

DIRECT ACTION

ONE OF THE central themes of anarchism is that people should have the freedom and the means to take full control of their lives. Both individually and collectively anarchists have developed an approach to human emancipation. This has come to be called direct action and takes many forms. Anarchists believe that there is a strong correlation between means and ends and this means freedom is not something that can be granted to us by politicians. We have to act for ourselves if we want a better world.

The belief in self emancipation arises from a deep distrust of politicians, statesmen, bureaucrats and others who would claim the right and expertise to run society. Anarchists are cynical of such people whether they are on the right or left of the political spectrum. The absurd socialist position which advocates for example, capturing posts within the state system inevitably ends up with people being at best imprisoned by the system, or more likely, with them being transformed by the system itself. Parliament has tamed every fiery MP that has remained for any prolonged period of time within its walls.

Direct action essentially means taking control of our own lives and action to create a better world without the mediation of political parties and other organisations that would act on our behalf. As anarchists have pointed out for generations, even the most well-intentioned of leaders and organisations become corrupted by power. The sociologist Robert Michels went so far as to speak of an "iron law of oligarchy" which he argued, overcomes the most democratic of representative organisations. The only realistic way to bring about a better world is to do it ourselves.

Anarchists then reject authoritarian, bureaucratic and representative institutions as being opposed to our interests.

Goals

Direct action though, has a more positive character. It enables the oppressed and exploited to gain a self-realisation of their value and helps bring about self empowerment. Setting and achieving goals actually increases the awareness and self confidence of those in struggle — it is a liberating process in itself. The oppressed, when they engage in struggle develop and discover qualities that they never dreamed they possessed. And, since the struggle is under the control of those directly involved, rather than under outside agents, like union full time agents, it

also develops skills of organisation and propaganda. A recent clear example of this is to be found in the thousands of local anti-poll tax groups which sprang up around the country. Starting from scratch, ordinary people created effective local direct action groups which dealt a fatal blow to the poll tax.

Even when struggles end in defeat, they can indicate what methods and tactics should not be used in the future. However, it is the traditional organisations of the working class which are most likely to fail. For example, the trade unions which are run by tired and cynical hacks invariably hold back and limit the struggle.

The characterisation of the National Union of Mineworkers as "lions lead by donkeys" is not far from the truth for that and other trade unions.

One of the beauties of doing-it-yourself is that it is an extremely flexible approach which can be used effectively on an individual, group, or mass level. The isolated anarchist, for example, can and should spread the anarchist message, whether by leaflets, stickers, local newsheet, posters etc. It would be wrong, however to fetishise the individual act.

On the collective level people can organise much more effectively, having larger resources and numbers to be able to act on a wider scale. Mass strikes, occupations, riots and other militant forms of revolt are dramatic examples of what is possible given the imagination, motivation and militancy of workers in struggle. Less obvious acts include working to rule, go slows, and sabotage.

A form of direct action which has caused some controversy in the ranks of anarchism is "propaganda by the deed", being distinguished from "propaganda by the word". This has involved political assassinations, bombing, etc and was acclaimed by late nineteenth century anarchists, including for a brief period, Kropotkin. Usually, such acts were carried out by individuals or small groups who were isolated from the mass movement. Assassination of Kings and politicians may have been dramatic but were universally counter-productive in that they provided the state with a counter-revolutionary propaganda weapon and an excuse for repression.

Sometimes, direct action takes forms which herald new revolutionary forms of organisation, embryonic examples of post



revolutionary society within the present one. When workers occupy and control factories, they are demonstrating their claim and power over it. The factory committees which sprang up in Russia in 1917 before the Bolshevik counter revolution showed that workers had the ability and inclination to take over production.

Experiment

In many uprisings, the masses themselves have taken over the task of maintaining order in the face of counter revolutionary sabotage and terror. In fact the whole process of revolution is like one huge school of self-emancipation and experiment.

There have been in the twentieth century dramatic examples of working class people rejecting their own forms of political organisation in favour of their own political assemblies. The soviets of Russia in 1905 and 1917 and in Hungary in 1956 immediately come to mind. However, and this is crucial, action in itself is not enough. There has to be a political awareness and consciousness if self-organisation is not to be subverted by the authoritarians. The soviets in 1917 became intoxicated by the radical sounding propaganda of the Bolsheviks and transformed into willing tools of their enemies, the state socialists. A similar development took place in Germany a year later, though this time it was the right-wing Social Democratic Party that side tracked the revolution.

Despite these and other difficulties, there is still no doubt that only direct action by the oppressed can lead to liberation. Freedom has to be taken — and by us in each and every aspect of our lives.

877 AF/ACF

ORGANISE!

for class struggle anarchism

ANOTHER GOVERNMENT AND SOD ALL FOR THE WORKING CLASS



Magazine of the
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WOMEN &
REVOLUTION

ASPECTS
OF
ANARCHISM:
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ACTION

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DECISIONS!

LOOKING IN
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LETTERS

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ORGANISE!

ORGANISE! IS THE national magazine of the Anarchist Communist Federation (ACF). *Organise!* is a quarterly theoretical journal published in order to develop anarchist communist ideas. It aims to give a clear anarchist viewpoint on contemporary issues, and initiate debates on areas not normally covered by agitational journals.

All articles in the magazine are by ACF members unless signed. Some reflect ACF policy and others open up debate in undiscussed areas, helping us to develop our ideas further.

Please feel welcome to contribute articles to *Organise!* — as long as they don't conflict with our Aims and Principles we will publish them. (Letters, of course, need not agree with our A&Ps at all.)

The next issue will be out in early July. The deadlines are 1st June for features and reviews, and 8th June for letters and news.

All contributions for the next issue should be sent to:

ACF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX

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WE FEEL THAT *Organise!* has an important role to play in the growth of revolutionary activity and ideas in these exciting times. We know from rising sales that many of our readers feel the same.

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THE PRESS FUND exists so you can contribute to the everyday running and production costs of *Organise!*

Money is always needed for printing, postage, layout materials and a host of other things. We also want to see *Organise!* produced more frequently, with more pages and a greater print run. Money is also needed to finance pamphlets.

Thanks to all those who contributed to the Press Fund this issue:

£100, East London; £17.50, Sheffield; £50, East London; £5, Bristol; £5, Central London; £7.50, Stoke.

Making progress!

WE HAVE REPRINTED a number of our ACE pamphlets "due to public demand".

Making Progress describes how and why the ACF was formed, and the continuing evolution of our ideas and practice. A "beginner's guide" to the ACF! 30p and an SAE from our national address.

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THE ANARCHIST COMMUNIST Federation is an organisation of class struggle anarchists. Its structure is based on groups and individual members. We have members in the following areas:-

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The ACF promotes the building of a strong and active anarchist movement in Britain and internationally and has contact with like-minded anarchists overseas. write to: ACF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High St, London E1 7QX

tal text of anarchist communism — just out! Describes how and why a revolutionary anarchist communist organisation is necessary.

In the pipeline are *Fortress Europe*, about the bosses' plans for Euro-capitalism; *Ecology and Anarchist Communism*; and a revised edition of our out of print pamphlet *Anarchism — As We See It*. Bulk orders please for these pamphlets to national address.

This ambitious publishing venture costs mucho dosh. We know that you, dear reader, appreciate how important it is to get our ideas over in this period so that the movement can grow and be effective. Any financial contribution, small or large, would be greatly appreciated.

The Provos and the building workers

THE PROVISIONAL IRA "executed" eight building workers in January because they were involved in building for the security forces. This action further illustrates the nature of authoritarian nationalist politics, bereft of any class struggle perspective.

The Anarchist Communist Federation is, of course, opposed to collaboration with the forces of law and order and with the occupying British Army in Northern Ireland. It opposes any material aid or collaboration with imperialism wherever it happens to be. This does not mean that the answer is to slaughter members of the working class, be they Protestant or Catholic. Workers have to be appealed to on their class interests, and this is not achieved by blowing them up, but through consistent argument and propaganda.

As the Irish anarchist group Workers' Solidarity Movement said recently in their paper: "It is undeniable that such an appeal would have been ignored by most. However in areas such as Newry, Derry and Strabane there was a very good chance that it would have been heeded if worked for... We must also look at the objective result of the threats and killings. It does not matter a lot what the intentions of the Provos are, the fact is that killing labourers and other workers drives Protestants into the arms of bigots like Paisley. It is not enough to denounce such workers as supporters of imperialism — the question is how to win them away from that. Death threats certainly cannot do it. Whether we like it or not many Protestants be-

lieve that such workers are shot because they are Protestants and that the Provos' stated reasons are not the real ones".

Bombs and ballots

The political wing of the Provisionals, Sinn Fein, is talking about a solution to the partition of Ireland by either the Common Market or the United Nations. They hope that the coming of the single European market can somehow dissolve the borders. They show blindness to the fact that these institutions are capitalist institutions, not some "fair-minded" body standing above class interests. The espousal of these views shows the growing gap between the "soldiers" of the IRA and the "politicians" of Sinn Fein.

Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness are already distancing themselves from the armed activity of the IRA and Adams talks about "a need to end all acts of violence". They are not yet ready to condemn armed action, indeed they hope to use the armed activity of the IRA as a bargaining counter. But there is a growing feeling that they could win more Sinn Fein seats if armed struggle came to an end. The contradictions in the Provisional strategy of waging their struggle through the ballot box and the Armalite is coming to a head. Bordering on the absurd

The illusions that the Sinn Fein leaders have in the EEC lead them to hope that they can use the end of IRA military activity as a persuader to end the partition of Ireland. Even if this were to happen, one form of capitalist domination would be exchanged for an-

other-an all-Ireland exploitation through the EEC, rather than through direct British domination. The Republicans have successfully channelled and controlled disaffection in the Catholic working class North. A change in circumstances could mean that this disaffection could spill out of the narrow confines of Republicanism and take in the working class of the South. But for this to be possible an active revolutionary movement needs to be built throughout Ireland. At the same time a movement of solidarity needs to be created in Britain, one that is not the backyard of one of the leftist groups or a meek lapdog of the Provisionals. This solidarity does not exist, and it is partly because it does not exist that the Provos have been able to retain their hold.

And in the South...

The Workers' Party of the Republic was a political continuation of the Official IRA which gave up armed struggle back in the early 70s, and which was a horrific amalgam of Stalinism and Republicanism. Its recent disintegration at its February conference points to the continuing crises within the Stalinist parties and within Republicanism.

The Workers' Party inherited the enmity between the Provisional and Official wings of the IRA, and saw the Provisionals as the main enemy. It welcomed the Common Market as progressive and cheered multinational investment in Ireland.

Two years ago, the leader of the Workers' Party, Proanasias de Rossa, indicated how



far it had gone down the road to dropping any pretence of defending class struggle politics when he said: "If the Irish people want a market economy mediated by the price mechanism, then the Workers' Party will not stand in their way".

The de Rossa faction wanted to drop all talk of class struggle and to cut their links with the Official IRA. This was opposed by a faction led by Cathal Goulding, former chief of staff of the IRA, Sean Garland, former Party General Secretary, and Des O'Hagan, a leading light in Belfast. This faction is still tied to Stalinism and still linked to the Official IRA, which whilst it has ceased armed activity many years ago maintains its structures and weaponry and supports the dismal Party policies on wage restraint and support for the Common Market.

The resultant split in the Workers' Party means that de Rossa has taken 90% of the

membership with him into a new Social-Democratic Party, whilst a rump, including many in the North, is all that remains of the Workers' Party. This marks a further stage in the collapse of the old Republican and Stalinist politics and the pressing need to create a revolutionary libertarian movement throughout Ireland.

Abortion

The Appeal Court in the Republic was forced to back down over its decision not to allow a 14 year old girl, pregnant after being raped, to go to Britain for an abortion. This was not due to moral indignation in the bosses' media but because of large mobilisations against the decision.

An estimated 7,000 women, according to unofficial figures, travel to Britain every year to obtain abortions. Abortion has been officially banned in Ireland since 1861, and the Fin-

lay judgement in 1988 in the Supreme Court made it unlawful to aid a woman trying to obtain an abortion — in other words any information on abortion facilities is illegal and can bring a jail sentence.

Infiltration

A number of reactionary Catholic organisations have infiltrated the civil service and the professions and they have a rabid anti-abortion stance. Among them are Opus Dei and the Knights of Columbanus. Both these groups have expressed admiration in the past for Mussolini, Franco and Salazar. Such admiration can also be found among leading members of the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child, like Dr. Mary Lucey. And so-called liberals like the President, Mary Robinson are as equally anti-abortion. Robinson said during the presidential campaign that "I don't support abortion, and in

fact I have done more practical work than any other Irish politician to stop Irish women going for abortion".

And what about the Provisionals? They have consistently refused to take a position on abortion, anxious as they are not to alienate the Catholic Church too much and the sensibilities of many Catholic workers. Instead of taking a stand they sit on the fence refusing to attack reactionary ideas.

There are a number of groups and individuals, including anarchists, ready to take a stand on abortion and to challenge the State and the Church by refusing to be gagged, and by distributing information on abortion services. Creating a revolutionary movement in Ireland includes taking a stand against the Catholic Church, breaking the working class from reactionary religious ideas and uniting both the Protestant and Catholic working class.

Looking in the coffin: collapse of the Soviet Union

IT IS TYPICAL of the Western press to see the collapse of the Soviet system as a primarily ideological and economic vindication of capitalism and liberal-democracy (sic).

The bankruptcy of the command economy/state capitalism of Eastern Europe has,

however, global implications beyond the acclaimed victory of capitalism in the metropolitan countries. The command economy provided a model which was more or less imitated by third world oligarchies on a very wide scale. Stalinists, pseudo — stalinists and many so called national liberation movements outside of the Bolshevik tradition saw in the Soviet system a model of development which would lift them from dependent poverty to real independence, development and industrialisation. Thus countries which were most unsuited to Stalino-Marxist economic analyses set forth with their own variants of the command economy and all which (following the Soviet precedent) went with it. When the USSR collapsed, so, by and large, did their projects collapse also.

The USSR tried a variety of economic programmes before finally settling for the Stalin-

ist model. Lenin was honest enough at times to admit that state capitalism was all that Russia was capable of achieving in the short run after the October 1917 coup. True he was perfectly capable of lying when it suited his propaganda needs as his (apparently) democratic analysis enclosed in "The State and Revolution" showed. He was equally capable of crude propagandism as is evident in his view that "electrification plus soviets" equals socialism. On a practical level early soviet economic policy boiled down to "War Communism" and then "New Economic Policy".

Apologies

War Communism, Leninist apologists never tire of telling us, was a necessity, forced upon the Bolsheviks by the needs of the civil war. In reality it was a policy forced upon the workers and peas-

ants by a high handed party dictatorship (nourishing sentimental, though fraudulent revolutionary language). War Communism equalled the police state, the banning of all commerce, including the selling of vegetables to the starving workers and the regimenting of the population under Bolshevik control. Trotsky, intoxicated with power and his own rhetoric, advocated the most extreme form of this dictatorship. Trotskyists who whine on about Trotsky the democrat/workers' tribune should read his "Terrorism and Communism" to evaluate his real views about workers power.

The abandonment of War Communism following the Tenth Party Congress and the Kronstadt revolt led to the imposition of the "New Economic Policy". Essentially, this combined strong Communist control and the destruction of all political freedom with the per-

missability of market relations, especially in agriculture. Essentially, as Lenin admitted, the NEP was a capitulation to market capitalism, albeit with a bureaucratic ruling class which preserved and extended its own privileges.

Political cynicism reached new heights during the period of NEP. Politicians preached the language of Marxism whilst practising oppression. So, when Stalin finally turned upon the most able practitioners of NEP, the Kulaks, better off peasants, he did so in the name of class struggle and socialism. Incidentally, it was not only the better off peasants who were slaughtered in the period up to the declaration of "socialism" in 1936 but also the broad mass of the working population.

"Socialism" in its Stalinist form had come into being. In its essentials it combined nationalism ("socialism in one country") with dictatorship carried out through a single party, a command economy regulated by long term plans and economic centralisation based upon state ownership.

Monstrous

Despite the monstrous nature of the new system the soviet economy made dramatic progress. In the 1930s output increased enormously — the country became industrialised. The USSR experienced dramatic economic growth, particularly in respect to heavy industry, coal mining etc. In respect of consumer products however, the achievements throughout the period of "state socialism" up to the collapse of Gorbachev were extremely limited. Agriculture from 1929 to 1989 varied from the inefficient at best to the downright catastrophic. The command planned economy appeared to work for several decades. In the post war period the USSR gained the status of armed super power, had apparently stunning achievements in space research and provided a comprehensive (if backward) educational and welfare system. It was these achievements which mesmerised would-be revolutionaries in the colonial countries. If the former peasant dominated USSR could achieve "socialism" why should not Cambodia, China,



Mozambique, Algeria, etc not be able to do the same?

The reality of the Soviet miracle was somewhat different. Soviet science, technology and industry were consistently behind the capitalist USA. Rational planning was supposed to be far superior to the market yet the USSR could not build a decent motor car, computer or machine tool. Consumer goods were in short supply, shoddy and without variety, whilst food supplies were of a generally very poor quality. The Soviet achievement was a mirage.

Nevertheless for social-nationalists the USSR seemed to provide the model for economic take-off. So, for four decades, "revolutionaries" from the 3rd World made their way to Moscow for education and training. Pakistanis, Indians, Iraqis, Angolans, Cubans and indeed representatives from all Third World countries made the journey to the new Mecca to see how things were to be done. True, the USSR could not compete with the West in producing consumer goods but from the third world "revolutionaries" viewpoint this did not matter. What counted was the USSR appeared to show how a back-

ward country could achieve "take-off" ie achieve self-sufficiency, industrialisation, a decent system of health care and self respect.

Cocktail

So, national liberationists adopted some of the ideas, language, methods and advice of the Soviet leaders. The cocktail finally adopted by each movement varied but essentially reflected, with modifications, aspects of the soviet model. The Indian ruling class, went in for the centralised command economy for heavy industry as far as was compatible with overall market capitalism. Hence, huge steel mills, nuclear plants etc. Those truer to the soviet model mouthed the slogans of Stalinism, imposed one party rule, strict currency controls and the ideological trappings of "socialism" such as the red flag. The sight of huge banners bearing the icons of Marx and Lenin in Ethiopia ultimately showed the absurdity of this approach. The collapse of the USSR in the late 1980s finally revealed the nakedness of the Soviet model.

Some, like the Yugoslav and Chinese Stalinists be-

came aware as early as the 1950s of the inadequacies of the Soviet model but were incapable of substituting libertarian alternatives as befits ruling classes.

The apparent stability of the Soviet economic system became questioned in the 1960s and 70s. Compared to many market economies the USSR seemed to offer high and sustained economic growth.

However, by the 1980s, the system was reaching the limits of viability and growth rates diminished with each plan. It took Gorbachev to tackle the crisis which he feared would overcome the whole system. As we know he failed and the Soviet system is no more.

Collapse

Today, no one except dyed in the wool Stalinists see any virtue in the soviet example. It has collapsed and with it has disappeared third world emulation — except of course for the dinosaurs of Cuba, North Korea and (perhaps) China, who, under the domination of ancient Stalinists are reinventing the New Economic Policy.

"Boris Yeltsin got Russia for Christmas and it fell apart by Boxing Day"



Introduction to the US green anarchists

MURRAY BOOKCHIN IS an important contemporary thinker, founder of the Social Ecology movement. Latterly his ideas have shifted from green anarchist-communism to the radical liberalism of Confederal Municipalism — "a belief in taking state power at a local level and using that power to transform society from the bottom up" Here is a report from an ACF member currently in America.

In the United States and Canada there are two main coordinating groupings of the Bookchinist current: the Left Green Network and the Youth Greens.

The Left Green Network has existed for about three years and has about 300 "members". They have a magazine called *Left Green Notes* — *A Magazine of Radical Ecology* which is printed about every two months. The latest I have is issue 10. They also have a theoretical bulletin called *Regeneration*, and a 24 page draft programme. The network was initiated in the North East (or New England) quarter of the United States most especially from Vermont where Murray Bookchin's Institute for Social Ecology is based. The ISE is part of a college at which Bookchin is a professor. Many of the older LGN activists seem to have come out of the anti-nuclear struggles of the seventies, and have since either or taught studied at the ISE.

The Left Green Network has yearly continental conferences and in between regional conferences. There are six regions; NE, SE, NE, SW, Midwest and Far West. The conference I went to was the first regional conference of the Farwest LGN. The LGN is run by a co-ordinating council which includes two delegates from each region, two from the Youth Greens and two from the "people of colour" Caucus. The LGN has a strange relationship with the Green Party, many left greens seeing themselves as the left-wing of that

party, some see themselves as autonomous.

Dominant

A dominant idea within the former is confederal municipalism. They really believe that their town councillors will be accountable and recallable to local people.

The Youth Greens are a younger and more radical offshoot from the Greens. They are more anarchistic. For example they are against the electoral politics of the Green Party and are close to the *Love and Rage* newspaper network. They have been going about four years and have already had five continental conferences. They are probably very student based since all their meetings have taken place on college campuses, and sometimes their theory is quite academic. The YG and the LGN have a separate history and identity, but most Youth Greens are also members of the Left Greens. They have published one issue of their own magazine *Free Society*, included in which was a discussion on whether they should change their name to the "autonomous greens" or to the "eco-anarchist network". Together with the LGN they produced a magazine called *Ecology, Anarchism and Green Politics* as a one off for a big student ecology conference. The Youth Greens have called for and taken part in radical Earth Day actions each year.

Politically the Youth Greens see themselves as "fol-



lowing in the tradition of the Paris Commune, the Spanish Anarchists of the late 1800's and early 1900's, May '68 France, and the thoughts of Hegel, Marx, Kropotkin, The Frankfurt School, Feminism, the New Left, the Situationists and Social Ecology...". Their six political principles adopted at their first conference in May '89 were "1) Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Liberation; 2) Social Ecofeminism; 3) Anti-Capitalism; 4) Oppositional politics; 5) Revolutionary Dual Power and Radical Municipalism; and 6) Democratic Decentralism."

Class

On Anti-Capitalism they state, "...we define Green as explicitly anti-capitalist. Both historical experience and theoretical analysis indicate that capitalism and ecology cannot coexist. The profit motive inherent in capitalism does not allow for truly effective ecological regulations or environmental protection. The priority is profit, not the land or the people. As Greens we will not compromise with capitalism..." Nowhere in their writings is there any discussion or even mention of class!!!

On the state, "...We do not believe that the present system can be reformed. It is partly for this reason that we reject the authority of the state, and seek an entire restructuring of society — although some of us think that the state may play a role in a period of transition to a stateless society..." Note their principles do not include anti-statism. It is probable that there is a trotskyite minority within the Youth Greens blocking this. It also shows in the refusal to attack Leninism, "...The question of Youth Green relation to democratic-centralist cadre group is still an open one and there are now three counter-proposals in existence."

Their confusion on the issue of the state carries over into their rejection of the national electoral system. Presumably they, like the Left Green Network, see the local electoral system and the local state as somehow distinct from the national one. They state, "...We advocate government based upon direct democracy, whenever possible and accountable representation when direct democracy is not possible. An accountable representation

would involve citizens meeting to discuss issues, then sending delegates to a larger body, who have mandated positions from the base..." Fortunately in practice the Youth Greens seem to avoid electoralism and emphasise extra-parliamentary activity.

Militant

Their ideas on Revolutionary Dual Power are influenced by the German Autonomists and include both militant street demonstrations and "...working in communities to establish counter-institutions with a goal of creating a dual power in opposition to capital and the state. Such projects include community cafes, restaurants, bookstores, squats and community gardens.

The most recent Youth Green conference was in

Eugene, Oregon last summer. From the review of the meeting it seems that the YGs have shrunk in number with many activists going off into different projects, eg *Love and Rage* or the LGN. There also seems to be a realisation that to continue they must change their title, both to allow it to become mixed age and to clarify their position to the Greens. But there are two main factions on this. The first want to ditch the word Greens as well. They see "...that the Greens are hopelessly middle class and will never be more than mild mannered reformers..." They correctly view the Greens as being tied to statist and electoral strategies that have no relevance to the revolutionary project. This faction wants to change the name to the Ecological Anarchist Network. The other faction argues that

they should stay in the Greens and work with them to develop a revolutionary consciousness and agenda. This faction wants the name changed to the Autonomous Green Network. The Youth Greens have not yet split. The issue will be debated again at this year's conference. But I hope they do split. For the sake of theoretical clarity the anarchist Greens need to break from the stifling confines of the official Green movement. And to get away from any trot hangers on.

Bizarre

The Left Green Network's seemingly progressive and radical ideas are being used as a cover to drag anti-authoritarians into the electoral circus. It is bizarre that they have joined the *Love and Rage* pro-

ject's anti-presidential election boycott, but they do have a bizarre ideology. Confederal Municipalism puts forward the nonsensical idea that the local state is good but that the national state is bad; this needs to be repudiated as merely another face of the same old leftist garbage. We've had enough leftist states to know they all stink the same.

The following are the most up to date addresses for these groups:

Left Green Network, POB 366, Iowa City, IA 52244.

Left Green Notes, 825 East Roosevelt, #178, Lombard, IL, 60148.

Regeneration, WD Press, POB 24115, St Louis, MO 63130.

Free Society/Youth Greens, POB 7293, Minneapolis MN 55407.

IS LIFESTYLISM ENOUGH?

LIFESTYLISM IS THE theory that major social change will only come about through people as individuals changing the way that they live and relate to other individuals.

I am examining and criticising lifestyle as a political philosophy, rather than its content. It is vital for revolutionaries to examine and change the way that they live — for example to tackle racism and sexism in themselves and others; those who don't speak with a corpse in their mouths. The point is that on its own this is not enough.

Theory

Lifestyle is an individualistic theory: society is made up of individuals who have real choices about how they live; for example whether they do waged work or not (and what job they do), whether they live communally, pay the rent, squat etc. If enough people make the right moral or ethical choices and act upon them, reform or major social change will occur.

Many people look critically at what food they buy and eat, for reasons of health, ecology, animal liberation and social justice. They boycott "Third World" cash crops such as tea, coffee and sugar in favour of "non-exploiting" home produce, buy free-range, organic wholefoods rather than food that is factory farmed/chemically treated — refined or adulterated, adopt vegetarian or vegan diets rather than meat or dairy ones.

In the wider areas of consumption, lifestyleists boycott "bad" companies connected with things such as Apartheid,

Vivisection or the Arms Trade; Similarly they favour small shops and co-operatives ("small is beautiful") to supermarkets and hierarchical businesses. Through environmental concern they buy green products that claim to be ecologically friendly, and try to re-cycle what they use (paper, cans, bottles etc).

Pacifists are opposed to violence, particularly the existence of the military and the criminal waste of the arms trade. Peaceful methods are the means to an end; a peaceful society. All behaviour is subject to individual choice. So, for example, police on pickets and demonstrations should be treated as individuals who "can be nice to you if you're nice to them". For a number of pacifists all violence is equally bad (whether committed by oppressors or oppressed) — so it was wrong for pickets to defend themselves at Orgreave. Similarly, some pacifists argue against using peaceful force — for example a non-violent workplace occupation — because it is violent to impose your will on other people.

Collective action

Campaigning against "bad companies" implies that there are good companies. The reality is that production for profit inevitably means the domination and exploitation of people, useless unhealthy production and the domination of nature and hence pollution and destruction. Big companies are only worse than small ones because they are bigger. In a class society worker/consumer co-ops are only a milder form of exploitation.

The fundamental flaw of lifestyle as a political theory is its individualistic basis. As anarchist communists we see individual freedom as vital but the guarantee of freedom of the individual is freedom of the collective.

We live in a class society which is organised for the wealth and power of an elite, the Ruling Class (Bosses, Landlords, Judges, Politicians, Top Military, Police and Civil Servants). The majority of people — the Working Class — have no real choice about how they live. They are forced to do boring, useless (and unhealthy) work for a boss, the drudgery of full-time housework and childcare, or the poverty and harassment of "living" on welfare benefits.

The people who decide what is produced and how, are not workers or consumers but those who own the means of production (land, factories etc) — bosses and landlords. Their sole motivation is profit i.e. domination and exploitation. Organised consumer campaigns can have an effect, if allied to workers' action — e.g. boycotting production of goods during a strike.

What is needed is local and national organisation and collective direct action ending in the working class seizing the means of production and creating structures where everyone has a direct say about all aspects of society (historically — workplace and neighbourhood councils, street committees etc). Only in such a classless society — Anarchist Communism — will we have production for use in a world human community which also is in harmony with nature.

WOMEN AND REVOLUTION

This article does not attempt to be the definitive statement on anarchism and women's liberation nor does it claim to be a comprehensive analysis of the women's movement in recent years. It is, instead, an effort to give an anarchist-communist perspective on these issues. The Editors welcome other contributions to a debate that is often ignored by anarchist groups.

ANARCHISM IN THEORY

ANARCHISM IS ONE of the few political ideologies that can take on board, at least in theory, the issues that have been raised by the women's movement. This is because anarchism is not just against economic exploitation but also oppression and hierarchy.

Marxists see an economic system as the source of all oppression and therefore argue that the demise of such a system will end the oppression of women. Anarchists, on the other hand, recognise that power and hierarchy have an ideological as well as a material basis. The communal ownership of the means of production is not a sufficient condition for an anarchist communist society. It is also necessary to destroy power whether that be state power or personal power. Anarchism also recognises the importance of autonomy ie people organising themselves. While Marxists/Leninists see the all-embracing party as the dominant force in any movement for change, anarchists accept that there will be a number of different movements and groups who are working together for a revolution on a more equal basis. Therefore, anarchism does not see the existence of women's organisations as a threat or as a problem. Rather it is the political ideas and practice that is important.

ANARCHISM IN PRACTICE

History

Anarchism, like other political currents, emerged out of a working class movement which was almost totally dominated by men. It was no different from the other currents of the time in the sense of ignoring the issue of women's oppression. However, anarchism seems to have had a number of key women activists in its ranks such as Emma Goldman, Lucy Parsons, Louise Michel and Voltairine de Cleyre. Why this is the case is not clear, but perhaps it was because the theory and general practice of anarchism, which challenged authoritarianism and demanded freedom, was more conducive for women activists.

Women, of course, had to fight hard to have their concerns taken seriously alongside the general demands for working class emancipation. The Birth Control Movement in the early 20th century is a good example. Birth control was absolutely vital if women were to become involved politically but many organisations including the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) did not take it at all seriously. This was one of the first struggles where revolutionary women realised that they could not count on others in their class and had to organise independently.

Recent history

The 1960s saw the re-emergence of mass political activity and the growth of new political organisations, anarchist included. In all these movements and organisations women were clearly less prominent than men. It was still a time when most women got married and had



"To make marriage possible many young wives still continue to work. Under such circumstances they must plan as simple and restful a domestic routine as they can. Otherwise the double task of running home and office will be too great a strain."

children. They were mainly responsible for taking care of the house and raising the children, whether they worked or not. Most people, including political activists, took this situation for granted. If women *did* have the time to get involved in political organisations (usually this meant they were single and childless) it was often as wives or girlfriends who made the tea and did the typing. When the politically active men became fathers it was the women who stayed home with the children so that the men could continue their political activity.

Times change

In the 1960s more women started going out to work. The service/office sector of the economy was expanding and both working and middle class women were recruited into these jobs. More women went on to higher education, including working class women as the number of places increased. Young women therefore had more freedom and participated in the fashion, music, political scene of the "Swinging Sixties". They soon became aware that even in the new climate, they were still treated as inferiors. The youth subcultures such as the Mods and Rockers were fashioned by men and women could tag along only as appendages of these men.

Within the emerging political movements, women were beginning to get fed up of making the tea and taking a back seat as men dominated the discussions and decision-making. Birth control and abortion became key issues for women and, as in other periods, they were not taken seriously by the organisations. Women, again, felt the need to organise independently. They had been fighting against the exploitation of the working class and for the freedom of Third World peoples but their own oppression was never recognised. Now was the time to do something about it. The Women's Liberation Movement was born.

Anarchism and the new women's movement

The women's movement had an enormous impact on the political movement. It was the existence of this autonomous movement that forced all political organisations, including anarchist ones, to consider the oppression of women as a political issue. Political groups tried desperately to take advantage of the heightened political activity amongst women — with articles in their papers and public meetings devoted to rape, abortion etc. The So-

cialist Worker's Party even set up a women's magazine, *Women's Voice*, as a way to attract women into their organisation. Marxists also had to come up with a theory of women's oppression which did not alter their fundamental materialist theory. Women going out to work and being united with their male counterparts in the workplace was the answer. Once in the workplace women could be organised with men and together they would fight for a revolution which would automatically end the exploitation of the working class. Since women were members of the working class, their oppression would end as well.

Question of power

Socialist feminists challenged this simplistic, materialist view, questioning whether working class women's interests were totally the same as working class men and whether the ending of economic exploitation would end an oppression that was also ideological. Anarchist and libertarian organisations agreed with much of the socialist feminist critique.

In addition, anarchists, as mentioned above, did not feel threatened by autonomous movements and welcomed the attack the feminists made on the traditional way of organising in left groups — based on hierarchy and democratic centralism. Probably most important for anarchists was that the women's movement raised the issue of power, questioning the view that the problem of power would disappear with the end of economic exploitation, something that anarchists had discussed at great length. Therefore, while the marxists were busy trying to control the movement, incorporate it or denounce it, on the whole, the anarchists supported it.

This does not mean however that anarchist men were non-sexist or that anarchists, both men and women, didn't have their criticisms of the movement, but that they saw the movement as something positive.

Decline of the movement

It is important to recognise the contribution that the women's movement of the Sixties and Seventies made to political ideas and practice and to the thinking of ordinary, non-political women today.

The issue of women's freedom and equality is discussed and fought for in different ways on all levels of society. The availability of abortion and birth control and the acceptance of at least the idea that women go out to work and that housework and childcare should be shared mean that young women today do not face the same enormous obstacles faced by women 20/30 years ago.

Still, it is important to also examine the problems of the movement. As anarchist communists we are willing to



Women's liberation?

learn from others and recognise their contribution, but at the same time we have our own ideas and analysis to offer.

Ghetto

The movement was dominated by politically active, educated women. To put forward this as a problem, is not the same as saying that the movement was dominated by "middle class feminists" as many on the left would say in their attacks on the women's movement. Many of the activists were from the working class but had gone on to higher education. The class

composition of the women's movement was very similar to all political organisations and is therefore not a problem only for the women's movement. The movement was able to get ideas out to many working class women, often indirectly, but never really succeeded in involving these women directly in political activity on a permanent basis. Partly this was because the movement as a whole didn't have the will nor the strategy to get out of the politico ghetto but also because of the real material difficulties that working class women, who were more likely to be married and have children than those who had gone on to college, have in get-

ting out to meetings and becoming politically active.

The issues around which women organised, such as abortion, rape and domestic violence and equal pay are important. But once limited gains had been made, e.g. Abortion Act, Equal Pay Act, much of the energy went out of the movement. The movement as a whole lacked direction and broke up into different groups often doing work on a local level. The movement would only re-emerged as a whole when there was an attempt to limit abortion. There was no link made with the need for a general transformation of society.

Reformist tendencies

The domination of the movement by political-educated women meant that reforms could be made that would satisfy them, especially as they were getting older, looking for jobs and wanting a more comfortable lifestyle. This was of course also a tendency amongst male revolutionaries. Both women and men joined the Labour Party, shed their revolutionary past and managed to get good jobs on the GLC, local government and in industry and the concerns shifted to winning reforms within the system. This tendency had always been there within the movement but came to the forefront as the wider political movement went into decline.

Practice

The practice of the women's movement was also a problem and contributed to its decline. The attempt to be "non-hierarchical" may have avoided the authoritarianism of Leninist organisations but led instead to the "tyranny of structurelessness". With no organised structure the leadership of the movement was based on friendship groups and informal networks which made it difficult for new women to get involved and participate equally. The movement was not able to avoid hierarchies, they were just well-hidden.

There was a sharpening of political differences within the women's movement as there were less clear-cut issues to unite around. Those who were in Marxist political organisations came under attack with the weakening of the movement and had to choose sides: the Party (and by definition, the class) or the women's movement. The more reformist elements found careers for themselves within the Labour movement umbrella (e.g. Hilary Wainwright), arguing for people to put "pressure on the Labour Party" and to fight for "municipal socialism". Some women, bitter from the years of battle and the attacks of political men, decided to retreat into separatism. Others, continued to work on particular issues e.g. battered wives, abortion. All of these factors meant that it is no longer possible to talk about

a "women's movement". At the same time, and perhaps as a result of the decline of the women's movement, the issue of women's oppression has ceased to be at the top of the agenda of political organisations. It is as if the problem has been solved or is not serious enough to warrant much concern.

Anarchism and women's liberation today

The anarchist movement was also in decline during the break-up of the women's movement. They were therefore not able to draw women in to the movement by offering a generalised perspective that meant women did not have to choose between class and fighting their own oppression.

It wasn't until the early eighties that national Anarchist organisations began to re-emerge and so far there is no evidence that they are concerned about sexism. The attitude expressed is very similar to that of Marxist/Leninist organisations in the sense that fighting sexism is a diversion from the class struggle which goes on either in the workplace or the streets. Their analysis also echoes that of Marxist/Leninists in the assumption that women's oppression is essentially the result of an economic system and that the ideology of sexism will disappear once the bosses have gone. Women within the Anarchist organisations usually share this analysis and are concerned to distance themselves from the "middle class feminist" label which is thrown at anyone who even raises the issue of sexism. Fighting sexism lacks street cred and one can score more points by attacking feminists themselves. There is no serious attempt to highlight the real problems that women face. It is as if sexism can only happen to middle class women and is therefore not worth discussing. So why has women's oppression taken a back seat within a movement that in theory has so much to offer women?

Less important

We see a woman Prime Minister and women struggling to become corporation executives and the whole idea of women's liberation seem like a bad joke. With other more obvious issues like the Poll Tax and the Gulf War, strictly "women's issues" seem less important or perhaps less easy to identify.

Within political circles, women's oppression is less obvious than it was even a decade ago. In the anarchist/politico ghetto it is often difficult to see the real problems that many women face. This is partly because women in political organisations are usually young and do not have children. They have more freedom to participate as equals in the anarchist movement. The oppression of a married woman with a couple of kids and a job or the single

mother struggling to survive are a long way from the experience of many women in political organisations who may not even see themselves as oppressed. They'd rather just get on as a member of the group or organisation, fighting on a range of issues rather than worrying about sexism, especially as interest in sexism gets them the put down label of "middle class feminist".

Hidden

Sexism is an issue which is often hidden away within the family or as part of a subtle ideological oppression which cannot be fought in an obvious way. The fight is often against individual acts of sexism and cannot be organised around like the poll tax is. Before, there was the abortion issue but today there does not appear to be any national issue to get stuck into, especially in a period when all struggles are defensive. Many of the issues that are concrete, like nursery facilities, affect women with children and is therefore not an issue that concerns people in the anarchist movement as most of the women are childless and the men, if they have children, do not usually take prime responsibility for childcare.

Another difficulty is that fighting sexism is not as clear-cut as fighting a boss. It may involve attacking people who are also allies. Women often shy away from this, particularly in a period when there is no general movement to get support from.

Way forward

Whatever the reason for the lack of concern, it is vital that the situation changes. An anarchist communist society can only come about with the ending of all oppression. We cannot assume that sexism will wither away anymore than the state will. It must be smashed and this involves organisation. From the evidence of previous periods, fighting sexism will take a back seat until women organise themselves and force the issue to the foreground of political debate and activity. In other words, we need another women's movement. However, unlike the previous ones, the political content and practice of this movement must be fundamentally different. We need a movement of working class women (in the broadest sense of the term class) which seeks a revolutionary transformation of society. This does not mean that women will only be active in a women's movement alongside a broader political movement. We also need women fully integrated as equal participants into anarchist political organisations that are themselves fighting for women's liberation. We need both so that women's oppression will be fought effectively but not in isolation. The working class will then be truly united and capable of creating an anarchist communist society.

A CULTURE OF RESISTANCE

IN THE SECOND half of the 20th century revolutionaries, especially of the marxist and academic variety, have often sought to explain the absence of the revolutionary event in Western society by arguing that the individual has become so perfectly moulded to fit the needs of capital that he or she has become incapable of independent thought or action. Education, the nuclear family, sexual repression, advertising, popular music, town planning, ideology, etc, are used as means of social control to keep the individual pacified, distracted and obedient.

While there are elements of truth in this theory, they are true only up to a point. We are all shaped to some extent by the culture we live in, but we are not simply empty shells to be filled with whatever society may throw at us. Individuals are capable of critical thought in relation to their own experiences and conditions, and of acting in ways which are an expression of resistance to these conditions.

Resistance

For example, in recent years the police have become increasingly concerned that they are no longer seen as the "friendly bobby on the beat". As a result of public awareness and experience of deaths in police custody, fabricated evidence and brutality at demos, the police are now likely to be viewed at worst with suspicion and at best with hatred.

Another example. The campaign of non-payment against the poll tax was, and is, one of the largest acts of civil disobedience by the working class ever seen in Britain. Millions refused to pay a tax they saw to be unfair, that benefited the rich while making the poor worse off, despite the fact that non-payment was condemned by Labour and that the trade unions failed to support the movement.

These and other acts of resistance are carried out largely by elements within the working class who are neither politicised nor consciously revolutionary. Simultaneously there exists a small movement of class struggle anarchists consciously opposed to capitalism and the state and committed to its overthrow.

The link between these two groups are tenuous. If we are to create a working class movement capable of smashing the power of the state these links have to be strengthened. Without them working class resistance will be bought off with reformist solutions while an isolated anarchist movement will fall into stagnation and disillusionment. How do we build these links and what can we learn from each other?

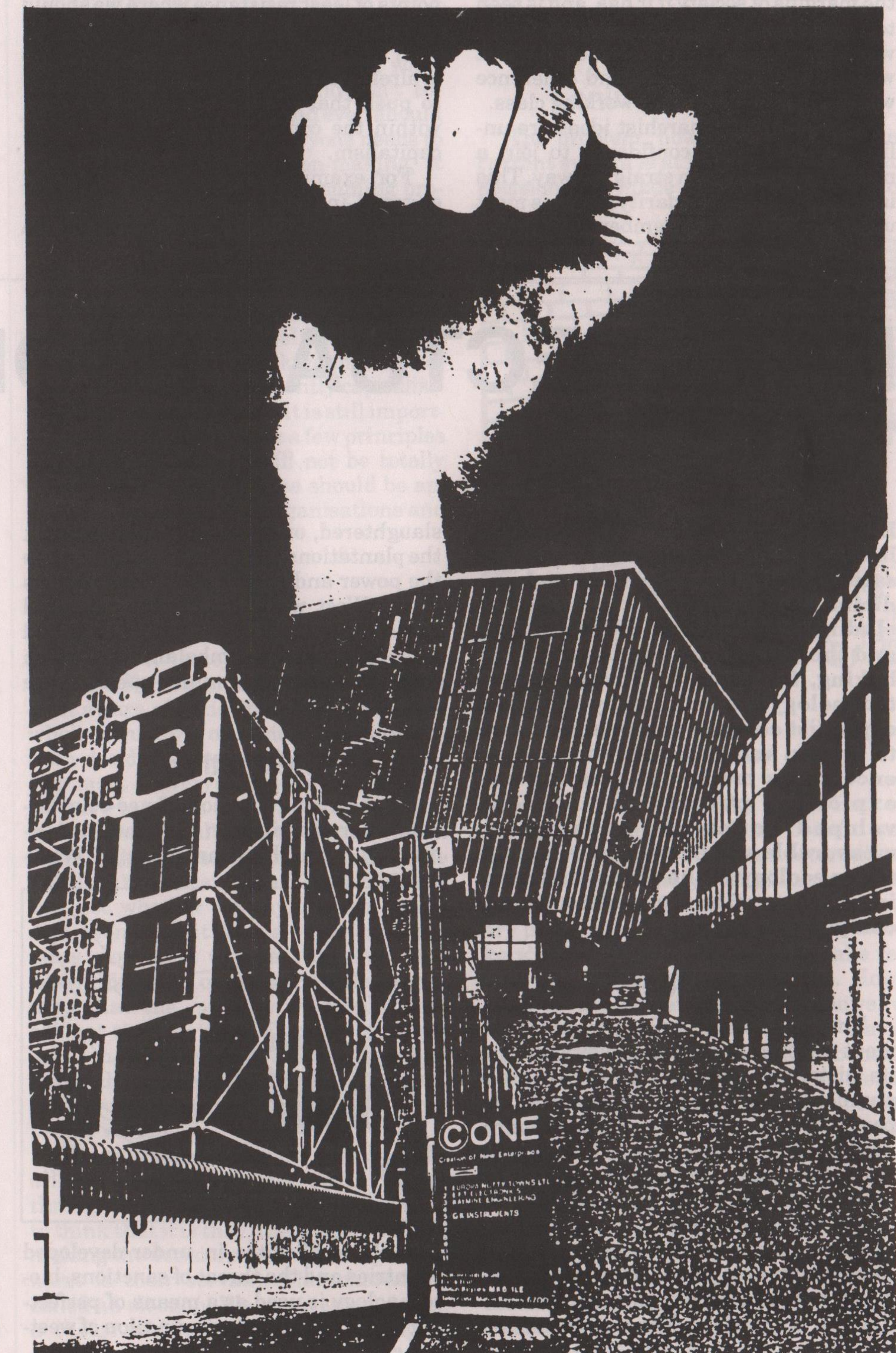
As anarchists, we can only learn if we look with open eyes and are then prepared

to critically analyse what we see. We should be prepared to point out that while there can be positive elements in, for example, rioting — the refusal of restrictive everyday patterns of behaviour, the challenge to consumerism in looting, confidence in confronting the police — there can exist negative aspects such as division of the community into rioting youth and an older, non-participating, generation often disapproving of their actions.

Our role should not be that of uncritical cheerleaders of any working class act with some oppositional aspect. We want to

build confidence in the self activity of the working class but this doesn't mean we should suppress our views and criticisms.

Those within the anarchist movement who think this approach patronising or vanguardist are arguing for pure spontaneity, i.e. the working class are capable of carrying out the revolution without the need of revolutionaries and their ideas. If this is the case why bother with an anarchist movement at all? If this is the case then why is resistance bought off with reformist solutions instead of developing along revolutionary lines?



Local solidarity groups have formed around the country attempting to build on the success of local anti-poll tax groups in involving larger sections of the community in class struggle activity. The advantages of these groups is in their ability to involve people with varying degrees of political awareness, experience and commitment. Their disadvantages are that they are, by their nature, limited to a local perspective, and that the synthesis approach can make it difficult to establish a unified approach towards strategy and goals.

This is why we need national and international organisations uniting groups and individuals, on a federative basis, arguing for anarchist communism. Class struggle anarchism can only move beyond the margins of society if it has, and is seen to have, clear aims and principles around which it can operate in a unified, coherent way. Without this clarity and coherence we have little to offer the working class.

Newcomers to anarchist ideas are unlikely to have the confidence to join a national organisation straight away. This is where the local/solidarity group is most useful. It can involve members of national

class struggle anarchist organisations as well as those new to anarchist ideas. This means members of national organisations are not limited to contact only with other members but are able to share their ideas and encourage and develop the activity of non-members. In this way we can begin to cross the divide between resistant elements within the class and conscious revolutionaries. From the most committed and experienced revolutionary to the least experienced individual willing to help with leafletting, organic links are made.

Propaganda

We must be aware of the issues around which elements of resistance are focused. These are the system's weak points, the points of least resistance where we should push hardest. Our propaganda must deal with areas of struggle in which the class is already involved at some level, and aim to push that struggle further placing it within the concept of a total critique of capitalism.

For example, capitalism is currently engaged in the recuperation of environmental concern into "doing your bit for the

environment" consumerism. This is a response to the threat of an ecologically aware population arriving at the conclusion that the interests of capitalism are fundamentally at odds with those of life on this planet. We should take advantage of current environmental concerns and argue that capitalism must be transcended, and that anarchism, based on production for need not profit, decentralisation and a harmonious, not antagonistic, relationship to nature, is a viable alternative.

Using these approaches we can hope to build a culture of resistance which challenges the idea of society as merely a mass of atomised individuals. To make such a culture a living and dynamic movement our realm of propaganda will need to be broadened to make use of radio and television broadcasting, films, music, cafes, community centres etc, allowing anarchism to reach out of the ghetto to the working class.

In this way anarchism can become part of a living experience, creating the shared identity, confidence and solidarity within the class that we need to bring down the old world and build the new.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY IS THEFT

BIOTECHNOLOGY IS THE manipulation of living matter by humans to satisfy their needs for food and medicine. It is an ancient practice including crop rotation, crossbreeding and the use of yeasts in brewing and baking, for example. However, biotechnology in a technically advanced capitalist country is no longer a tool to sustain and enhance human existence, but a method of creating and exploiting poverty in under-developed countries, causing immeasurable and irreversible damage to the ecology of the planet and making vast profits for multi-national companies.

Plunder

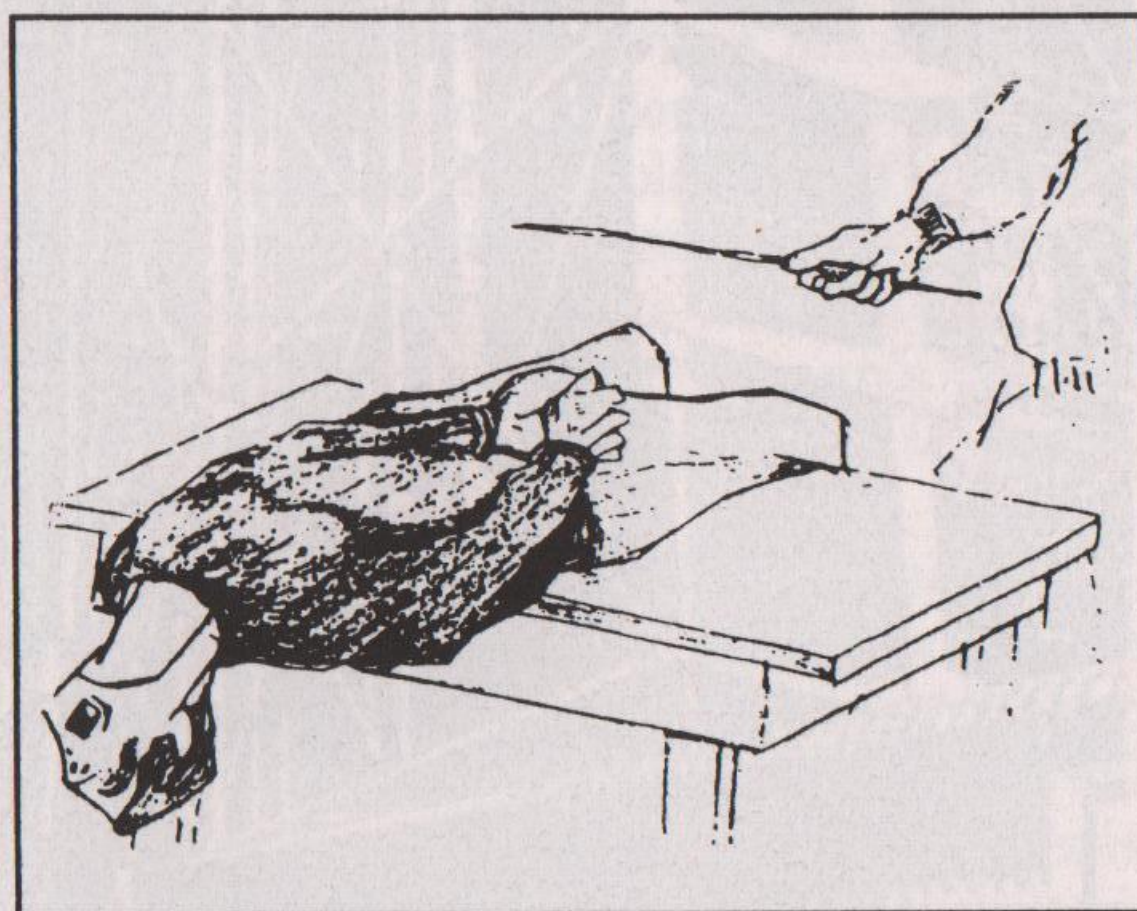
The use of biotechnology as an instrument of domination and exploitation has its historical roots in the West's great plunder of the rest of the world in the period of colonialism. The colonialists regarded all in their path — land, plants, animals and humans — as their property: commodities and tools for the accumulation of wealth and power.

Plant species, such as tea and cotton, were sought out, transported around the world and grown as vast monocultures on plantations. The native cultures were decimated — cleared from the land,

slaughtered, or traded as slaves to work the plantations. All this served to increase the power and wealth of the rich nations of the West while forcing the colonised world into a position of dependence and causing ecological imbalance in which numerous plant and animal species were lost forever.

Genetics

In the current period of neo-colonialism, where domination is maintained indirectly with the connivance of West-



friendly local elites in under-developed countries and the threat of sanctions, biotechnology is used as a means of perfecting and extending the domination of western capitalism.

The new science of genetics, established at the start of this century, enabled the huge multi-national companies that control the cash-crop monocultures of the Third World, to scientifically manipulate species. The consequences of this were that these corporate giants genetically engineered "super breeds" to be grown in vast monocultures, further endangering the diversity of ancient natural varieties and species. Only a few centuries ago 5,000 plants were used as food, today agriculture uses 150. These monocultures, working against the basic ecological principle of diversity, are prone to pests and diseases. Farmers then have to treat these crops with chemical pesticides, herbicides and fertilisers, purchased from, and manufactured by, the same companies — ICI, Ciba-Giegy, etc — responsible for the vulnerable crops, causing further poverty, dependence and damage to the environment.

Life patenting

In 1980 the US Supreme Court ruled that genetically engineered organisms could be patented, and in 1987 the US Patent Officer ruled that all forms of life — excluding humans — were patentable. These rulings spurred the multi-national companies on to even greater experimentation with the genetic engineering of

plants and animals and provided opportunities for even greater profit making.

The engineering of plants and animals is now a rapidly growing branch of science. Species are designed for maximum efficiency and profitability, producing models like "animals without legs" or "chickens without feathers". A university scientist is quoted in the *New Scientist* as saying "I believe it's completely feasible to specifically design an animal for a hamburger".

The farming of wild species taken from Third World countries contributes billions of dollars annually to the US economy for which it gives nothing in return. Yet once the stolen raw materials have been manipulated in the laboratories of the West, they can be patented as "intellectual property", for which royalties must be paid from countries forced to base their economies on the production of cash crops for corporate capitalism.

Already, much modern agriculture involves farming seedless varieties. This means that crops must be bought anew each year instead of being simply replanted. However, powerful lobbies, such as the Intellectual Property Coalition, want even seeded varieties under patent to be "protected" from resowing, and farmers forced to pay royalties on each generation of crops.

The IPC feels that existing patenting laws are too limited and should be extended with royalties increased. They want to see Third World countries prevented from adapting imported "properties" (although of course it's OK for them to manipulate the raw materials they stole before selling them back). The IPC want these measures backed and enforced by GATT. If that fails they propose the use of trade threats and sanctions.

A common treasury

Biotechnology under capitalism takes evolution into its own hands using the logic of profitability as its guide. It makes life equivalent to property, threatening the stability, diversity and spontaneity of the ecology of our planet that has evolved over millions of years. It erodes the rich variety of species available to us and our freedom to decide how we interact with them. It forces millions into dependence, poverty and starvation through the use of their land for cash crops for export, land that they could use to feed themselves.

We anarchist communists see through the Green veneer, we see that capitalism is the enemy of our environment, our autonomy, our freedom. We work for its downfall.

You poor take courage
You rich take care
This land was made a common treasury
For everyone to share

The World Turned Upside Down
Leon Rosselson

DECISION-MAKING

ONE OF THE most difficult issues that will have to be dealt with in a future society is how decisions will be made. It is not something to be dismissed lightly with, "We'll sort it out when the time comes" or swept under the carpet with a glib, "the workers themselves will make the decisions". In fact, we must begin to confront the issue head on because "after the revolution" could be too late and vague platitudes give us no help at all.

And there will be decisions that need to be made: What should we produce, what kind of houses should be built, how can we preserve the environment, what should happen to people who can't co-operate with other people and even should we produce meat. Since everyone needs to be involved in this decision-making, it could become a very time-consuming process. What time we save by not having to work so much may be taken up with endless rounds of meetings. It's almost enough to make you prefer capitalism!

We must believe that the process of revolution itself will help create new structures of decision-making that are beyond the grasp of our currently capitalist-infected minds. However, it is still important to have thought about a few principles and ideas so that we will not be totally unprepared. Some of these should be applied in any case in our organisations and struggles at the moment.

Charade

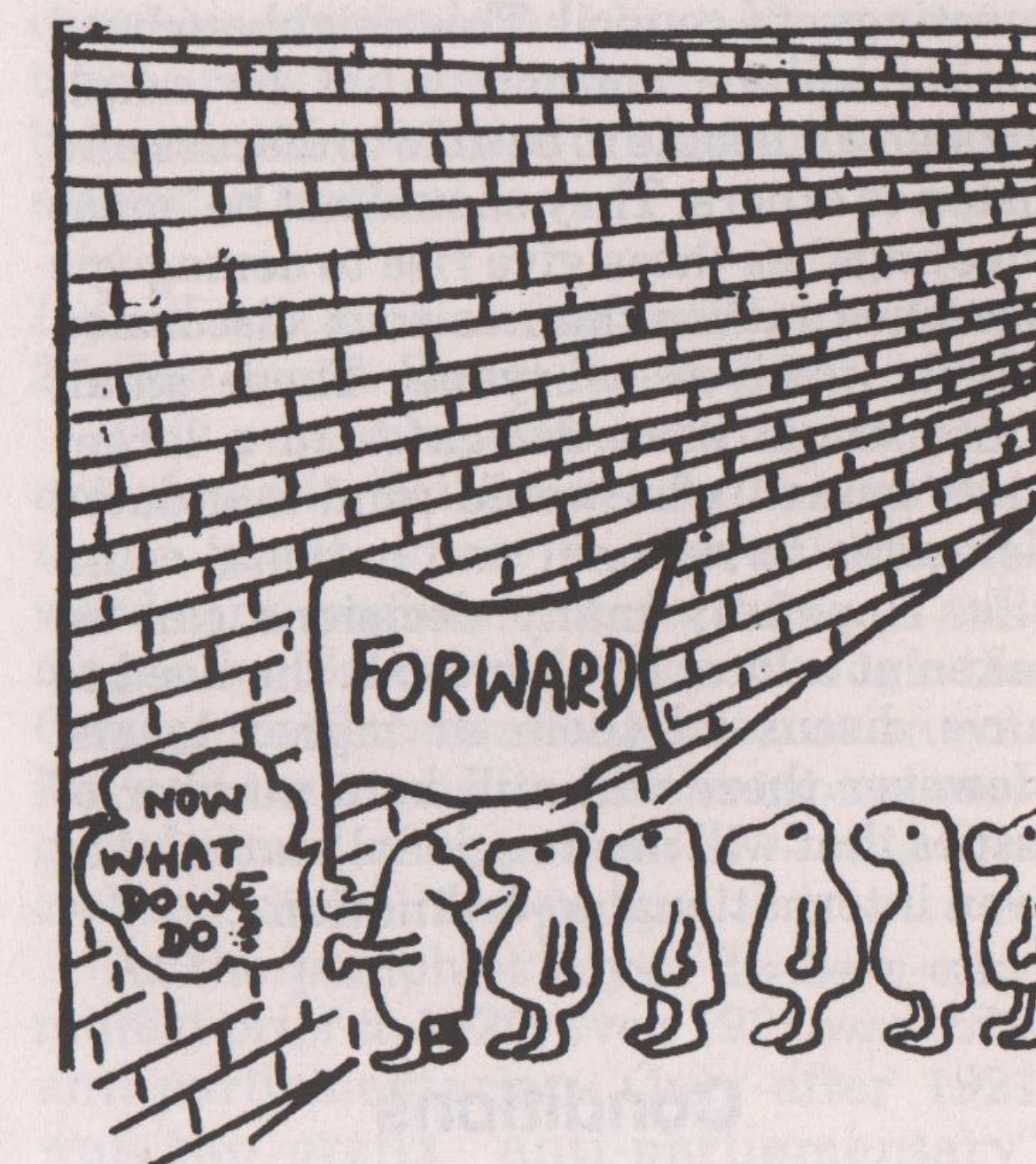
To begin, it is easier to discuss what we don't want ie the system we have at the moment. For the most part, people aren't even aware of decisions being made. The whole structure of society has already been decided. The fact that a few people own most of everything and the fact that we have to go out to work for them is not an issue we are allowed to discuss. When an issue does appear before us, such as the Poll Tax, the decision is still which kind of tax, not whether we pay any tax at all. And even then it took a very vocal and mass movement to defeat the Poll Tax, despite it being obvious from the beginning that the majority of people were against the tax. A small group of people make the decisions and only rarely, when forced through mass action, make a decision which is vaguely in line with what people want.

The ruling class does not overtly make all the decisions on its own. It goes through a massive charade to get people to think that it is they, the people, who are making the decisions and that the government is their servant. This charade is called an election. We are presented with a choice which is similar to having to choose between ham and beef when you

are a vegetarian. You've got to decide which you hate least — and this process is called democracy. Even if you do find someone to vote for who you think you agree with, they either have no chance of winning because the ruling class-controlled media machine is against them or if they do win, the system within which they operate makes it impossible for them to make any important changes. Therefore, democracy is nothing but a convenient vehicle for the ruling class to carry on making the decisions whilst making the working class think that they are. A revolution would get rid of such a system.

Leninist alternative

The problem, however, remains. The current system is at least efficient in that decisions get made without us having to



Tear it down

give up our time to make them. But, of course, the decisions don't benefit us. Marxist/Leninists have an alternative which is theoretically both efficient and of benefit to the working class. A revolutionary party takes power and sets up a "workers' state". This state can then take responsibility for making decisions. However, as the Soviet experience shows, a revolutionary party and a "workers' state" will seldom make decisions that benefit the workers. The state takes on an identity of its own and decides what is in the interests of the people, whether the people like it or not. Ask the Kronstadt sailors, shot for demanding that the working class have more say in the running of society.

Thus, the workers' state solution must also be rejected. We turn now to the anarchist solution: working people themselves will directly make the decisions. There will be no state, workers' or otherwise, which will make decisions in the



name of the working class. Instead, people will participate in the decision-making process, without leaders or experts dominating. This sounds fine, but what does it actually mean in practice? How will it work, especially in what we hope will be a world-wide revolution?

We have now come full circle, back to the original problem that confronted us. Anarchist communism has a number of principles and practical ideas to offer.

Councils

Everyone should belong to and attend meetings of a council. This neighbourhood or workplace council must be small enough for people to be able to discuss and listen to others. They should not be "mass meetings" as these give rise to demagogic speeches rather than serious discussion which involves everyone. These small units would elect delegates to a larger local council who would send mandated delegates to regional and national councils. Hopefully many decisions can be taken at a local level without the need to have discussed them at higher levels. However there will still be a number of issues that will need regional, national or even international co-ordination.

Conditions

For this federated system to work, there are a number of conditions that have to be met. Firstly, the number of decisions that have to be made by the new society must be reduced. Most decisions should be kept entirely at a local level. At the moment, society seems incredibly complex and it's difficult to imagine how we could run a society without having to make an endless number of decisions. Many decisions that arise under capitalism are made by a bureaucracy that is designed to regulate the lives of the working class eg. the police, the courts, tax office, social security, with the top making decisions about those on the bottom. All these type of decisions would become unnecessary as there would be less need for regulation. People would be free to live their own lives in voluntary co-operation with others. Another type of decision made under capitalism results from the limitation of resources. Because so much wealth is in the hands of a few and the earth's resources are wasted in militarism, bureaucracy and advertising-fed con-

sumerism, there is only a limited amount left over, necessitating choices to be made about what to do with it. A revolution would free vast amounts of resources so that we would have to make less decisions about what we want to produce and consume. If people want to build one kind of house and others want to build another, we can do both; we don't have to spend time discussing which we prefer. The main concern will be the environmental impact of our decisions.

A BIRD THAT LAYS SUCH ROTTEN EGGS IS LONG OVERDUE FOR EXTINCTION



No leaders

One of the main problems of Leninist ideology and practice is their maintenance of a permanent leadership. Both in the Soviet Union and in Leninist Parties elsewhere, a leadership remains in place for an extended period of time. Similarly, in bourgeois democracies, a government is elected and remains in power for several years. This type of system ensures the continuation of an elite, with people cut off from decision-making. In an anarchist communist society, there should be no such leadership. Within the councils, at all levels, delegates are directly controlled by the people who have chosen them. Delegates must vote as they are mandated and are accountable in all respects. Delegates must be rotated so that a new leadership cannot develop. These delegates can also be recalled if they do not express the wish of the people.

Equality

There must be three types of equality if the councils are going to operate according to anarchist communist principles: equality of income, education and information. Everyone must have equal access to the resources and products of society so

that no one can use economic power, as the ruling class does today, to influence decisions. Everyone must be educated to the point where they are politically aware and feel confident about expressing their views. People must have the necessary information on which to base their decisions. If some people manage to monopolise information than they may be able to manipulate decisions to benefit themselves.

No matter how perfect the decision-making structure, if people do not have the ability and willingness to participate fully and on an equal basis then the structures mean nothing and a new elite could develop.

Problems

This has been a mere outline of the possibilities for decision-making in an anarchist society. Much more consideration needs to be given to the issues raised both for the future society and for our current struggles and organisation. There are several problem areas that need to be looked into more fully.

Having equal access to information is necessary for equal participation in decision-making. However, it is unclear who will collect together information and how we will decide what information needs to be distributed. At the moment it is the mass media who decide what is newsworthy and apart from our own experience and contacts this is the only way to find out what's going on in the world. Needless to say, in a capitalist society we cannot rely on the press to tell us the truth nor inform us of what we would like to know about. Therefore, for the future society we need to consider how people can get the information they need and want without being bombarded with unwanted trivia.

Minorities

Though we assume that people will be different than they are now and that there will be a willingness to co-operate and work together, there may still be times when it's impossible to make a decision that's agreeable to everyone. It will then be necessary to vote, leaving a dissatisfied minority. The question of how to deal with this minority is a difficult one. Will they be forced to comply with the majority decision? Will they be able to opt out and go their own way? For example, what if the majority decide to ban the eating of meat or the taking of drugs? Would the minority be allowed to go off and raise their own cows or grow their own marijuana?

An anarchist communist society will mean the end of power based on money, race and sex. Ending these types of power will involve a very hard struggle. However, there may remain two more intangible types of power that may be even more difficult to get rid of: expert power and charismatic power.

Anarchist communism does not mean a return to a primitive society. Though simplified, society will still be highly complex and not everyone will be able to understand every aspect of it. Therefore, there will be a need for some specialisation; some people will know more than others about certain things e.g. a technology, a craft, a language or a musical instrument. This knowledge will in some ways give people power over each other. We must ensure that this does not lead to the development of an elite. People's expertise must be freely available to all and there should be a willingness to share knowledge and skills and to help people. How we ensure that this is the case and that certain experts don't become more important and thus more powerful than others is an issue that needs to be addressed.

The other type of power, charismatic power, has an even greater mystique about it. It is not necessarily used deliberately by the holder. The problem is that some people are more willing to listen to and follow certain individuals rather than respecting everyone equally. To keep this from happening, mass meetings and assemblies should be avoided as these are fertile ground for demagogues and their sheep. Instead, decision-making units should be kept as small as practically possible so that they are "user-friendly". In addition, everyone should be encouraged to develop the skills of speaking in a meeting and arguing their point of view. This training should begin now, not wait until charismatic individuals start dominating.

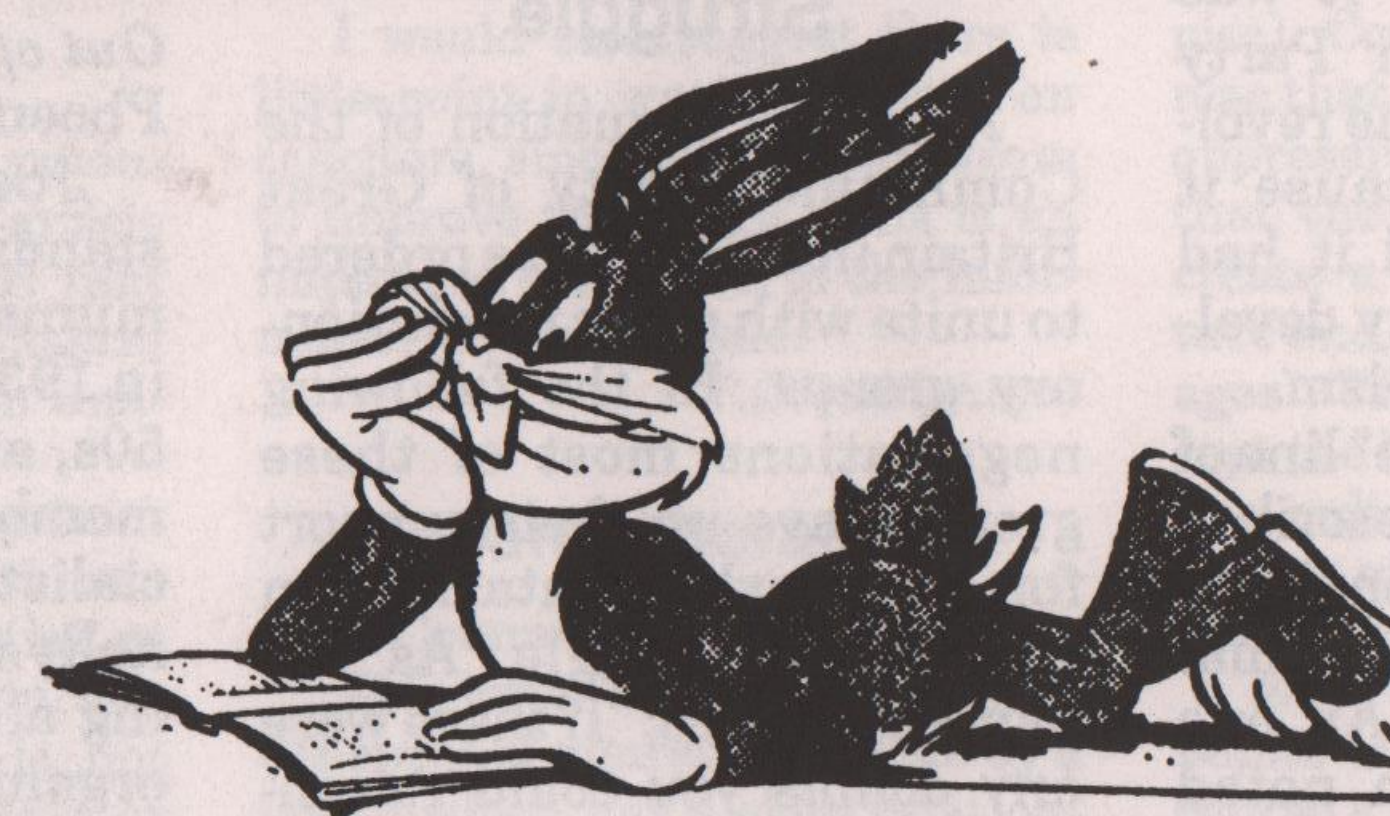
Councils

Finally, the issue of the workplace/locality divide must be considered. In this society, many people's lives are distinctly divided between work and home/leisure time. Therefore, when we talk of having councils, it's difficult to say whether they should be workplace or neighbourhood based. In a future society it's difficult to say which would be more convenient and effective. Clearly, the workplace for decisions pertaining to production, but people are not just workers. We will have to make decisions about the areas in which we live as well as wider social and political issues.

This article has hopefully raised a number of fundamental issues that need to be taken seriously by the anarchist movement. It is very easy to see what is wrong with the current system. Most working class people would agree with our criticisms of capitalism. A much more difficult task is to convince the working class that a better society is a real, workable possibility — not just a figment of our imagination which we "believe in" similarly to religious people who have "faith" in God.

The Editors of *Organise!* welcome contributions to this discussion of the future society. The next issue will look further at the Economics of Anarchist Communism.

REVIEWS



The prohibition of hemp

Following from the article on drugs in issue no.25 of *Organise!*, I would like to bring to readers attention the book *The Emperor's New Clothes*, by H.E.M.P. (or Help End Marijuana Prohibition.) As far as I know this American book isn't available in this country, but can easily be bought in Amsterdam.

The basic thesis of this book is that the plant hemp was made prohibitively expensive by state regulation in the USA in 1937, not for the reasons given at the time, ie that hemp is the cannabis plant and they wanted to stop drugs, but for the commercial reasoning of certain big capitalists. Essentially media sensationalism against the drug cannabis was used as an extremely effective cover to ban a plant that was threatening established capitalist interests.

The plant hemp has always been used for three main reasons. In order of importance, as a fibre, as a food and as a drug. The hemp fibre was historically used to make rope and sails during the sailing ship era. It became so strategically important that the French invasion of Russia in the early 19th century was essentially designed to stop Russian hemp from being sold to the British. The British as a maritime power were reliant on hemp ropes and sails to keep their fleet afloat.

Hemp though had a greater potential in the 20th century. It was found that paper could be produced more easily from hemp than from timber. Four times less chemical was needed in the production process. Combined with this discovery was the increasing level of agricultural technology which would have made hemp a commercially viable crop in the USA.

This threatened the interests of the US timber and paper barons, who already had much capital invested in the production of paper from timber. They joined forces with the US chemical giant Du Pont which also stood to lose from any change. A media hate campaign was begun by the biggest of the US paper barons W R Hearst against the drug marijuana. On the back of this media scare Du Pont controlled senators and congress men pushed through a sudden law putting a prohibitively high tax on hemp.

The base of the media hysteria was

extremely simple, racism. The line taken was thus: by always referring to the drug cannabis it was possible to associate it as a new foreign drug and to dissociate it with hemp. The users of marijuana were always black men and always dangerous. The drug was supposed to cause "reefer madness" in which crazed black men would rape white women. This story was simple and stupid but it worked and to this day most people don't know hemp and cannabis are the same plant. It is interesting to note the similarity in media fiction between this and the "mugging" scare in seventies Britain.

Left Wing Communism in Britain 1917-21. Bob Jones. Pirate Press. 1.50

This pamphlet deals with an important phase in British revolutionary politics, a phase where a *general* move towards anti-parliamentarianism was sabotaged by Bolshevik policy through the Communist International that it controlled, and the imposition of the typical vanguard model of organisation — the centralised, disciplined party.

As the pamphlet says: "To be a communist prior to 1920, even 1921 was to be anti-parliamentarian. Only after 1921 was the prefix "anti-parliamentary" needed". This was true of both anarchists and marxists, apart from sections of the British Socialist Party and the Independent Labour Party. Ideas of direct action and anti-parliamentary agitation, the importance of class struggle, and of workers' committees and councils seizing the means of production and distribution were shared by both anarchists and marxists alike. This is not to ignore the many differences that existed between them.

Lenin

All this was to change with the imposition of Lenin's line, which insisted that "British communists should participate in parliamentary action". As his acolyte Page Arnot was to argue at the Communist Unity Convention in 1920 "we were all sick of the Labour Party, but that didn't mean that revolutionaries should leave the Labour Party." This point of view was argued by the British Socialist Party, which was affiliated to the Labour Party and continued to argue for affiliation.

But there were growing numbers of BSP members arguing against this line, and in revolutionary circles it was seen that the Labour Party could play no part in the revolutionary process because it was not socialist and it had positively hindered any development towards socialism.

This "common sense" line of argument was now described as "naive" or "emotional" by supporters of the Communist International line. As one anti-parliamentarian noted ironically: "I do like this word naive. It clinches the argument. All logic falls before it. Anti-parliamentarians are so 'naive' in the face of... these revolutionary parliamentarians".

Prior to the imposition of the Leninist line there had been increased questioning of Parliament. Members of the Socialist Labour Party started to question its attitude to parliament, some, leaving to join the anarchists.

Unite

A new non-sectarian atmosphere emerged to the point where there were attempts to unite dissident SLP branches with London anarchists around the *Spur* and *Freedom* papers in 1919. This resulted in the Communist League which was however to disappear without trace towards the end of the year. The formation of the League did not pass without debate between a member of the Stockport Workers' Anarchist Group and a member of the Stepney branch of the Communist League over communist dictatorship and economic determinism. At a Conference of London Anarchists it was argued by some that the "anti-parliamentary attitude of many Socialists and Communists was greatly due to our propaganda in the past, and good results would undoubtedly follow if we worked with them. Steps therefore are to be taken towards holding a conference with the Communist League to consider a joint plan of campaign". This conference took place and included dispute over the nature of any dictatorship of the proletariat. It was, however "very friendly in tone, the desire on both sides being to find points of agree-

ment rather than points of controversy".

Struggle

After the formation of the Communist Party of Great Britain in 1920, it was ordered to unite with other revolutionary groups. In the following negotiations most of these groups gave up their support for anti-parliamentarianism without a struggle. As the pamphlet notes: "If there were any doubts you could rationalise these away by fondly imagining you could work for a change in policy from inside the CPGB and/or Comintern... In most cases intelligent



people simply rejected their own revolutionary traditions and experience for the sake of a collective delusion-loyalty to the Party".

So confirmed anti-parliamentarians like Whitehead were to vote overwhelmingly in favour of parliamentary action at the Cardiff Conference of the Communist Party. He justified this by saying that theoretical differences were insignificant compared to "loyalty to the world revolution". Others like the anarchist Henry Sara were to take this path. Within a few years many had left the Party, some, like Sara, ending up as founders of British Trotskyism, others like Whitehead, joining Labour and becoming virulently anti-Communist Party.

Lack

As Jones notes, one of the reasons all this took place was the lack of any critical information on Lenin and the Russian Revolution, and the peddling of "unity at all costs".

The potential for a united anti-parliamentarian communist movement had been dealt a hammer-blow by Lenin and the Comintern. Out of the wreckage emerged the tiny Anti-Parliamentary Communist Federation in 1921

which was to "keep alive the hopes of libertarian communism for the next thirty years".

Out of the Ghetto. Joe Jacobs. Phoenix Press. £9

Joe Jacobs was along standing member of the Communist Party, being expelled in 1938, again rejoining in the 50s, and ending his days as a member of the libertarian socialist group Solidarity and finally as a spontaneous rejecting all forms of revolutionary organisation.

What is important about this book is its accounts of how fascism was countered in the East End of London. Unfortunately, throughout the book

there is very little analysis or questioning of how the Communist Party behaved. For instance Jacobs' reaction to the Moscow show trials was one of "it took some swallowing but somehow I was able to swallow along with many others". Even when he was expelled from the CP he continued to speak favourably about it and sell their paper. Only in later years did he move away from Stalinism. However, none of this is made very clear in the pages of this book, which is really a verbatim recollection of his years as a young Communist in the East End.

Mosley

He was one of those in the Party who believed that the Fascists had to be countered physically on the streets, and the most important pages deal with their disagreements with the District Party Committee about this matter. When Mosley's Blackshirts prepared to march through the Jewish areas of East London in 1936, the CP had called a demo in Trafalgar Square in solidarity with the Spanish Republic. Instead of cancelling it, they proposed to continue, and up to the last moment dragged their heels on physical opposition to the fascists. Even after the

Battle of Cable Street, when 250,000 people mobilised against Mosley, they showed how much they were tied to the Labour Party by amongst other things calling for the "general reviving of the East London Labour Party organisations from their present complacency and stagnation..". When Jacobs continued to oppose this line he was pushed out of the Party.

Flag

In his book *Our Flag Stays Red*, Phil Piratin, a leading East London Communist, talks about how the fight against fascism was successfully combated through the organisation of rent strikes which broke Mosley's influence amongst sections of the poor who had been open to fascist ideas. The sad truth is that these two lines, physical confrontation with the fascists, and the development of working class militancy were artificially polarised. But the rigid structure of the Communist Party and the policies of Stalin at that time for a front with social-democratic organisations, ensured that there was no synthesis of the two positions, which were both correct but incomplete without each other.

Jacobs did fight for mobilisation against the fascists, but thought that he could remain a loyal Party member, and could not conceive of life outside of the Party. Apart from the useful sections in his book on the problems of fighting fascism, the tragedy of how many sincere working class militants were used and how seriously the cause was sabotaged by the Party is revealed here.

Anarchist Year Book 1992. £2, available from AK Press, 3 Balmoral Place, Stirling FK8 3rd Scotland.

Contains some useful lists of organisations, magazines and publishers. Particularly interesting are two articles from the Economic League (bosses' spy organisation) on British anarchism. These articles are inaccurate but at the same time amusing and interesting. They see the movement as "vibrant" and obviously have fears that it can grow and gain influence. Let's prove them right.

We've been flooded with letters so cannot include everyone. We promise to put them in next issue. Keep on writing!

Mutual aid

Dear *Organise!*

Crucial gaps and simplistic links spoiled "Mutual Aid & Evolution" (*Organise!* 25 p9). It's important not to confuse individual co-operation with social solidarity. Biological evolution rarely works on populations or societies (as Kropotkin wrongly believed) but via blood and kinship lines. So, Kropotkin's version of mutual aid as biologically evolved is basically romantic naturalism, however well-intentioned. Human biology clearly gives a potential for mutual aid, and a potential for domination. Similarly, the prisoner's dilemma game tells us little about the biological basis of co-operation as such, unless human evolution operates at the level of conscious rational choice and decision-making (it doesn't).

A less romantic view is that in early human groups evolution through kin-selection built solidaristic links through enhanced and finely-textured emotional bonds. This was made possible by the delayed physical development of human infants, which allowed the human brain much more time to grow in complexity (believe it or not humans can be described as physically retarded chimpanzees — with whom we share over 99% of our genetics). So cognitive and emotional complexity will have increased hugely at the same stage of human evolution. The resulting flexibility enabled our feeling of empathy and co-operation to be progressively distanced from just close kin, potentially to apply to any humans.

This kind of perspective has the advantage of allowing human history to not be seen as determined by our biology, whilst indicating how the basis for our human potential did evolve. It fits our intuitive knowledge that characteristics such as mutual aid and solidarity are matters of our guts at least as much as our minds. It also hints at a more satisfactory materialism than the Marxists have been able to come up with — one which can take account of our biological and passionate existence as well as parts of us which merely produce, use and exchange resources, objects and money. Such a materialism can't be achieved using a mixture of nineteenth century idealism and naturalism, even though the work of previous generations of anarchists can show us where to look.

TJ, Newcastle upon Tyne

Author's reply: I agree that human biology gives a potential

for mutual aid as well as a potential for domination. In the article I intended to demonstrate that mutual aid does have a biological basis as many people seem unaware of this.

The best solution to the prisoners dilemma "Tit for Tat" was found by a process of evolution as it was able to out compete any alternative strategy. It is not therefore based on animals or people somehow evolving in a fully conscious way. It was simply the most effective strategy so evolution would inevitably favour this strategy being adopted.

I deliberately excluded any mention of kin selection from the article as I was looking at co-operation between unrelated individuals. Kin selection is an entirely different matter as co-operating with people you are related to is obviously beneficial as far as evolution is concerned. I concentrated on co-operation between unrelated individuals as the mechanism by which this naturally occurs is much less obvious than for kin selection.

In writing the article I did not use any of Kropotkin's "nineteenth century idealism and naturalism". I used late 20th century selfish gene theory. Kropotkin was mentioned in the introduction because as you say "the work of previous generations of anarchists can show us where to look".

I may have over simplified in trying to make what I thought was a difficult concept easy to understand and, in trying to show that nature is not entirely based on domination, gone too far in over emphasising the co-operative aspects of nature.

As to links between human evolution and social solidarity these are of course tenuous and difficult to prove, whether based on co-operation between unrelated individuals or kin selection.

Poll tax

Comrades,

Having read the piece about the poll tax I feel I must reply. It reads like a leaflet that Militant might have produced as it ignores the advice coming from many independent groups which is not to turn up for committals. Any warrant they issue is initially a civil matter and they have to actually serve it on you. There are hundreds of warrants out in Notts and only one person has been picked up by the police. When you actually turn up you can still make offers etc.

Importantly it sabotages them further, increases confidence and

defiance. The police are not especially interested in chasing around trying to serve warrants and arrest people.

I would also suggest there is little point in wasting money on solicitors, since they seldom seem to improve the result. This is an important correction to the information in your article.

T.(Nottingham)

National liberation?

Dear Comrades,

This letter has been written in the spirit of comradely debate by a group which has a close relationship with the ACF, particularly in Manchester where we have been engaged in joint revolutionary activity for some time.

Indeed, for the last few years we have considered the ACF's politics, more than almost any other group around, to be in close accord with our own.

However, from time to time some of the old leftist crap that we'd hoped the ACF had left behind raises its head in the odd article in *Organise!* This letter is a criticism of two such examples in *Organise!* 25. We hope you will print it in *Organise!* so that the maximum number of people can be involved in the discussion.

The two articles are the one on the Philippines and the one on 1492.

The Philippines article is a sympathetic interview with a member of what is clearly a leftist (i.e. bourgeois) organisation — the Cordillera People's Alliance. To focus on only the most glaring points, the CPA is (as the article says) a member of a "coalition of Nationalist and Democratic organisations" and is involved in opposing "foreign control". The ACF's Aims and Principles quite rightly oppose the ideology of national liberation (point no. 4) but there's little point in stating this on the inside back page if it's contradicted by what's printed on the other pages. (This same point no.4 also contains this phrase about opposing "political and economic colonialism" which, on the face of it, appears to directly contradict the opposition to national liberation earlier in the same paragraph — perhaps in your reply you could explain exactly what you mean what you mean by this).

The Philippines article also appeared to give support to the New People's Army, which is the military wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines! The footnote at the end of the article about how the ACF opposes all governments hardly makes up for all this.

The 1492 article also adopts a stance which is soft on the "national liberation" approach. It seems to assume that all evil stemmed from the Spaniards and that the indigenous cultures were all wonderful. In fact, many of the

political units destroyed by the Spanish conquerors were, if anything, even worse than what replaced them (e.g. the Aztec Empire). Communists should recognise that all cultures are based on oppressive social relations and that the revolution will need to create a new, revolutionary culture and sweep away the "muck of ages". This article appears to accept the legitimacy of the indigenous cultures and, among other things, of the indigenous religions and of the Inca royal family!

Expressing different viewpoints in one's publications is of course a good thing, but there are limits! — articles such as this would never in a million years appear in *Subversion*.

We hope the letter provokes some discussion on what is an important issue. Such discussion is an absolutely essential part of the process of development of all of us as a revolutionary movement.

Yours in Comradeship,
SUBVERSION,
Dept 10, 1 Newton St.,
Manchester, M1 1HW

Author of Philippines article's reply: Yes, there is validity in your criticism. The Cordillera People's Alliance is made up of grassroots worker and community groups and churches etc — a "broad front". Its ideology is leftist: national liberation, etc. We should have made the interview more challenging and given more emphasis and length to the *Organise!* comment.

However, opposing "political and economic colonialism" can only be done through the class struggle; it is statism and national liberation that says language and culture are synonymous with religion and the state. It is vital that revolutionaries find practical ways of supporting grassroots struggles by workers, peasants and indigenous people. Leninism and Maoism are still strong in Africa and Asia as alternatives to Western Capitalism.

It is important to critically support Native Peoples' struggles for a number of reasons: opposition to genocide (and we have much to learn from their ecological and communitarian aspects), and as the best way of preserving rain forest and "wilderness" areas. A global class analysis and practise is needed which links class struggle, ecological action and Native Peoples' struggles. The Anti Nuclear Movement will illustrate this. Much Uranium mining and nuclear waste dumping and all nuclear bomb "testing" (sic) has been on indigenous land. The Anti Nuclear Movement for the most part refused to oppose all the nuclear chain (eg. for years CND maintained that the siamese twins of nuclear power and nuclear weapon were separate and refused to oppose nuclear power).

Author of 1492 article's reply: How the Subversion comrade can deduce that the 1492 article supports the Inca royal family and national liberation is beyond my comprehension. It stated as a matter of fact that many of the revolts in Peru were carried out under the pseudo legitimacy of neo-Incas. The fact that the article mentions Sendero Luminoso's use of the restoration of an Inca golden age should have been indication enough of how manipulative such approaches are.

The Incaic system was of course oppressive, being based upon divine kingship and a perverted and exploitative form of the ancient Peruvian system of reciprocity. However, anyone with the slightest knowledge of the subject will know that the Incaic system, oppressive as it was, was child's play compared with the system imposed by the Spaniards.

The article does not support national liberation of any sort. Though of course we are very critical of imperialism and colonialism. Perhaps the Subversion comrades feel we are too "leftist" by attacking what the Spaniards did in the Americas. I can't see where there is the slightest hint that national liberation is OK or even mentioned. The Subversion comrade seems to be finding weaknesses and flaws which exist only in his imagination.

Vote Labour but?

Dear Organise!

In your article "Labouring Under Illusions", you criticise the SWP for advocating a vote for Labour "without illusions" and you state that "such a vote will do no good at all". While I understand the ideological reasons behind an Anarchist refusal to vote, it seems to me that a victory for Labour will do some good in that it would lessen the relentless attacks by the Conservatives on the living standards of working people and the National Health Service etc. While obviously no substitute for revolutionary action, if putting a cross on a voting form can improve conditions for all of us, then why not do it?

Yours Sincerely,
L.B.(Bristol)

Editors' reply: But yes, that's the whole point. Voting for Labour can not improve conditions for us. Just look at the history of the last thirty years. We saw the Wilson Labour government replacing the Tories. At this time the economy was beginning to falter. Unemployment doubled under Wilson and welfare spending was cut back more than under the Tories. There were the anti-working class "In Place Of Strife" proposals and an attempted wage freeze. Then under the 1974-79 Labour administra-

tion unemployment trebled, real earnings fell and a whole range of anti-working class measures were developed, for example the Social Contract and the five per cent wage norm. Monetarism in this country was pioneered by the Callaghan administration and it was they who started the cuts in welfare services at the behest of the International Monetary Fund. And you expect this lot under Kinnochio who have dropped everything but the merest nuance of socialist rhetoric (and rhetoric it always was, never practice) to improve conditions for the working class? When a patient has cancer you don't give them aspirin!

Gay Liberation

Dear Organise!

As a gay man and a one time anarchist, I was glad to see that *Organise!* had covered the issue of Lesbian and Gay liberation but sorry, the article — "The Moral Crusade Continues" was a big let down.

Firstly the writer (one year late) highlights the dangers of Section 25 of the Criminal Justice Bill (criminalising "procuring, indecency and soliciting" amongst consenting gay men) and the attack on Lesbian parents evident in Paragraph 16 of the Children's Act. The writer does not mention that in December 1990 a group of 15 gay men were sentenced for taking part in sado-masochistic sex acts which they had all consented to. Is the issue of s/m sex (gay or straight) too difficult for sensitive anarchists to deal with?

Secondly the writer claims: "with the rise of christianity in Western Europe came condemnation but it was not until the rise of capitalism that it (homosexuality) was singled out as a particular form of sexuality that was outside the norm."

This is hard to follow. Is s/he saying that before the rise of capitalism — whenever the writer wants to date it — homosexuality was condemned without being singled out as being "outside the norm"? In Britain and Western Europe court records are hard to find before the last couple of centuries but as far as we can tell homosexual men were persecuted by the laws against sodomy. There is a good chance that homophobia (fear and prejudice directed against homosexuals) existed before the rise of industrial capitalism.

Thirdly the author of the piece claims that capitalism condemns homosexuality but at the same time attacks "pink capitalism" which is puzzling. Significantly the writer makes no mention of the fact that many revolutionaries with a commitment to overthrowing capitalism were (and some still are) anti-homosexual liberation.

It is obvious that the whole link between capitalism and homophobia is not nearly as clearly defined as the writer believes and it is disappointing that an anarchist journal should reproduce the confusion and the clichés one would expect in a dull lefty paper.

Finally we are told that: "Lesbian and Gay liberation has to be linked to the general onslaught on capitalism and taken out of the ghetto and away from the leaders of the gay alternative society".

If the author is sneering at the gay scene in this reference to a ghetto I would argue that many of us who face prejudice and discrimination due to the effects of homophobia find the evolution of the Scene part of our way of defining our sexuality and therefore part of our liberation. Certainly there are faults with the Scene, especially commercialism and Ageism, but don't underestimate its appeal. (Before anyone starts about the pink pound I should add that I have no other money besides income support). Besides why do the vast majority of gay men prefer to go to the local gay club rather than to anarchist meetings? (That would make a more interesting article).

The author refers to the "domination of the leaders of the gay alternative society" eh? None of these leaders are named, do they exist? Certainly particular individuals such as Ian McKellan, Derek Jarman, and Peter Tatchell have little cliques of followers in London but they are not important up here (Sheffield). Also it is fair to mention that these individuals are doing more than most class struggle anarchists to fight homophobia.

An article looking at the Gay Scene and the way that the Right has captured the imagination and the opinions of a number of gay men, and the way that radical ideas can still appear alien to a section of the population who experience a great deal of oppression, would be more interesting.

M.S. c/o Conviction, PO Box 552, Sheffield, S1 3FP

Editor's reply: *Organise!* has not given enough attention in the past to the social movements, to the questions of for example, women's liberation, gay liberation and black nationalism. We are attempting to get to grips with this problem.

Replying to several points raised by your letter. Yes, of course homophobia existed before the rise of capitalism. What capitalism did was to incorporate and institutionalise homophobia within its ideology, and to strengthen its defence of the nuclear family. We never denied in the article that homophobia was around before capitalism!

One of the phenomena of the last ten years was the rise of "pink

capitalism". This was not a gain for gays and lesbians, but a sign of the defeat of the gay liberation movement, just as the women's movement was incorporated into the GLC, the Labour Party and Communist party. Of course some capitalists invested in this new "pink capitalism". For example London Hosts, — a division of the multinational Grand Metropolitan — put £118,000 into the launch of Bromptons, a bar and restaurant in Earls Court in 1984. The manager of Bromptons, Peter Booth, was amongst those who argued that gays must go beyond campaigns and political rights to develop a gay business sector. When the recession was hitting the economy, it was realised that a new market sector could be fruitfully targeted. Bromptons and another club, the Clone Zone, were able to make a turnover of half a million pounds a year. Capitalism quickly spikes the guns of any subversive threat to itself by co-opting it and opening it to the forces of the market and consumerism. Pink capitalism is tolerated, is indeed a valuable market, but it is marginalised and not incorporated into mainstream capitalist ideology.

Some key symptoms in the counter attack against the revolutionary movements that had developed in the sixties and seventies were selfish hedonism, world weary nihilism, in opposition to a need to radically change the world. This is seen throughout society, and certainly affected the gay movement. Why the vast majority of gay men prefer to go to the local gay club rather than to anarchist meetings is in part due to general demobilisation, and in part due to revolutionary groups not taking gay liberation seriously. But there are groups like Pink Brick and the Lesbian and Gay Freedom Movement willing to link gay liberation to the destruction of capitalism.

The domination of the "leaders of the gay alternative society"? Yes, people like Tatchell etc, but also the multitude of gay entrepreneurs who run the clubs, travel firms and publishing houses.

Finally the issue of sado-masochistic acts. People's sexual preferences and how they express them are their concerns — as long as they do not interfere with the rights and freedom of others. This is the libertarian view on sado-masochism and other sexual practices. We welcome readers' letters on this.

Fundamental principles of communist production and distribution

An English translation of this guide to communist society has at last been produced and is available for £20 (558 pages) direct from M. Scott, 21b Eastlake Road, London SE5 9QJ.

Aims and principles

1. The Anarchist Communist Federation is an organisation of revolutionary class struggle anarchists. We aim for the abolition of all hierarchy, and work for the creation of a world-wide classless society: anarchist communism.

2. Capitalism is based on the exploitation of the working class by the ruling class. But inequality and exploitation are also expressed in terms of race, gender, sexuality, health, ability and age, and in these ways one section of the working class oppresses another. This divides us, causing a lack of class unity in struggle that benefits the ruling class.

Oppressed groups are strengthened by autonomous action which challenges social and economic power relationships. To achieve our goal we must relinquish power over each other on a personal as well as a political level.

3. We believe that fighting racism and sexism is as important as other aspects of the class struggle. Anarchist-communism cannot be achieved while sexism and racism still exist. In order to be effective in their struggle against their oppression both within society and within the working class, women and black people may at times need to organise independently. However, this should be as working class women and black people as cross-class movements hide

real class differences and achieve little for them. Full emancipation cannot be achieved without the abolition of capitalism.

4. We are opposed to the ideology of national liberation movements which claims that there is some common interest between native bosses and the working class in face of foreign domination. We do support working class struggles against racism, genocide, ethnocide and political and economic colonialism. We oppose the creation of any new ruling class. We reject all forms of nationalism, as this only serves to redefine divisions in the international working class. The working class has no country and national boundaries must be eliminated. We seek to build an anarchist international to work with other libertarian revolutionaries throughout the world.

5. As well as exploiting and oppressing the majority of people, Capitalism threatens the world through war and the destruction of the environment.

6. It is not possible to abolish Capitalism without a revolution, which will arise out of class conflict. The ruling class must be completely overthrown to achieve anarchist communism. Because the ruling class will not relinquish power without the use of armed force, this revolution will be a time of violence as well as liberation.

7. Unions by their very nature cannot become vehicles for the revolutionary transformation of society. They have to be accepted by capitalism in order to function and so cannot play a part on its overthrow. Trades unions divide the working class (between employed and unemployed, trade and craft, skilled and unskilled, etc). Even syndicalist unions are constrained by the fundamental nature of unionism. The union has to be able to control its membership in order to make deals with management. Their aim, through negotiation, is to achieve a fairer form of exploitation of the workforce. The interests of leaders and representatives will always be different to ours. The boss class is our enemy, and while we must fight for better conditions from it, we have to realise that reforms we may achieve today may be taken away tomorrow. Our ultimate aim must be the complete abolition of wage slavery. Working within the unions can never achieve this. However, we do not argue for people to leave unions until they are made irrelevant by the revolutionary event. The union is a common point of departure for many workers. Rank and file initiatives may strengthen us in the battle for anarchist-communism. What's important is that we organise ourselves collectively, arguing for workers to control struggles themselves.

8. Genuine liberation can only come about through the revolutionary self-activity of the working class on a mass scale. An anarchist communist society means not only co-operation between equals, but active involvement in the shaping and creating of that society during and after the revolution.

In times of upheaval and struggle, people will need to create their own revolutionary organisations controlled by everyone in them. These autonomous organisations will be outside the control of political parties, and within them we will learn many important lessons of self-activity.

9. As anarchists we organise in all areas of life to try to advance the revolutionary process. We believe a strong anarchist organisation is necessary to help us to this end.

Unlike other so-called socialists or communists we do not want power or control for our organisation. We recognise that the revolution can only be carried out directly by the working class. However, the revolution must be preceded by organisations able to convince people of the anarchist communist alternative and method.

We participate in struggle as anarchist communists, and organise on a federative basis. We reject sectarianism and work for a united revolutionary anarchist movement.

JOIN US!

So, the Tories won and monochrome Major was elected, or was it Labore and Kinnochio? Either way the Working Class lost, and Class Society and the State grind on: homelessness, starvation and poverty in a world of plenty, the "choice" of useless, boring waged work, the drudgery of (full-time) housework and childcare or living on welfare benefits, racism, sexism and environmental destruction. No change

Maybe it would be better if there were many more women bosses, councillors, MPs and premiers (Thatcher, Golda Meir, Aquino) or black leaders

(Amin, Nyerere), or home rule for Ireland, Scotland etc. Or the Greens could try "environmentally-friendly" capitalism (greater participation and a radical gloss a la Ken Livingstone's GLC). Or the Trots could give us Socialism (Socialist bosses, socialist wage labour etc). All of these are merely different ways of running Class Society.

All change

Without an organised national movement, anarchist ideas will remain marginalised. We need to organise in anarchist groups both lo-

cally and nationally in order to be efficiently involved in campaigns and struggles, to co-ordinate and support each other, and to be a real, visible alternative to the cynical manoeuvrings of the Trots.

Such an organisation would get known through effective propaganda and action, and develop its ideas through debate and experience. This is the organisation we are trying to build.

The ACF works towards a social revolution not to seize power for itself, but participating in a revolutionary process as

working class people, to assist the class as a whole to destroy the present system and build a free and equal society run through mass decision making.

We urge ALL who agree with our aims and principles to join us — and let's get stuck in!

