist Spanish state", said one. "The evidence against him has been nil".

The release came as plans were being made for an international week of action to mark the first anniversary of his arrest, on 8th November last year.

• **Turkey** The death toll in the year-long Turkish prison fasts rose to 41 last week, when a prisoner died in the northern city of Izam. The man, who has not been named, was on the 170th day of his fast when he died on 25th October.

There are currently over 1,000 political prisoners on hunger strike in jails around the country. The fasts began last year, in protest at the introduction of F-type isolation cells for political prisoners. The prisoners drink sugared or salted water and take vitamin supplements to survive.

In December 2000, at least thirty prisoners were killed when units of the army launched an attack on twenty prisons in a bid to halt the protests.

NATO in Euro court

Strasbourg

Relatives of Serbian television workers, killed by NATO bombs in 1999, began proceedings in the European Court of Human Rights last week, aimed at having the military action declared illegal.

Sixteen employees of Radio-Television Serbia (RTS) were killed in the early hours of 23rd April 1999, when an American bomb was dropped on the television station. Most of them were technicians and support staff.

The case has been taken to the court in Strasbourg by relatives of five of the dead and one survivor. They argue that the NATO

action violated the victims' right to life and their right to freedom of expression. Both of these are guaranteed under the European Convention on Human Rights.

The relatives have pointed out that, even under the Geneva Convention (which aims to make war 'humane'), broadcast media are legitimate targets only if they are "an integral part of the military apparatus".

On 18th April 1999, NATO representative Jamie Shea said, "the time has come to take a closer look at the Serb state media. It is not really a media at all, it is part of President Milosevic's war machine". RTS Belgrade was hit just days afterwards.

What we say ...

Laden with nukes

Good news has been in short supply recently, and it doesn't look like that's going to change any time soon. The latest little bundle of fun is the news that Osama bin Laden's got the material he needs to build a nuclear bomb, and nobody's sure he doesn't have the expertise to use it.

There's also the persistent rumours that a score of suitcase bombs have found their way into his fanatical clutches. And everyone knows that his Taliban skivvies are thick as thieves with senior members of the Pakistani military, who unquestionably have a chunky nuclear arsenal of their own (and who gave him his nuclear goodies in the first place).

Bin Laden serves his version of Allah, Bush and Blair serve their own power and prestige. We'd be happy for them to serve whoever or whatever they choose, but for the fact they insist on involving us in their games. With bosses, always the same thing – they're not content to play by themselves. They always want underlings to boss around. Unfortunately, they've all got nasty big missiles to make sure we obey.

Worldwide attack

Australian anarchists are right to be alarmed at the powers the Australian government is merrily awarding itself. Their equivalent to MI5, which goes by the name ASIO, will now be able to question whoever it likes, and its victims won't enjoy the right to silence accorded people picked up by the bog-standard police.

The government is quite open about how these powers will be used. It's not just 'terrorist suspects' who are liable to get grief from ASIO. Anyone who has 'information that may be relevant to ASIO's investigations' could get it too. And that, of course, means absolutely anybody at all.

It's not just in Australia these things are happening. The moves in the southern hemisphere are only a regional symptom of the ongoing attack on liberties, which has been taking place worldwide for several years.

We don't think the attacks on America were a conspiracy by America's own government, though it's certainly possible they were. Nor do we think it matters either way. The point is that, wherever those attacks came from, governments everywhere are busily using them to speed up a process of repression that had begun long before.

Know your enemy

Our civil liberties were only won by hard struggle down the generations. The scariest thing about what's happening now is the speed with which those liberties are being taken away. Who could have predicted in January that, by November, US officials would seriously be suggesting the use of torture against people they consider 'terrorist suspects'?

History is the story of windows of opportunity, for rulers and ruled alike. The events of 11th September provided one such window for governments of the world, to fundamentally shift the balance of power between them and their subjects – us.

It's not too late to stop them, folks. We have to make our protests louder. The more we shout, the more people will stir from their shock at what happened in September and see that the biggest enemy isn't in a cave in Afghanistan, but closer to home. All governments are the enemy – and our own in particular.

Readers' letters

Reply from Garry

Dear *Freedom*,

I have read the two replies to my letter (6th October), and can only say 'ouch'. The letter has been read and interpreted in a way I never expected!

It really is too facile to run comments on illegal immigrants into Australia with accusations of me pandering to racism, which I abhor and work ceaselessly against within the means at my disposal.

Immigration within the legal framework of a country is one thing. It is quite another to overfill a leaky old tub with immigrants. A tub which has no safety standards, and little hope of arriving at its destination on some distant barren shore. If it founders, only the crew have any life-saving equipment. If it does arrive safely, a local community finds itself faced with an economic burden for which it is totally unprepared. The slave trade, with all its horrors, had perforce to use ships that were both seaworthy and fast. These modern-day slavers respect only gold or some other 'hard' currency, and care not a jot for their patrons' welfare.

One other factor is: what role is being played in the country of departure, and/or the country of embarkation? At best, they seem to play 'pass the parcel'.

Garry Bradford

Power is sexy

Dear *Freedom*,

In commenting upon my piece in *Freedom*, Francis Ellingham raises some interesting points (letters, 20th October). First, in using Acton's dictum that 'all power tends to corrupt', I offered it to counter the assertion

that who was to 'blame' for 11th September was a matter of detailed concern for anarchists – I think most couldn't care less. In this context, in a world of power politics and counter power politics, the corruption of power would tend to produce terrorism, state or otherwise.

Of course we need to ask why humans need power in the first place. Well, in the first place it's sexy and those with more power tend to get more sex. Whether that desire equates with insecurity I am not sure, nor am I sure that insecurity derives from "an illusion of separate personhood". Separate personhood as a totality is an illusion, but in the non-absolute sense it is also the source of choice, creativity, freedom and anarchy – is it not?

As for god, oh dear – doesn't the denial of the power of the self to this degree simply lead to the ultimate authority of a deity? "Something sacred (?) beyond time and thought"? Beyond time and space I could understand. Because nothing lies there, and I believe that is exactly what most anarchists think god is – nothing.

Colin Johnson

Dear *Freedom*,

On second thoughts I realise that my previous letter, written under the name Francis Ellingham, was a load of tosh. Please accept my apologies.

Johnny M.

Paul's perversions

Dear *Freedom*,

Aaron L. (letters, 6th October) should reread and allow for the editing of the story of Jesus. See the story as of a dangerous subversive, whose ideas were spreading like wildfire.

Saul's suppressions of the Christians were in vain until the blinding revelation that he should defeat them by joining and subvert them from within. He developed Christianity in churches, which has little to do with Jesus and teaches submission and obedience to the slavemaster's whip, obedience to the state.

While turning the other cheek means not being diverted from your course, Saul/Paul's perversions effectively reversed the course.

As the true nature of God must (if God exists) be beyond human understanding, it is best not to waste time seeking to study God or to know God. Leave God in peace to get on with running the world, and you are far more likely to find a place to park when you need one.

Ilyan

Radical Routes

Dear *Freedom*,

I should like to make contact with anyone who attended the 'Radical Routes' meeting at the Anarchist Bookfair. There was talk about setting up an anarchist club in London, and I should like to know about any progress with the project.

I am also interested in setting up a workers' co-op to distribute books (not exclusively anarchist) and possibly other stuff like films.

If anyone can supply information about the meeting, or is interested in the co-op project, could they please contact me via *Freedom* Press or email edmcArthur94@hotmail.com

Ed McArthur

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

Donations

14th-26th October 2001

Freedom Fortnightly Fighting Fund

Croydon, HT, £2; Sheffield, DB £6; Upton, GG, £6; Manchester, AD, £9.

Total to 26th October = £23.00

Total for 2001 = £946.00

Freedom Press Overheads Fund

Manchester, AD, £9.

Total to 26th October = £9.00

Total for 2001 = £1,569.00

Raven Deficit Fund

Sheffield, JC, £46; Manchester, AD, £8.

Total to 26th October = £54.00

Total for 2001 = £659.00

MAKING FREEDOM EVEN BETTER

At the Anarchist Bookfair last month, the idea was floated of abandoning the small 'front' page which *Freedom* has had for many years, in favour of having an A3 format throughout. We also discussed plans for guest-editorships on individual pages. To discuss these ideas further, and to suggest ideas of your own, join our discussion list. This exists to give readers of *Freedom* an opportunity to become more involved in the editorial process by sharing ideas and information with each other and with members of the editorial group. Membership is free. To join the list, send an empty email to FreedomAnarchistFortnightly-subscribe@yahoo.com

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Saturday 3rd November 10.30am to 7pm
(with evening disco 8pm to midnight)
and Sunday 4th November 11am to 3pm
at

Waterloo Hotel, 155 Manchester Road, Bury

— B&B list available —

For more details contact

Harry on 01422 842558

Martin Gilbert on 0161 707 9652 (martin@stanley.freemove.co.uk)

Dave Backwith on 01638 669551 (dave.backwith@btinternet.com)

Glen Burrows/Dave Chapple on 01278 450562

(glen@redsw.fsnet.co.uk)

Birmingham Anarchist Group

PICNIC IN THE PARK • FURY IN THE FORBIDDEN ZONE

Wednesday 7th November 2001

meet 2pm at

The Bandstand, Cannon Hill Park, Birmingham

contact: 07866 443407 or bag2k@hotmail.com

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with

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All U Can Eat

Earth Tribe

and others, plus DJ

stalls and raffle

£4 / £2.50 (concs)

at the Arsenal Tavern

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all money made goes to protest actions

Dutch Anarchist Bookfair

on Saturday 10th November

from 11am to 6pm

3rd Anarchistische Boekenmarkt in Utrecht

The third Dutch anarchist bookfair will be held at two locations this year: the bookfair will be at the Moira, and the cultural programme will be at the nearby ACU.

There will be vegan food available during the day.

Cheap accommodation available at the nearby Strowis hostel

(strowis@xs4all.nl)

Anarchistische Boekenmarkt, p/o Simon Bolivarstraat 91,

35 73 ZK Utrecht, The Netherlands

peetje@antenna.nl

TYNESIDE RADICAL FILM FESTIVAL

The Side Cinema, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 3JE

Part 2. Violence and the State

Wednesday 14th November at 8pm

• *Injustice* (Migrant Media, 98 mins)

In this session we take a look at the film *Injustice* which documents the struggles for justice by the families of people that have died in police custody. In 1969 David Oluwale became the first black person to die in police custody in Britain. Many others have died since then. None of the police officers involved have been convicted of these deaths. In this documentary, the families of these victims ask 'Why not?' The makers of *Injustice* will be discussing the film afterwards.

info: Paul on 0191 272 4635 or paul.chatterton@ncl.ac.uk

London Anarchist Forum

16th November General debate and social (bring food/drink to share)

7th December Anarchy and Environmentalism (symposium)

21st December Anti-Xmas Party

This fortnightly discussion forum is held on Fridays from 8pm at the Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn. Following the above dates the LAF will return to Fridays for the rest of the winter.

For more info see: www.trak.to/LAF or contact LAF@anarchic.co.uk

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 18th November 2001

Lathkill Dale in autumn, 6 miles. Meet at 11am at Monyash Village Green by the War Memorial. Walk leaders Malcolm & Marion.

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

Industrial Workers of the World

London branch meeting on

Monday 19th November

Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1

The IWW has had some recent successes in Britain starting branches for supermarket workers, despatch riders and education workers, and we also have on-going campaigns. Internationally the IWW is organising on a much larger scale in the USA, Canada, Australia and elsewhere.

The IWW is a revolutionary union for all workers. We tackle day-to-day local workplace issues, while aiming to create a better society in the long run. Grassroots democracy and direct action are our means and ends. Solidarity within the IWW and the working class in general is our motto. The IWW has a long and proud history. IWW members were involved in the Mexican, Russian and Spanish revolutions and numerous epic industrial and social battles throughout the twentieth century. Early on we acquired the affectionate nickname 'The Wobblies'.

More information and application forms available from:

Industrial Workers of the World, PO Box 4414, Poole, Dorset

www.iww.org.uk

PRISON ABOLITION ... OR MORE PRISONS?

A conference on the abolition of prison

Saturday 26th January 2002

from 10.30am to 5pm at Conway Hall

Red Lion Square, London WC1

contact: Prison Abolition Conference,

c/o BM Hurricane, London WC1N 3XX

prisonabolition@hotmail.com

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