



# Nuclear Power in France and Britain

As part of their policy of disinformation, the media here give the impression that the French are happy with their nuclear power. Last October I attended meetings and demonstrations against the nuclear reactor at Golfech in south west France. These protests continue, as I have just heard from Vivre Sans Le Danger Nucleaire de Golfech, BP 343, 47008 Agen Cedex, France.

The reactor at Golfech would evaporate over 28 million cubic metres of water a year if it ran continuously. Consumption for the department of Lot et Garonne, for both irrigation and domestic use, is 18 millions. The level of the Garonne has dropped for the last five years and drinking water is now of poor quality with outbreaks of water borne diseases. This hitherto productive region of intensive small farms is now threatened by the loss of vital water supplies and by the real threat of radioactive contamination. Even the suspicion of this could reduce sales of their produce.

Although the power station has never been operated, there are already corrosion problems (rust) similar to those which led to the reactors at Cattenom being shut down eleven times last year. A reactor at Nogent was shut down on 22nd April of last year with the same problems and radioactive cobalt 58 was released into the Seine. Evidently, our fish may be irradiated even before they have been caught! This reactor has not yet been restarted, perhaps because, also, it has subsided by 28-30cms, leading to problems with the pipes for cooling the radioactive core. Last year, French electricity (EDF) made a loss of about £0.5 billion to add to the overall debt of £25 billion.

A camp to protest against this madness has been set up at the Golfech power station. In Britain we had revelations about the true cost of nuclear power during the summer, although even these did not take into account past expenditures. Now we have recently learnt more details of how wind and wave power projects have been sabotaged in order to maintain nuclear power.

A report has finally been published admitting to a statistical connection between working at Windscale (sorry, Sellafield) and leukemia in

children. I believe that this would have been accepted long ago but for the desire to maintain nuclear power whatever its effects, and remember Dr Ernie Sternglass, a physicist, warning about just such dangers in the early 1960s.

The story of the nuclear industry in both France and Britain is one of incompetence and megalomania on a grand scale quite comparable to anything in Eastern Europe. The case with which evident dangers were kept secret shows that democracy in these countries is purely a facade. Idiotic policies have been adopted and followed because of election systems in which the populace can choose between groups of power-seeking individuals. France and Britain have progressed from the time when these "countries" were united by armed force into kingdoms to a state of rule by economic force. We need further progress to survive the desire of some for greater power.

Norman Albon

*"Between the government which does evil and the people who accept it there is a certain shameful solidarity."*  
Victor Hugo

## The Factory and Beyond

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All the same, workers at British Aerospace (BAe) Preston have turned down their firm's offer of a 37-hour week with strings. At a mass meeting they threw out the company offer with only 20 votes against. They object to the bosses demands for job flexibility and that they give up their tea break.

BAe are now threatening to close the Preston plant, and to sub-contract the work out.

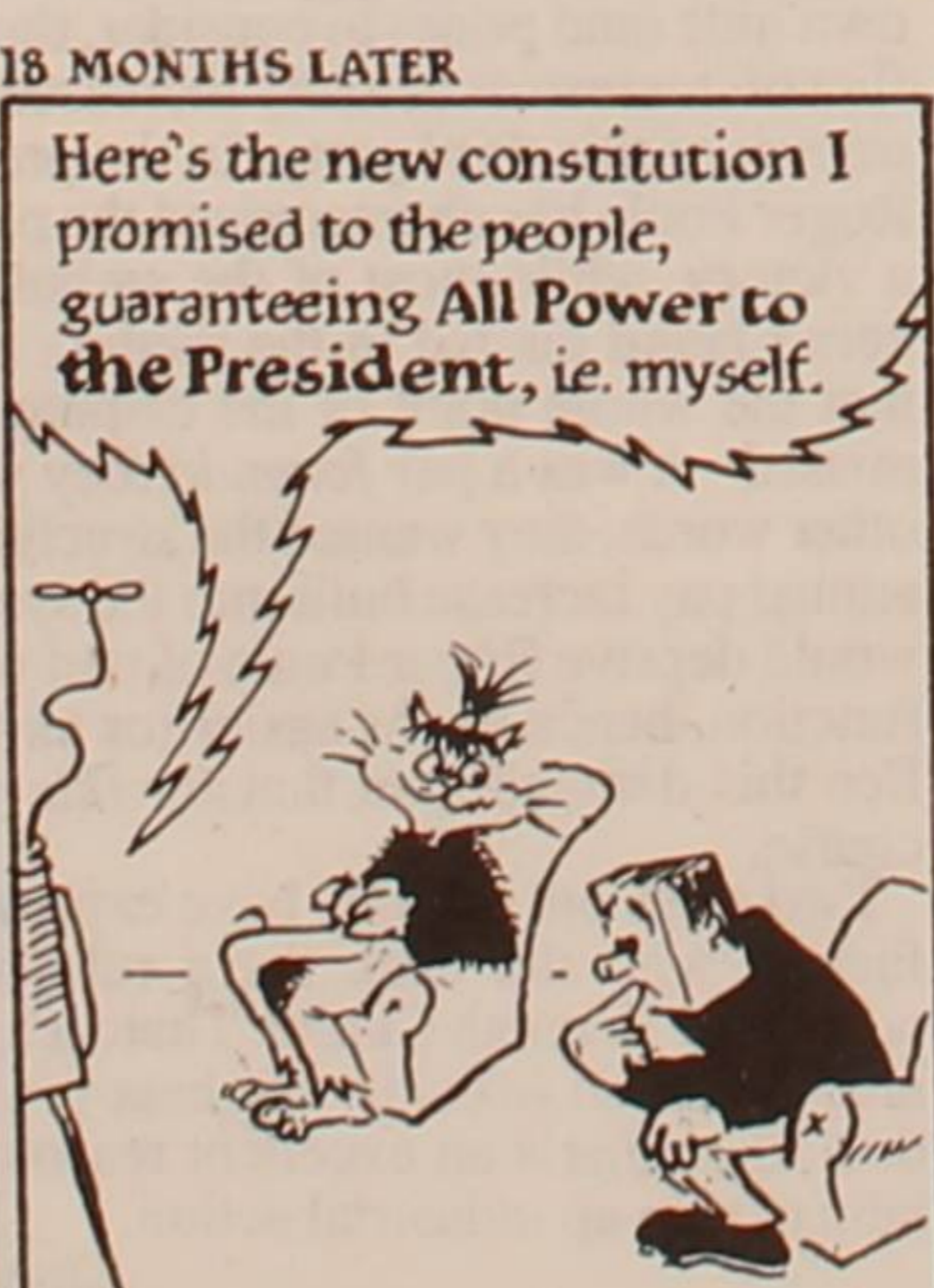
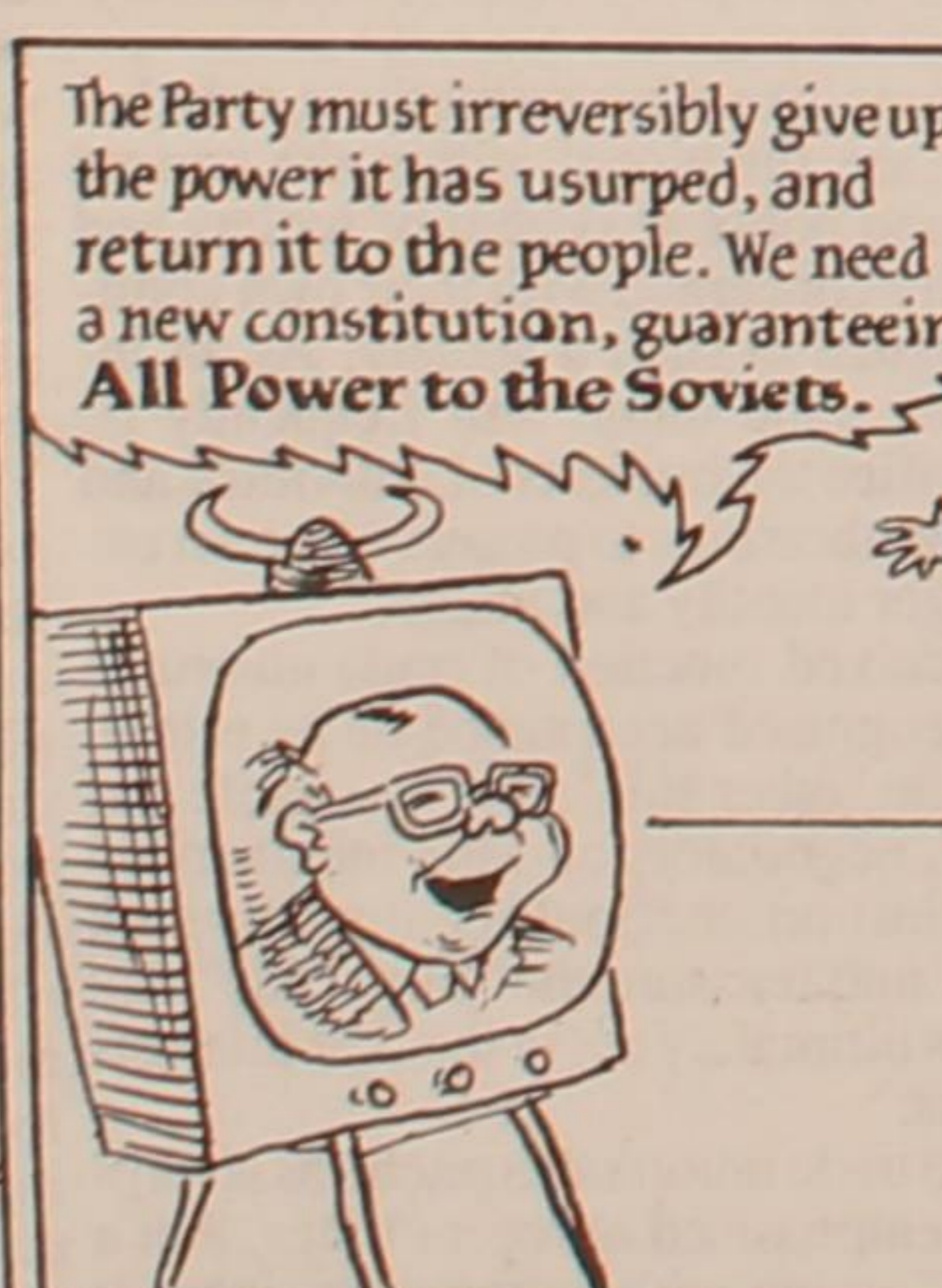
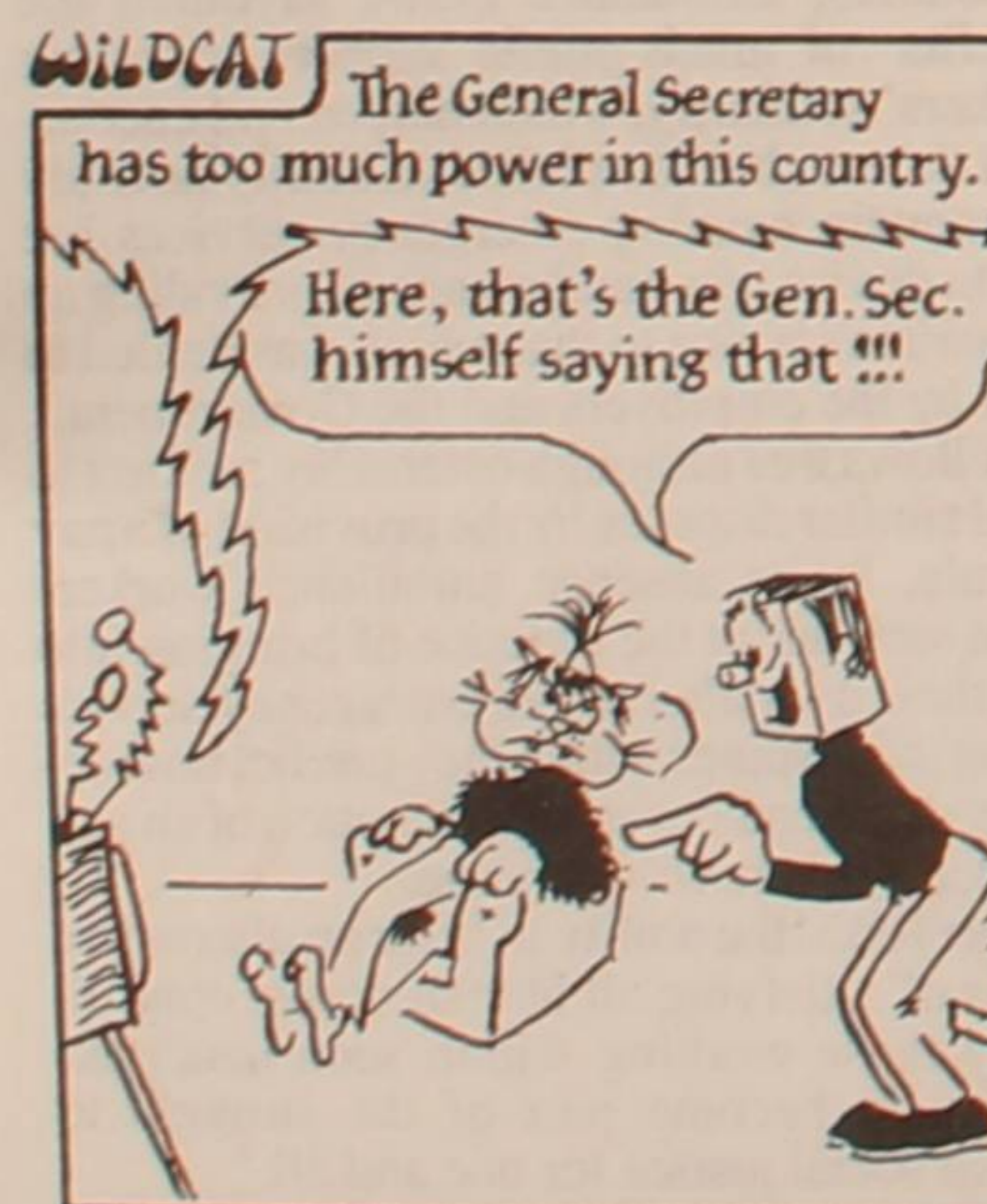
Politics of production: The strike of 1,600 electricians continues at Fords, though some "sparks" at the Swansea plant are said to have voted to recommend a return to work. Ford claim that production at their 21 UK plants is close to normal. This may be because the electricians are maintenance workers, and the impact of their strike depends on breakdowns. It takes time for such strikes to hit output.

It has also been reported that Fords has used Belgian electricians to break the strike by the electricians' union (the EETPU), certainly earlier this month production of the Sierra at Ford's Genk plant in Belgium was halted. At Dagenham and some other plants the effects of the EETPU action has been reduced through the decision of the leftist electrician's union the EPIU (TUC affiliated) to work normally. But the engineering craftsmen in the AEU are as unhappy as the electricians of the EETPU about the company plans for flexible working teams and other strings attached to last month's pay deal of 10.2%.

Any attempt to understand the current craftsmen's dispute at Fords, with the bizarre example of a strike being led by a union of dedicated strikebreakers, the EETPU must consider the politics of factory life as distinct from state politics. We need a tool which goes beyond simple-minded syndicalism but which avoids us becoming fashionable addicts playing ring-a-ring-a-roses with the feminists and others.

We need to penetrate the world of the worker by seeing the factory as a regime with its own politics of production. One aim of this column, or this page, must be to uncover and understand the everyday politics of the shopfloor. Another objective must be to discover how this relates to state politics.

Mack the Knife



## NEWS FROM NORTHERN IRELAND

(from our correspondent)

Favour of the month in government circles these days is "Community Relations". For one senior government figure here it is unashamedly a form of social engineering intended to put pressure on politicians. For Republicans, community relations work is nothing less than counter-insurgency. For Loyalists it is treachery, pure and simple. But what is it for anarchists?

In so much as it puts pressure on politicians anarchists will welcome community relations work. But we will also be aware that the pressure being sought is solely for the government's benefit and not towards a radical rethink of politics and power. There are elements of community relations work that anarchists can be interested in. There are also approaches to inter-community contact in Northern Ireland that empower people, that effectively address sectarianism and, more rarely, challenge the very notion of authority.

There is no doubt that movement in the Northern Ireland situation will be meaningful not when so-called constitutional parties get together to divide up the post-imperialist cake, but when working class people unite to redesign their society on libertarian lines. The gradualist approach a la Colin Ward would seem to point to the need for anarchists to involve themselves in projects that address sectarianism and that offer opportunities for Nationalist and Loyalist members of the working class to get together in various ways. Some of the most productive work in this area will occur when opportunities are provided to discuss and investigate the consequences of living in a society where some people define themselves as British and some people define themselves as Irish. It is no good for anarchists to brush aside the importance of nationalism.

As the front page article in *Freedom* (10th February) stated: nationalism is a very important tool in the suppression of internationalism. It is not to be expected that the new massive government interest in this area will foster this type of radical approach. Nonetheless the setting up of a Community Relations Council with a huge influx of cash (£4 million this year) will be worth watching in particular as the newly appointed director is keen on work on "justice and rights", speaking of the work as "pre-political". Marie Fitzduff has also said that she will want to direct the Council into work on sectarianism, intimidation and political options. These words are far removed from the notions of "togetherness and harmony" being touted by the government.

If community relations work allows members of the British and Irish working classes (and this is not the two-statism of the Communist party of Ireland) to break down barriers of sectarianism then it may form part of the process of designing the libertarian future for Northern Ireland.

Other government activity of note here at present is the Stevens Enquiry into alleged collusion between security force personnel and loyalist paramilitaries. Recently loyalists pasted up a large collection of confidential documents from police and army files on walls

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DR

## THE 'FREEDOM' OF THE ROAD: Three Views

I used to go along to this Friends of the Earth Group. You know, nice people, if you like bike-riding vegetarians. Don't get me wrong they were hard working and committed and on the side of the angels. And like angels just a bit smug with it too.

I went to the meeting on the way home from work on the other side of London. It was not on the tube so I used my car. They of course came on their bikes. Mind you they were a bit younger than I. When I drove up in my car I got the usual ribbing about poisoning the atmosphere and brain damage to children and so on. I ignored the fact that the room was filled with tobacco smoke. Then one day something happened.

It was raining very heavily and when I got to the meeting place I surprisingly could not find anywhere to park as the area was jammed with cars. When I got there I found everyone else was nice and dry. It was only later I found the reason. They'd all arrived in their cars.

I find a lot of comrades are like that. They are always pontificating their beliefs about what you should do with your life, financial resources and assets and expect you to give way to all their current attitudes and demands angrily name-calling if you do not concede but when you find out more about their circumstances you realise they are sometimes being less than honest about their own resources.

This makes me think of once in Birmingham in the mid-sixties when I had been to visit someone in Longridge and was walking to the bus stop when suddenly the whistle went for the shift to come out of Austins and I thought I'd never get on the bus. But the bus left half empty. The reason? These workers did not go for the bus. They drove home. These were the working class.

There is a common misapprehension amongst the movement that the working class are the unemployed or single parent families living in squats and the like. Live your lives as you wish say I but a great many pontificators would be hard pressed to be categorised as working class by any recognisable criterion and what's more the working class knows it too. Most members of the working class in Britain today are house owners, car owners, live in monogamous family relationships and are very little convinced by the protestations of those they see as the 'middle class'. They mean you. I remember an elderly communist of my acquaintance commenting about the 'student' Trotskyists that came to union meetings to convert the workers. They were very easily spotted as they were the only ones who dressed like workers. No worker worth his salt would go to a public meeting in his work clothes. 'And' he said 'they were so blinded by their rhetoric that they never saw this'. As if wearing a donkey jacket and designer jeans made you a worker.

A recent article in *The Guardian* (24th November 1989) 'Auto try harder' by George Jones (*The Guardian* have this rather juvenile thing about pithy titles) was well worth quoting.

... the car is the great liberator. As an extension of the legs it enhances mobility and widens opportunities for individuals. It is the most convenient form of transport so far invented. Unlike the bus, train or tube it goes from where you are to where you want to be, when you want to, and can carry you and your baggage far more comfortably. It is easier for the old, the disabled and children to move by car than by any form of mass transit.

## NEWS FROM NORTHERN IRELAND

(continued from page 3)

in Belfast saying there was more where that came from. The Stevens Enquiry is now desperate for a breakthrough and recently arrested a loyalist spokesman in Derry/Londonderry for possession of government documents. It turned out they were traffic warden note books that look very similar to ones used by the RUC. Apparently a relative of his wife gave them to her and the family shopping lists and other such domestic details are recorded therein. The man concerned has been released without charge and the Stevens Enquiry rumbles on.

Let that be a whimsical note on which to end news from the police state.

Dave Duggan

He also made many more cogent points. Now most anarchists I know appear to take on a contradictory line on this. They appear to be in love with the notion of public transport (even if some of them try and avoid paying — rejection of the money system no doubt) yet almost all have, or have had, some form of motor-driven transport.

Why are we, as anarchists, not advocating support of 'the great liberator'? Motor vehicles give you greater freedom. 'Not everyone can have them' did I hear someone say? Yes, I agree, but not everyone can have everything anyway. I have always been the one that didn't get the girl. We live in an unequal world and an anarchist society would hardly change this.

Anyway the poor in the West do rather better than most in the Third World. Is the anarchist movement supposed to be a charity organisation restricting everyone's freedom until a common mean is reached? It is like the opponents of the poll tax who bring in every group to support their aim without looking at the facts. Take the elderly. The average elderly person will be better off under the poll tax. The largest group of elderly is the single woman householder. They will pay less in poll tax than rates. It is the young anarchists that are going to get hit. So they protest and rightly so but why the smokescreen of inaccurate facts?

Do we seriously want to aim at converting the average member of the working class or are we advocating the charity approach, if so where do we start, the meths drinkers who sleep opposite Angel Alley?

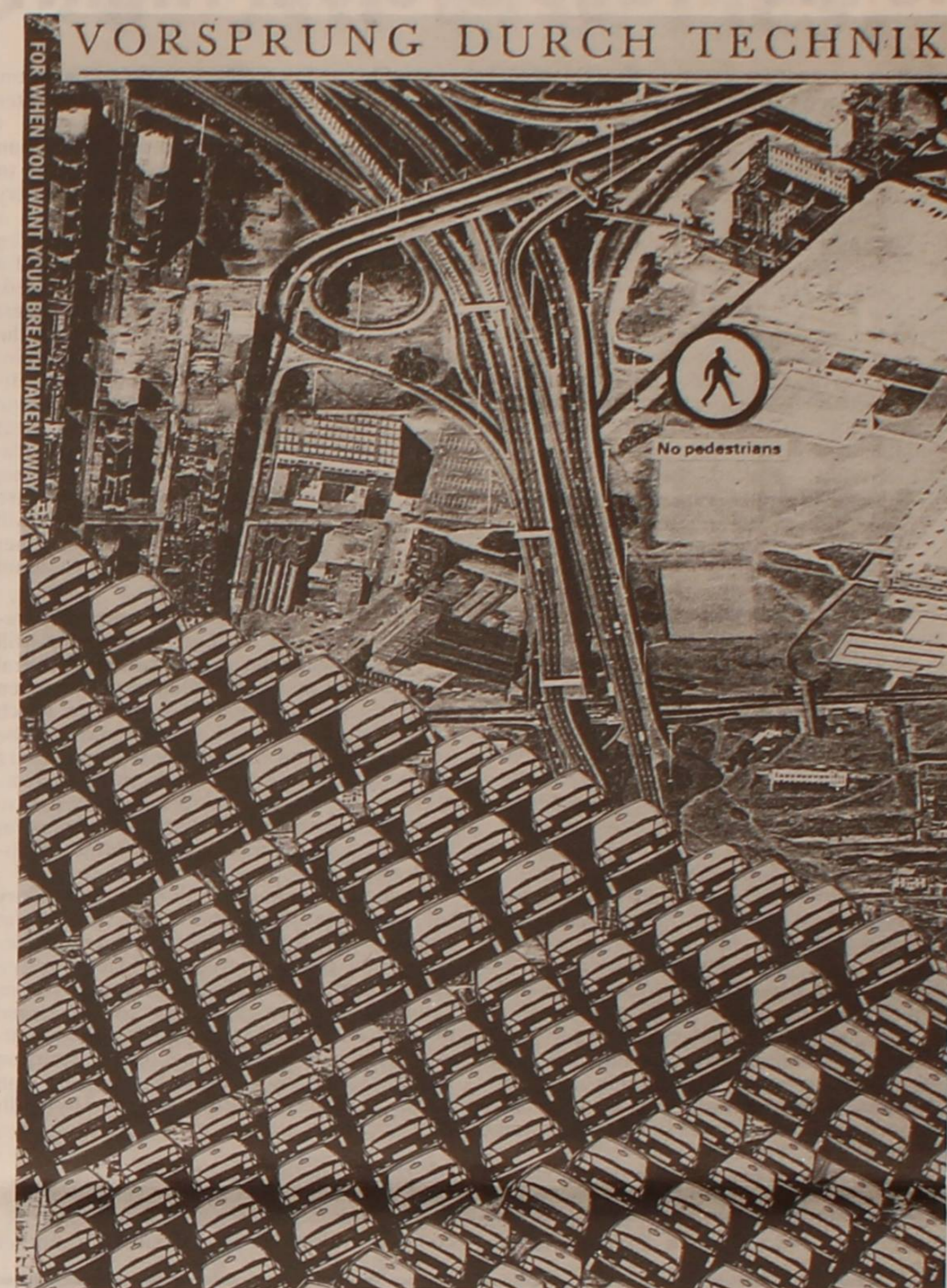
Let us look to where we stand and look objectively. Personally I would, like most working class people, prefer to use a car and would advocate much more social spending from my taxes and poll tax on the roads rather than public transport although this has a place too but integrated within a motorised economy. I remember asking a bloke on the Welsh border if a recent rail strike had affected them? 'Rail, what rail, Beeching closed them down years ago. Without road transport we would be immobilised.' And yes it is not outside the bounds of reason to produce pollution free engines and make the whole basis of the transport system safer.

Of course if you want to drop out of the system, avoid work and follow your interests, well fair enough but if you put nothing into the universal soup bowl your entitlement to take anything out might be restricted a little by the producers. I have never heard of anarchists advocating social security. When I oppose those who ponce off the rest of us such as capitalists and landowners and the like the list is inclusive of all. We the producers have the right to decide whether we want to put that extra hour in to support the non-worker. In this I support the genuine meths drinker who does not ask for support. As things stand an anarchist society is any society that extends the freedom of the individual and one of the best ways to do this is to have a motor vehicle. Many comrades appear to see anarchism in a more restrictive welfare statist sense. I continue to find this puzzling. Surely we should be finding more ways to extend our freedom, not more ways to hedge ourselves in by restrictions?

Peter Neville



That bus spokesman said in the local paper that 97% of the buses go out on time. He didn't say anything about the buses that never start out. Well, we only pay half fare so I suppose we're lucky if half of them turn up. They say that Kylie looks gorgeous in colour. You don't even watch Neighbours in black and white, so... I'd like colour for Wildlife. I wouldn't mind a black and white bus, or even a sky blue pink one... I wouldn't mind if a



## Collage by Doug Spencer

## Waiting for the Bus

As we wait, bus passes at the ready, in the cold for the bus that doesn't turn up, we talk above the roar of speeding cars, empty but for the drivers, to the reek of exhaust fumes: the Wall has come down. Must be terrible for those poor East Germans. You can tell they're hard up, from the state of their cars. Mind you, we couldn't afford one ourselves. And the queues out there, poor devils. Did you see on the news, they're buying stuff in East Berlin and flogging it for a profit in the West or is it the other way round? Wonder where they get the money to buy it? Wonder if they pay poll tax? Did both sides of Germany lose the War? They say what the East Germans really want is the freedom they've got in the West — you know, free elections — that's how Hitler got to power, but he couldn't do it now, not in East Germany anyway. I suppose Hitler would have at least made the buses run on time. I did a lot of queueing during the War, but I didn't feel the cold like I do now. Shall we walk it? At least carrying these shopping bags will warm us up. Wait another five minutes? Wonder of those East Germans get enough to eat? For a country with less than a quarter of our population, they don't do too bad at the Olympics. Perhaps the starter's guns have live cartridges over there. Wonder if they've got Neighbours on their telly. Look! there's the bloke next door just gone by in his car — never seems to see us, it's all the traffic I suppose. That bus spokesman said in the local paper that 97% of the buses go out on time. He didn't say anything about the buses that never start out. Well, we only pay half fare so I suppose we're lucky if half of them turn up. They say that Kylie looks gorgeous in colour. You don't even watch Neighbours in black and white, so... I'd like colour for Wildlife. I wouldn't mind a black and white bus, or even a sky blue pink one... I wouldn't mind if a

Communist bus came along driven by Gorbachev. I wouldn't chance it, he might run into a wall. Somebody said in the paper there's a wall north of Watford. That straight up? There's a wall all round Slough to keep us out of Gerrards Cross and Stoke Poges. Don't be daft. It's not made of bricks, it's a financial wall — even Gorbachev can't knock walls like that down, even if he was driving a tank. Shall we walk it — how's the leg? Come on then. They'll have to drop Maggie now. Why? Well, she can't change her mind, can she. Why not? Politicians can't change their minds. What's she got to change her mind for anyway? Because the wall's come down. Our old MP Sir Anthony Meyer will get my vote again if he comes down to Slough again — I liked him. Wouldn't mind him as Prime Minister. What? He hasn't got enough panache to influence a schoolboy. What's he going for Prime Minister for them? He's not. He's been put up because he's got nothing to gain and nothing to lose. Who's it going to be then? Better ask the White House. It's got to be someone who can trade in the Falklands and Gib, and maybe Northern Ireland. Maybe it'll have to be Kinnock. How's your leg? It's all right, we're nearly home now.

EFC

Capitalism, which along with war played such a stimulating part in the development of technics, now remains with war the chief obstacle toward its further improvement.

## Is the Wage System Right?

Selling yourself for money is the OK thing if you happen to be a computer hotshot or big in engineering or any other industry. If you pace the Paddington or Nottingham pavements as a female prostitute or a rent boy, it is quite another matter in the eyes of society. Selling yourself has many meanings.

When you work, you sell yourself. Work or, practically any sort is usually either under or over valued. Most of us despise wage-labour, because we are forced to do it against our will. Even the most dedicated craftsman will soon discover that he is at the mercy of a grasping market. In the end he becomes nothing more than a bloke who happens to know how to do a tricky job. At the moment the carpenters, plumbers and electricians are still living on the proceeds of the property boom. A lot of them are redundant after being used. It has happened to a lot of us in many industries.

Work equals money and money seems to fuel life. In the Brazilian Matto Grosso huge tracts of land are being grabbed and sold for their timber and gold by the richest people who want to grow even richer. Their attitude is no different from the chap who fiddles his benefit payments in Britain. Both of them want more and both want to be sure that they will have enough to eat tomorrow. In various ways they are working hard for what they can fiddle out of the system. To them the law is simply a fence to be hurdled in pursuit of a goal.

### Thatcher's Enterprise Culture

In Thatcher's enterprise culture — 'enterprise' has never been government-translated, but the Shorter Oxford declares that it is a 'bold, arduous, or dangerous undertaking' — thousands of people are encouraged to strike out for themselves.

Modest — but not to be sniffed at — grants taken from public funds are put into their pockets. There has been a boom in side-street hairdressers. Service industries of all kinds have popped up. Pizza parlours fizzle every few yards in many cities. Young people everywhere have had a go. About 50% failed in their first year. It all helps to prop up that other business, of receivership and bankruptcy. In the past the bankrupt had to apply for a discharge from his

miserable condition. The government has now decided that discharge will be automatic after three years.

What we now have is a parasitic rather than an enterprise culture. Bankrupts will have to look for jobs, but few of them will have a very impressive curriculum vitae to show.

A political system which exploits the citizen in this way puts the State in the position of a carcass on which the opportunist flies can feed. Job recruitment breeds some of the busiest biophysicists in the business. The first bait is the display advertisement — 'Considerable increase and challenge in highly attractive surroundings', paying £20,000 a year. Another one says: 'If you have drive and expertise, meet this challenge' with a generous salary, relocation expenses, BUPA and a pension scheme, and it pays £30,000 a year. When you learn how to fly a Tornado for the RAF, they will give you £8,242 a year. As an office cleaner you knock up about £2.60 an hour. No doubt about it, the jobs are there.

The pattern which the government has created suggests that the biggest problems will come to a head at the time of the next General Election. By that time inflation will be even more inflated, because it is a factor which cannot be quelled, and every country in the world is suffering from it. By that time there will be many more loan sharks nibbling away at the very poor. And there will be even more salary-rich people. Both classes of the population will have their particular forms of discontent.

Anybody who has ever drawn a high salary will know that discontent sets in after about one year. The first flush is over, the imperfections of the company erupt like blackheads on a lovely face. Quite suddenly the money means damn all. 'Targets' and 'objectives' become illusions and irritations. In the home the outgoings will have increased out of all proportion to earnings. If the poor are harassed by loan sharks, the wage-rich are beleaguered by credit card operators.

### Alternatives to the Wage System

Paid work is a very unattractive way of life. When a job is less than socially useful, it becomes worthless. How to get out of it is another

matter. After the war, when survival was important, dozens of communities were started, all with a common purpose, their resources created by pooling money. They acquired large rundown houses, worked the land and tried to create a new sort of social status within the State framework. Threads from William Morris to Plato were all drawn together. The disease of wages seemed to be evaporating. All goods were held in common. The insidious profit motive was laid to rest. Less than ten years later many of these communities began to close down. After all, the new Welfare State seemed to be a projection of the community ideal. It was time to join the world again. By this time a lot of people were not very happy with community life. Most of them wanted more than food, arduous labour and evenings spent arguing about how to run things. Community life demonstrated that man was not quite as gregarious as the social psychologists once claimed.

The Welfare State has come and gone. Achieving the sort of brotherhood defined by Alexander Berkman in his 'ABC of Anarchism' as long ago as 1929 seems to be completely

unachievable in Thatcher's Britain. Berkman's idea of 'putting the boss out' so that he 'may remain only on equal terms with the rest' can be equated to some extent with the new device of the management buy-out. The snag is that management buy-outs usually spawn much the same sort of boss. People have come to believe that a boss is absolutely necessary. Our crippled unions have no say in it, even when representatives reach the boardroom.

We are down in the dumps. In our hearts we know that the real exchange rate is the true value of a commodity. Wages are nothing more than a temptation. In 1990 we are haunted by the idea that there must be something better than this. If only our voices were stronger we might be able to evolve new ways of thinking and better ways of living. Struggle itself is on the wane in Britain. The government cannot allow itself to be abolished. Now that we have lived through the Thatcher Revolution and some of us have survived, it may be time for counter measures, so anti-bloodless as those of Thatcher, but more effective. Somebody somewhere must be considering the first move.

C. A. Hall

## ISRAELI PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE

nately, whatever the outcome this time, there will be many more Adam Kellers in Israel.

Virtually the entire Israeli male population and over half the young women have to do compulsory military service after leaving school — the men for up to three years, women for less. All men are required to do 4-6 weeks 'milum' (temporary military service) annually up to the age of 55. No-one eligible for milum can leave the country to travel abroad without 'p'tor' (exemption certificate) issued by Tzahal. The army is a central and influential feature of Israeli life, involving almost the whole population, so anti-militarists have a difficult time of it putting their views forward. In the siege mentality of the Zionist state, any lack of support for the army is construed as tantamount to pro-Palestinian terrorism. Pacifism doesn't figure much even in the left wing in the political scene.

War Resisters International can supply information about war resistance in Israel and elsewhere. WRI are at 55 Dawes Street, London SE17 (Tel: 01-703 7189). The British affiliate of WRI is the Peace Pledge Union which organises campaigns here and jointly with pacifists in other countries. PPU are at 6 Endsleigh Street, London WC1 (Tel: 01-387 5501).

KA

# Anarchism & Nationalism

Superficially, anarchism is a movement of the Left, but this is not strictly so, since it implies being part of the political spectrum. Anarchists reject this, asserting that there is more in common between Right and Left political parties (like the struggle for power) than between even extreme Left political groups and the anarchists. History has shown us that no matter how 'Left' a party is when it starts off, the achievement of power brings it round to the Right, for every government wants to maintain the status quo; wants to extend the control it has over the people, and isn't this what the Right really means?

Certain Right-wing attitudes are specifically rejected by Left-wing parties — until they become useful in the power game. 'Divide and Rule', for example, can be played with many variations, from wage differentials to religious and colour prejudice, and although nationalism is intellectually rejected by the political Left, they quite shamelessly use what are quaintly called 'National Liberation Movements' when it suits their political ambitions — and a 'Left' party in power knows very well the usefulness of nationalism and indeed patriotism as a weapon of government. Even if this were not deliberate cunning on the part of a so-called 'revolutionary government', the logic of authoritarianism leads to it.

Even allowing for soviets or workers' councils, the actual operation of state power cannot be carried out by the entire population. This demands the workers' own revolutionary party sitting at the top doing the actual governing, like suppressing all opposition in the name of the revolution and ensuring internal security by the perpetual policing of the population in its own interests to effect the immediate spotting of any deviationary elements. At the same time as this defence of the revolution is strenuously maintained, the population also has to be kept safe from external aggression, so an efficient army, navy and air force is kept at the ready, and since a workers' state is the most democratic state, a form of conscription becomes desirable to ensure that everyone does his bit.

This is really no sacrifice since the state belongs to everyone and everyone belongs to the state, but to keep

the people enthusiastic for service to the state, a leader comes forward to give every citizen someone to identify with on a personal level. In order to provide the cozy feeling of collective security, of belonging to the corporate body around him, the idea of the nation is encouraged and patriotism becomes a virtue once again — if, indeed, it ever fell out of favour.

Thus the service of the revolution achieved through authoritarian means brings the wheel full circle. The ideologies and justifications for lack of freedom — indeed for ruthless totalitarian control of the entire country — will differ from those of the old regime, but *in fact* the institutions and the realities of life are exactly the same, if not worse.

For this reason anarchists do not enthuse about revolutions which are mounted in order to bring to power another set of governors. Our interpretation above has been of a so-called revolutionary change in society; how much less, then, can we enthuse about changes which do not even pretend to be revolutionary from the start?

Into this category fall the movements for national liberation which are frankly nationalistic and call for opposition against a ruling or occupying power purely on xenophobic grounds. Although revolutionary means may be used in such a struggle, it has no more to do with social revolution as the anarchist sees it than the xenophobia of a Hitler or an Enoch Powell. Pathetic examples of this are to be found in Wales and Scotland. In fact — and here is where the situation seems to get confused — 'movements for national liberation' in the trouble-spots of the world today tend to give a social-revolutionary veneer to their claims, in order to get support from the Communist states. The classic example of this was in Egypt, where a successful anti-colonial struggle established a nationalistic, military regime (much like the Greek colonels!) with the aid of Russian arms and technology. By using devices like nationalisation and land reform, the veneer of socialism was

applied — but, in spite of Russian 'friendship', the Communist Party banned and Egyptian Communists put in prison. Meanwhile rabid nationalism was whipped up, patriotism by the imperial pit kept on the boil, but nothing prospers like the state and the international arms merchants. But your authoritarian left — the Trotskyists and the CP — supported the new Egyptian state!

Anarchists do not play this political game. We are not jockeying for position all the time and trying to further one or other of the power blocs that divide the world and its workers. We are truly international and oppose all those forces which divide people. Hence it is quite logical for anarchists to oppose an imperial power and the indigenous politicians who lead national resistance. For example, in condemning the Russian military occupation of Czechoslovakia, we did not thereby support the Dubcek Communist state which was in conflict with the Kosygin Communist state, in the sense that we wanted to see Dubcek remain in power. We supported the Czech people and their right to choose — even though choosing Dubcek (as the lesser evil!) — because this is a right that all people must have, and also because they were using revolutionary means (if only because there were no others) and so were learning how to do things for themselves. In the event, what opposition there was came from the people and not from Dubcek. Our attitude was the same on Vietnam (against US imperialism), but not for the Vietcong; Cuba (against Batista, not for Castro); Black Power (the answer to white racism is not black racism!); the American Revolution of 1776 (to hell with George III and the American state that followed him!); and all Arab, Jewish, Indian, African nationalisms.

The answer to Imperialism is not nationalism and reactionary regimes — it is international social revolution, destroying all national, religious, racial barriers. We have learnt from history!

If you bought shares in one of the water companies last December and then sold them, you are now no doubt comfortably sharing with your stockbroker the profit you made. I believe some people bought a few shares so that they could take a protesting voice to future annual general meetings. More likely you had nothing to do with the whole sordid business, seeing it as just another way the government has found to transfer wealth from the poor to the rich.

Leaving aside for the time being the effect this will have on us as consumers of water in terms of its future quality and cost, consider the water authorities (should we now call them companies?) as major landowners. In the Peak District national park, three water authorities own 80 square miles, which is over 15% of the total 542 square miles of the park. Altogether some 750 square miles are involved, much of it open upland moorland. This is land which nominally at least belonged to all of us, most of it freely available for recreational walking but which is now privately owned. Can this land be developed? Might we find our path blocked by a chemical factory, a luxury time-share hotel development, a massive tourist leisure complex complete with undercover artificial tropical rainforest? Or perhaps we will just have to pay to walk where previously we could roam freely, with turnstiles to negotiate and ticket collectors to restrict us? Will the fire services, who now draw water freely from reservoirs to deal with summer fires, find the water is metered, with the bill to follow later? Did you know that one water authority has already instructed its staff to pursue commercial initiatives?

Commercial companies have a duty to their shareholders to be economic and efficient, euphemisms for maximising profits, and it is clear that the government originally intended that the water companies should be free to use or dispose of the land as they chose. Pressure from interested groups has modified this slightly. In 20% of water authority land, mostly in the Lake District, an attempt was made to cancel an existing legal right to roam but was abandoned. For the rest of these acres the privatised water undertakings are required to have regard to the desirability of preserving for the public any freedom of access'. No doubt they will think about it, all the way to the bank. The water companies are not free to sell land unless the Secretary of State approves and conditions may be imposed. These are the kinds of detail determined by parliamentary bills and debated by our politicians. But who reads *Hansard*? And who would trust the Secretary of State?

The three quarters of a million hill walkers are not going to give up their right to walk this land, and to do so without payment. On 7 May last year over 3,000 people attended a meeting at Rivington in Lancashire at which one of the speakers was 77 year old Benny Rothman, a leader of the famous mass trespass of Kinder Scout in 1932. They pledged to exercise their traditional right of access to the hills by continuing to walk on the half a million acres of water authority land after privatisation and not to be deterred by the threat of legal action for trespass. One of the offshoots of privatisation could therefore be the biggest confrontation seen in the countryside since 1932.

HS

# AUSTRALIA 1990: All Worries!

"Never return to the place where you've had a good time. You'll only be disappointed." How often I have laughed off this dictum in numerous returns to the country of my youth. But this time my travels around old haunts did raise many doubts and disappointments. I found it difficult to re-live the experiences and fantasies of childhood which had made Australia a paradise for me. The nightmare, begun long ago with my being sent to boarding school, seems to be invading every corner of social life.

My romantic view of Oz, those unreasonable expectations, led to the big question — have the privileged inhabitants of this vast magical land finally blown whatever chance they may have harboured to show the old world (Europe) how to live? For the first time I felt like an outsider without affinity with the world around me. I despaired of the Anglo Saxon mentality, industrial man's part in Australia, and even felt he had no place there. Having destroyed the Aborigines and wasted our own opportunities, maybe it's the turn of the Asians, preferably the Chinese and their cousins. Government policies point in this direction. More important, I sense a feeling deep in the Australian psyche that we've thrown in the towel.

Outwardly the good life is even more available. The happy-go-lucky hedonist is still king in those moments when the corporate yoke is cast aside. The food, provided it is not processed, the climate at the best times, the recreational facilities, the exotic Bush, the light, the sea from rolling surf to tranquil inland lagoon are all still there, unbeatable. The trivia of superficial exchanges still matches the flat, bland, sanitised city suburbs and country towns. "No worries mate", "There you go", or the achievers "Go for it!" complete every deal. It is impossible to understand why so many foreign-born people in Oz don't speak English, so little vocabulary is called for. But the frantic rush of living, the obsession with making money particularly among those who have it, the constant shifting, give the lie to the lucky country. Australians are beginning to live as though they knew there'll be no tomorrow.

I recall Malcolm Muggeridge's prediction of 20 years ago — "Australia is an absolutely doomed place. The notion that 10 million people can go on getting richer and richer and happier and happier is absolute fantasy." And there are now 16 million restless people striving for these impossibilities. Australia's men of power do their level best to perpetuate and extend the orgy of consumption, travel rip-off, move on. The residue of the old 'stay and cultivate' ethos is all but gone — banished to the ghettos of country town and bush. The only possible resistance to this Faustian deal with the devil — the younger generation — is co-opted or

beaten by the system. Up to school age and thereafter for a while, Oz is still the best place in the world for kids. Until the institutional world gets to them. Then they are regimented, coerced and exploited without mercy by school, government, advertiser, financial institution and drug racketeer. They have neither the energy nor the time and space to turn against the sludge of materialism engulfing them. Australian kids are brainwashed, depressed and suicidal to a degree unequalled anywhere in the West. The bulk of the homeless and those drifting mindlessly round the cities are youngsters. Or was it only in the streets in which we found ourselves that five out of six of the destitute were under 21?

Corruption flourishes in every aspect of corporate life — police, business, property, government — wherever one looks. It's widely acknowledged, though only in its petty expressions. At the apex of this bankrupt society in the making are the new tycoons — the Murdoch, Packard, Abels and Bonds. Between them this ugly lot have a stranglehold on the mass media and transport. Much of their success they owe to some nifty deals with Labour Governments who lifted restrictions on overseas borrowing and helped these thugs to lucrative local contracts and deals. The cost of carrying their debt-ridden businesses (overseas loans often acquired at low fixed interest) has been passed on to home buyers, small businessmen and farmers who must borrow locally at 23% interest or more. Hawke and his treasurer Keating could transfer the onus for repayment to where it belongs by devaluing the dollar, but this wouldn't please their new mates and they'd lose their offices.

The subservience of people to institutions is hardly credible among a people with a reputation for independence. These days the wild colonial boy or larikin emerges only round the ritual 'barbe' or Christmas party and thereafter, like a tired giant, is shoved back in the bottle. For the contemporary Aussie believes in the cult of the corporation as a comfortable womb. The mass media are enthusiastic upholders of institutional legitimacy too. An easy, collusive understanding exists between politicians, newspaper proprietors and corporate leaders. In keeping with this corporate subservience the most governed nation in the world is fed a daily diet of parliamentary antics and political pronouncements. The public world of the politician is deemed to be vital and proper and his private conduct fair game for the journalist as shark. Nobody exploits the special relationship between politician and media better than Digger Hawkes, whose antics both public and private are fed to an audience of insatiable consumers.

Australia suffers socially most of all from a lack of alternatives. It has no legitimate history — an in-

tensely empirical society cannot tolerate the past. Foreigners can preserve aspects of their heritage for themselves only as long as it has no influence on the Australian way of life. Consequently we find a powerful commitment to the one-best-way-of-industrial man. Our way. The dull uniformity and sameness of life in city suburbs and country towns can be as overpowering for the outsider as the bush itself. Just possibly this inability to cope with cultural diversity is linked to having to manage a savage natural world, the threats of space, bush fires, storms, floods, burning sun, turbulent seas and things that bite.

However, there was a time when Australians were not the willing victims of the corporate world, as the officers of two World Wars can testify, and when their private and less visible lives promised all manner of possibilities. When I was a kid the myth of Australian resourcefulness and neighbourliness flourished. Nearly two-thirds of Australian homes in 1940 had been built by the original occupants and their neighbours. In the suburbs I knew each other, fences were seldom raised between houses, property didn't count as much as good neighbours you could turn to. Now with much to hide and guilt about their rights to what they own, more and more people are constructing high fences and walls around their dwellings and acquiring guard dogs and alarm systems to complete the conversion of home to fortress. As though to balance things out and justify this protection of property, other forms of theft are rampant too. And how does this tally with the successful TV soap 'Neighbours'? Well, it's just a bit of superficial contrived nostalgia for what Australians are losing or have lost.

Why has the Aussie propensity for mutual aid, the deeper aspects of conviviality, the unspoken understandings of mateship, the intimacy of relations, just evaporated in the sun? What has happened to the magic of the everyday that getting by is no longer enough? Human relations are the chief casualty of affluence. This prosperity is compounded by European man's unquestioning faith in the capacity of his inventions to deliver permanent supremacy over nature. The confidence does not extend to self and others. Through material wealth and technology the tyranny of space and distance, out

Dens Pym

## Shhhh....!

Margaret Thatcher, who is crammed beforehand with instructions, had no option but to refuse to investigate the 'dirty tricks' claims made by Colin Wallace because she, like Wilson, Heath, Callaghan and other Prime Ministers, is nothing more than an animated, albeit sympathetic, public address system under the control of the Establishment (Crown / Armed Forces / Whitehall / Business) and, as such, could be a potential victim of dirty tricks herself.

Much has been written about the 'power of the Prime Minister' or 'Cabinet rule' so that the general public may be excused for believing in fairies in the Commons, if not at the bottom of their gardens. However, there is no excuse whatsoever for those eminent people who, singing their names to Charter 88, delude themselves and others into believing that a written charter would result in any significant benefits.

One eminent signatory to Charter 88, Lord I, served to lose all credibility when, in an article in *The Observer* last year, he described Britain as a "true democracy", and suicidally carried on to claim that our Judiciary is "admittedly independent" — this in spite of the fact that the Director of Public Prosecutions, who was appointed as a QC by the Lord Chancellor who is a Cabinet Minister, is supervised by the Attorney General QC who, as an MP, is responsible to the Lord Chancellor.

Lord Scarman and his liberal friends must be perfectly aware, anyway, that the renowned American Constitution failed to prevent the Vietnam, Nicaragua, Grenada and Panama invasions because the House of Representatives and the Senate are just as important as our Houses of Parliament, and the theoretically possible impeachment of US Presidents might just as well have been written into the Constitution in invisible ink. Nor, thanks to the Fifth Amendment cop-out, can anyone grass on anyone else. And yet another cop-out called 'Presidential Privilege' seals everything up nicely, thank you. If anyone should think that the foregoing is highly imaginative speculation, let them ponder the fact that it is the job of the CIA in the USA, and of MI6 and 6 in Britain, to keep everyone, including Prime Ministers and Presidents is need be, in ignorance of what they are up to. It follows logically that these Secret Services are controlled by people outside of the democratic process.

In *The Changing Anatomy of Britain*, Anthony Sampson writes "it is in the Cabinet office that the different intelligence networks come together under the Joint Intelligence Committee, which is made up of Ministers but of civil servants and intelligence officers who are responsible to the Prime Minister through the Cabinet Secretary". In other

there always threatening, has been imported into Australian homes, relationships and lives. Could we reasonably have expected a visual, literate, materialistic people to value invisible, transitory relations that need constant maintenance and don't always work? Easier, surely, to count on money and machines which don't let you down.

In recent years the more conscientious inhabitants of this old continent have devoted good energy to protecting and advancing the cause of nature's flora and fauna. Millions of Eucalyptus have been planted in cities and towns. Artists and writers have turned again to the bush and what remains of Aboriginal civilisation for inspiration. The ecological spirit appears to flourish. Yet Australia stands as a pure and extreme expression of the European industrial culture, a society in which the 'mine and move' mentality dominates every aspect of life, not excluding the conduct of most would-be ecologists. A society that can't sustain intimacy in relations needs a heavy emphasis on law and order, rules, standards, qualifications and compulsory corporate activities, just to maintain confidence in its way of life. This hollow tradition offers a modicum of security to a male workforce of predominantly over-schooled, programmed technicians and bureaucrats, but that's about all.

The isolation and loneliness of Australian lives is there to observe in its most obvious victims — the sullen-faced, indulgent, overweight urban kids and the thin-tipped, wrinkle-skinned, bitter women-folk. It can also be seen in the dearth of private debate and discussions about things that matter, even in university circles. Passionate outbursts by anyone but the Prime Minister (who has a monopoly over legitimate emotionality in the mass media) are still eschewed like the plague. Phoney studied casualness, pretending to have no worries, using public social occasions to display or proclaim one's achievements, are the order of the day. Such behaviour does not belong to those who are well in their skins and who know each other. It is the gateway to nothing which must be guarded thus because the condition of emptiness is too serious to divulge. And, you may ask, what's so different about Australia? Precisely.

Dens Pym

words, the Prime Minister acts as a rubber stamp, and the rest of the Cabinet play golf.

People like Lord Scarman and Tam Dalyell, who conjure up visions of an accountable Secret Service, believe in fairies because, like the United Nations, it is a paradox. It stands to reason that you cannot have both. The amendment to the Official Secrets Act, soon to become law, in making it an offence punishable by two years in jail for any member or former member of the Security Services to reveal any information which came to them in their official capacity, has recognised that you cannot have your cake and eat it, so you may as well go without your cake.

No wonder Maggie's old friend Ceaucescu had to die without a public trial — he really did know what went on and could have taken hundreds with him. And as for Noriega — well, you have a guess, I'm prejudiced.

EFC

*No working ideal for machine production can be based solely on the gospel of work: still less can it be based upon an uncritical belief in constantly raising the quantitative standard of consumption.*

The quotations on this page and on pages 4 and 7 are from

### THE FUTURE OF TECHNICS AND CIVILISATION

by Lewis Mumford with an introduction by Colin Ward published by Freedom Press at £3.50 (post free inland, add 15% postage overseas) Lewis Mumford's death in January this year at the age of 94 prompted the assessment of his life and work by Colin Ward which appeared in our issue dated 10th February, still available from Freedom Press, as are the other back issues of the new-style fortnightly *Freedom*. For subscription rates see back page.

# IRRADIATION Gummer's Panacea

To the chagrin of John Gummer, Minister for Agriculture Fisheries and Food, there is widespread and emphatic opposition to the practice of irradiating food. While Gummer's outrage at this development has led him to denounce the anti-irradiation lobby as 'fascists and alarmists', anarchists will find cause for celebration in the public's reluctance to accept the pronouncements of scientists and government ministers at face value.

Irradiation is a 'cleaning' technique which involves subjecting food to ionising radiation produced by one of two radioactive materials; either Caesium-137 or Cobalt-60. Bombarding foodstuff with gamma rays or electron beams kills contaminating agents such as listeria and salmonella bacteria, fungi and insects. The proponents of the process take pains to assure us that irradiation does not produce radioactive food, but there are several reasons to be alarmed at the prospect of its widespread application.

● Although radioactive food is not normally a product of the process there is always the danger of contamination by accident. In 1988, traces of Caesium-137 were found in boxes of food and worker's clothing in a US irradiation plant.

● Increased potential for contamination after irradiation means that the process would be carried out on food which is already wrapped. The possibility of toxic and carcinogenic substances passing from the packaging to the foodstuff has not been thoroughly researched.

● Many advocates of irradiation (including supermarket supremo Lord Sainsbury) assert that it will bring 'expanded consumer choice' in the sense that the public will have the option of selecting a 'safer' type of food. This claim is negated by the fact that it is currently impossible to identify irradiated food.

● The irradiation process destroys or damages vitamins A, B complex, C, D, E and essential amino acids.

● Irradiation may cause pesticide residues to become harmful and may produce virulent strains of salmonella through mutation. There is evidence from experiments involving rats that the immune system can be damaged by a diet of irradiated food. The process is being advocated before these issues have been properly researched.

● The most worrying aspect of this use of nuclear technology is its potential as a 'masking' treatment for contaminated food. Drew Smith, Director of the Consumers' Association, points out that irradiation will prevent potatoes from turning green when Solanine (a poison which can cause pregnancies to abort) develops in them (see *The Listener*, 25th January 1989). The natural warning mechanisms of bad food, like the foul smell of bad fish, can be hidden — but the food is still unsuitable for consumption: in 1979, 61 tonnes of toxic, rotting prawns were irradiated and delivered to Australian restaurants.

The pro-irradiation lobby includes the scientists responsible for developing the process, Lord Sainsbury, and many Tory MPs. The anti-irradiation lobby contains supermarket groups such as Marks and Spencer, Waitrose, Co-op and Tesco; restaurant 'celebrities' Egon Ronay and Pru Leith; Friends of the Earth; the Institute of Environmental Health Officers; the Women's Institute and the Meat Traders' Federation. The British Poultry Federation has not expressed support for irradiation, and there has been a great deal of vocal opposition within the National Farmer's Union. When the

Medical Research Council (funded by the government) made a submission to the House of Lords, they expressed the view that the safety aspect of irradiation requires more careful examination. Since they face such 'heavyweight' opposition — much of it from groups not traditionally associated with challenging the government — why are the Tories so keen to rush into legislation which will favour the mass application of this unpopular process?

I suspect the answer is that Gummer and company have little choice, since the alternative is to call into question the whole ethos of 'agri-business'. Last year's scandals involving listeria and salmonella made food an important political issue. The government is desperate to find some way of bolstering public confidence in their approach to the food industry, without undermining the notion that market forces provide the best means of protecting the consumer's interests. Irradiation is seen as a panacea for a variety of problems ranging from ensuring food safety to extending shelf life — and thus maximising profit. This process constitutes a technological 'fix' for a problem created by the intensive approach to food production. Ken Bell, owner of one of the largest shellfish processing companies in Europe has rejected irradiation as a 'substitute for good hygiene and quality control'. Ken Bell International Ltd have financed research to 'detect this dangerous practice for concealing contamination'. While profit remains the major motive for food production Bell's concern for food safety will continue to place him in a minority of food producers.

Andrew Hedgecock

## Book Review

# BLASPHEMY

Blasphemy ancient and modern  
Nicolas Walter  
Rationalist Press Association £3.95\*

Why do adherents of the various Judaeo-Christian-Mohammedan persuasions persecute those who insult their religions? God is surely powerful enough to smite His enemies without assistance.

I offer the following hypothesis for consideration. Religious people secretly suspect that their beliefs are a lot of nonsense, but repress their suspicion because they suppose that if

they do not believe, they will suffer eternal torment. Anyone who threatens their precarious belief puts their immortal souls in danger, and is therefore an object of fear and loathing.

Nicolas Walter's book is an erudite, but concise, history of blasphemy, seen as part of the long tradition of religious dissent and persecution. A good read suitable for bus journeys, it is also a useful work of reference which would be even more useful if it had an index.

One recurring result of religious persecution is that attention is called, and adherents attracted, to the belief which is under attack. As Walter reminds us, the first Christian martyr, Stephen, was executed for blasphemy under Jewish law. Saul, the young man who minded the coats for the men who stoned Stephen to death, afterwards took the name Paul and became the most important Christian missionary.

The freethinker Susannah Wright, imprisoned for blasphemy in 1822, said "I am bold to tell these persecutors, they never can, they never will, put down these publications...As the blood of the Christian martyrs became the seed of the Christian Church, so shall our sufferings become the seed of free discussion, and in those very sufferings we will triumph over you" — and she was right.

James Kirkup's poem "The love that dares to speak its name" would be very obscure, had not Mary Whitehouse ("the Director of Private Prosecutions" Walter calls her) revived the blasphemy law to prosecute *Gay News* for publishing it. *The Satanic Verses* would be much less widely heard of, and somewhat less widely read, but for the death sentence for blasphemy on its author.

The *Gay News* case and the *Satanic Verses* case get a chapter each, and the early history of religious persecution gets a chapter of two, but the main emphasis is on the freethinkers and secularists of the nineteenth century. It is a challenge to many trite statements about religion, that the anti-religious are as steadfast as the religious in the fight for what they believe.

Explicitly the book does not take sides, but there is an implicit attitude that blasphemers are heroes and their persecutors villains. I daresay Mary Whitehouse would object, but anarchists can only applaud.

DR

\*available from Freedom Press Bookshop, £3.95 post free inland, or add 15% for postage abroad.

David Luton

## HERE & THERE In Brief

A joke going around Washington DC in early February ran: What is the difference between the USA, East Germany and Hungary? Answer: The USA still has a Communist Party.

The Western capitalist establishment is discovering the potential of the moneyless economy in its attempts to sell highly-priced commodities in short supply in Eastern Europe. Western companies don't want to trade for the worthless currencies of the Comecon bloc, and there is a shortage of hard currency — but the markets are enormous. So barter is making a comeback. It was reported recently that Rank Xerox has been offered racing camels, goats' horns and untrained hunting falcons from the USSR in exchange for photocopyers and high-technology products. The Eastern Europeans don't want to swap commodities they can sell themselves, such as oil or precious metals, and a lot of the stuff they are bartering is pretty useless in Western Europe too. So Western companies are in turn selling off the bartered goods elsewhere; black-and-white TV sets are accepted from Poland and then re-sold in Bangladesh, for example. Rank Xerox take ball-bearings from Rumania, typewriters and hanging plant-pots from Bulgaria. Czech light-bulbs, Hungarian paper, and cheap hi-fi systems from Russia. The General Manager of the firm's eastern exports operations said: 'We run a very complex marketing and selling operation purely for the goods offered for our products. But we see the need for the barter business as the economies of some countries are in such a bad state.'

This uneasiness was strengthened when I read about the attitude of the Party to the poll tax. The Greens are against it. However, it appears that direct action is out. Instead I read the position is that they did not advocate breaking the law as they wished to be seen as a responsible party fit for Government. This is, of course, an understandable if not very radical position. After all if you are aiming for the commanding heights of the State where you will have to rule by law — and there is plenty of banning and regulating in the manifesto — then you cannot give a bad example yourself and ignore government edict.

Is this peculiar to the British scene? I do not think so. The Green Party in Germany is much further down the road of coming to terms with 'reality'. I heard Rudolph Bahro speak Bristol of the problems facing activists involved with manipulating power in the political struggle. Bahro is a Marxist dissident from east Germany who helped start the Green party in West Germany. At first enthusiastic he gradually became disillusioned and resigned over compromise on vivisection.

Another example is in Berlin where there has been a Red/Green coalition. It has been obliged to act against squatters — although they claim to be on the side of the socially disadvantaged. The fact of the matter is that a big split is emerging in the Green movement. There are the funds and realos. The funds are realists in libertarian terms. They see that any aims which are for the general good of the community and the planet cannot be realised via power politics. The realos are idealists who have a touching faith in the party political process and parliamentary democracy.

What amazes me is why any Green should want to take the party political line. The European Space Agency is doing its bit to ease wash-day blues. A pilot scheme has been set up to look into ways of transferring highly-developed space technology into the 'civil sector'. A spokesman for one interested company, Defence Technology Enterprises, remarked: 'A clever bit of circuitry used in a satellite could be wonderful in washing machines'.

Seven squatters and fifty-one of their supporters, protesting against property speculation, were arrested in Amsterdam on 20th February, when police moved to enforce eviction orders on a squatters' group in the city. Dutch Riot Police used horses, water cannon and tear-gas in their attack.

*Our disregard for the quality of work itself, for work as a vital and educational process, is so habitual that it scarcely ever enters into our social demands.*

A spokesman for the Bulgarian Interior Ministry has denied that the Communist government or its state security services were involved in the murder in London twelve years ago of Bulgarian exile George Markov, who worked for the BBC's World Service foreign language section. The new government has, however, promised to hold an official enquiry. Markov was shot with a poisoned pellet from an adapted umbrella as he waited for a bus on London's Waterloo Bridge. No-one was ever charged with the murder, but it's always been suspected that the Bulgarian Secret Service was involved.

As part of the endless war against Irish terrorism, the Metropolitan Police have now compiled an enormous directory of Gaelic names, translating every conceivable first name and surname from Gaelic to its English equivalent/s. Seems those cunning Paddies have been filling in their Irish identification cards in Gaelic and causing untold problems for anti-terrorist police at ports of entry to this scepter'd isle. (Glad my surname isn't Belmore.)

1. Daily Telegraph, 19th February 1990
2. Daily Telegraph, 19th February 1990
3. Daily Telegraph, 19th February 1990
4. The Times, 21st February 1990
5. Daily Telegraph, 19th February 1990

## In Search of a Libertarian Shade of Green

In the columns of *Freedom* (27th January) Brian Leslie suggests a realistic choice for an anarchist is to vote Green. We are told that it is a party working for change in the existing system by devolving power. I fully agree with the sentiment but what of the method.

By voting we give away our power. We are centralising our power...in order to decentralise it? Some mistake surely. So I turned to the Green Party (GB) manifestos to which we are advised to read. The 1983 manifesto has all the appearance of being written by a genuine grassroots movement. It even mentions the 17th century Diggers favourably.

The 1987 manifesto is much greyer altogether. The colour is grey and it is presented in a much more businesslike, party political and bureaucratic way. Gone for me is the feel of an extra-parliamentary non-party movement. I felt the Greens were becoming like any other party.

This uneasiness was strengthened when I read about the attitude of the Party to the poll tax. The Greens are against it. However, it appears that direct action is out. Instead I read the position is that they did not advocate breaking the law as they wished to be seen as a responsible party fit for Government. This is, of course, an understandable if not very radical position.

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A RECENT major article in the magazine section of one of the quality papers said of Telford that it was the meeting place between the Fabian ideas of planning and Kropotkin concepts of decentralised self-activity.

While loath to contradict anything that might motivate a stream of anarchist activists to settle here, I feel it is necessary to deny that we have built utopia here at the foot of the Wrekin.

The reference to Kropotkin is to the Lightmoor community — something like twenty families (more to come later) are building houses on a few acres of land on the west of Telford. Unfortunately, though, this has had some national publicity (though curiously this failed to mention that it is in an area where for centuries groups of miners squatted on land and built hamlets) it is not so well-known in the area that it is influencing the whole new town.

Actually even the community — though its members generously host fund-raising social events for CND and other such groups in the area — has less resemblance to a Kropotkin (or Paul Goodman) anarchist experiment than some of the publicity might suggest. It is not a commune. Those who join the community have not the skills or time to build their own and so intend to pay the group to build find it costs more than buying a house commercially, so some of the original group were forced to drop out.

Ownership of houses remains totally private, so when one of the earliest families the community split up their house was sold on the open market and the community mem-

road considering the excellent track record of grassroots campaigning. The dangers of power are evident. Not least eco-fascism, a kind of Pol Pot regime in the West — what a *Guardian* reader calls "a potential nightmare vista if repression". The same reader pays tribute to the awesome propaganda machine of the Green pressure groups — usually run on a shoestring. But that is the power of truth combined with direct action. Indeed I would argue that the limited effect the Green movement has had, despite widespread support, is because it has directed too much attention towards government. They have seen government as part of the solution rather than what it is — part of the problem.

The *Guardian* even asks these groups to target the world's banks, the International Monetary Fund and the multinationals. It does not mention petitioning governments. Is the *Guardian* going anarchist? The activists are, of course, already doing this and getting some response. Governments are virtually powerless to tackle these international bodies.

So my advice to Green activists is to keep on grassroots campaigning. Do not allow yourselves to get sucked into, and wasted by, the political machine.

## Peckham

Dear Editors,  
My copy of *The Peckham Experiment*, much appreciated in the 1950s, has long since disappeared, but unless memory fails me I was disappointed at the time by two aspects of the Peckham project as described in the book.

The concept and realisation of a genuine health centre not just concerned with the treatment of disease was a great achievement and I have no wish to detract from this in pointing out that it was designed as a controlled experiment, unlike the self-help friendly societies of the 19th century. The rule that only families could be admitted was not helpful to isolated members of the local community, who could have benefited from membership.

More serious was the refusal to offer contraceptive advice and facilities at a time when it was difficult for unmarried couples and single women to obtain these. The authors justified this by some rather obscure arguments, despite the fact that lack of knowledge often led to misery, ill-health and the horrors of inefficient abortionists. This was in sharp contrast to the contraceptive service provided by, among others, John Hewetson in London and Dr Dove in Liverpool.

Yours sincerely,  
H. Sculthorpe

bers had no say in this, so there is no reason to suppose that after a few more such sales most house owners will have no interest in the community at all. Still, that said, it is true that somewhere around 0.1% of the Telford population live in a semi-community of self-build houses situated near Coalbrookdale, with equally easy access to open country and to a new town centre, and that this group interrelates with much of the wider 'left' in the area which is not very active.

Telford itself certainly embodies the planning ideal, fortunately only in the earliest parts in the stark horrors of its full Fabian expression. Basically the town was designed to get the unemployed and broken families of Birmingham off the rates there by shipping them off to large characterless housing estates, initially called Greater Dawley. They were slapped down regardless onto an area with a fascinating history, much of which was destroyed in the slapping.

Halfway through this process it was suddenly decided to make the new town a far larger conurbation (taking in the historic market towns of Wellington, Oakengates, Dawley, Madeley and Ironbridge) for which they decided to build an out-of-town shopping centre and call this a town centre. Emphasising the novelty by destroying the oldest building in the area to make way for it. Then as an afterthought they suddenly noticed that Iron-

Become consciously libertarian. In the end I have to agree with Murray Bookchin that the solution to environmental problems lies in the social dimension. When we learn to live in harmony with each other we will learn to live in harmony with our planet.

Gerald Hatten

## Cardiff

# POLL TAX RESISTANCE

The Poll Tax resistance in Cardiff has suffered a series of setbacks in recent weeks. The dominance of the 'Militant Tendency' in the steering committee of the Cardiff Federation of Anti Poll Tax Unions has coincided with the splintering of two local APTU's, ostensibly because of the actions of 'Militant Tendency' supporters. There are rumblings of discontent in other Cardiff APTU's also and unless matters improve, the Federation could easily split.

Despite this, one of the said groups recently held a social evening attended by around 170 people, clearing about £180 for the Poll Tax struggle in Canton.

On the very same evening, the Cardiff Federation held a public meeting, attended by some 80 people, to coincide with the official release of the Cardiff Poll Tax figure of £253. Peter Walker, the Welsh Secretary of State, has threatened the Council with 'charge capping' because, as elsewhere, the figure is higher than the Government's original estimates.

On the 24th February the Welsh Federation of APTU's held a national demo in Cardiff. Unfortunately the turn-out was a disappointing 6-800. The demo, headed by a band and a group of clowns, marched through the town and later listened to several speakers — (all of a decidedly 'Militant' hue).

According to a poll conducted by the *Western Mail* in February, 56% of people in Wales favour some form of devolution — compared with the 4-1 vote against Labour's devolution plans in 1979.

Also of interest is that according to the poll, supporters of minority parties (Greens, Plaid Cymru, SLD, etc) out number Tory supporters by 24-22%! Labour takes the other 54%.

The response from comrades and readers to the new look *Freedom* has been most encouraging in all respects. Obviously some prefer the small format *Freedom* but the majority who have expressed a view on this subject approve and see future possibilities of the larger format and fortnightly appearance. Subscription renewals have been up to expectation; what we now must try and do is to get new readers and to a large extent we have to depend on you, our readers, introducing *Freedom* to your friends. One should not miss the opportunity of sending a copy to people who write interesting letters to the Press. Send us the clipping and we will post a sample copy of *Freedom*.

Bookfairs: The second annual mini bookfair held last month in Hadleigh was a double success. It was well attended and everybody remarked on the good atmosphere and the discussions that took place. And it was also a success in that we sold over £250 worth of literature between 11am and 4pm. It can be done in all parts of the country. Hadleigh is only a small rural town. We can think of at least a dozen towns where a successful bookfair could be organised by local comrades and readers and we would supply the books and an experienced comrade to help run the bookstall.

A successful literature stall was organised in Edinburgh recently by Ramsey Kanaan on the occasion of Noam Chomsky giving a number of lectures there. The same comrade is organising a bookfair in Bradford in April, where *Freedom Press* have a bookstall (details in announcements column next issue). We are also joining our friends of the CIRA (International Centre for Anarchist Research) in Switzerland next month sharing a stall with other anarchist publishers (though *Freedom Press* will be the only English anarchist publisher there) at the four-day International Book Fair in Geneva.

With it becoming more difficult for small booksellers to survive as the book trade becomes concentrated in a few supermarket type enterprises, more reason why we should be organising our own outlets. Market stalls on a regular basis, mini-bookfairs combined with meetings and lectures. And of course comrades willing to act as local distributors, who call on booksellers and newsgents and take orders and in the case of journals arrange to collect the unsold copies and the money; this saves the newsgent headaches for small amounts.

Translators: Our appeal has met with some response — four translators to be exact, from Polish, German, Italian and from Denmark a polyglot with another on the way! And we have also had a call from a potential photographer, and in the

last issue the Support the Ambulance Workers graphic came from our reader Doug Spencer in response to our appeal for photographers and cartoonists and illustrators. The appeal for more contributors to make *Freedom* something everybody will be proud of is a permanent one. Meanwhile our warm thanks to all who have contributed to this issue of our journal, and that includes of course the healthy donations list below.

Did you notice last issue the *Freedom* envelope was stamped with our new franking machine. You didn't? Then look out for it this issue! It's very smart, and it cost a lot of money, but is going to save more important work for *Freedom*. Raven 10 is on the way. Subscribers' copies should be dispatched before the next issue of *Freedom* comes out. 96 pages at £2.50 post free inland, £3 overseas by surface mail.

## DONATIONS

JANUARY 29th — FEBRUARY 22nd

**Freedom fortnightly fighting fund**  
Witham: C.P.S. £6; Stirling: D.J.K. £3; Cardiff: V.M. £3; Polstead: D.P. £10; Heidelberg: R.S. £4; Wolverhampton J.L. £2; Swansea: W.A.B. £2; Rugby: A.G. £5; Coventry: D.J.N. £6; Tewksbury: K.L. £3; London SE11: C.J.C. £5; Bristol: A.F.C. £8; Bristol: P.T. £3; Cheadle: C.G.J. £5; Uxbridge: R.S. £6; Aylesbury: D.S. £3; Hay-on-Wye: B.R. £10; Okehampton: S.B. £1; Pullihel: M.J. £3; Sittingbourne: P.K. £2; Wirral: T.H. £5.

TOTAL = £95.00  
1990 TOTAL TO DATE = £432.30

**Freedom Press Overheads Fund**  
Witham: C.P.S. £6; London SW1: M.C. £3; Polstead: D.P. £10; Wolverhampton: J.L. £2; Oakland Cal: R.D.E. £6; Hamburg: P.B. £5.50; Rugby: A.G. £5; London E1: A.G. £3; Coventry: D.J.N. £8.70; Hove: B.P. £4.50; Bath: B.V. £2.35; Colchester: P.N. £6; Hadleigh: Book Fair donations £11.70; Abingdon: M.B. £5; Cheadle: C.G.J. £5; Camberley: S. £3.20; Aylesbury: D.C.S. £; Sheltenham: T.K.W. £20; Oxford: M.H. £5; Penzance: J.M. £2; Sittingbourne: P.K. £2; N. York: P.A. £1.20; ?M.P.L. £3.10; Little Rock Ark: G.S. £9; Tokyo: G.K. £5.

TOTAL = £137.25  
1990 TOTAL TO DATE = £220.65

homes when returning, are not ideal. But the town was planned for the car and in order to ensure that that is what it will be, it is ensured that public transport is by far the worst in the country. There used to be a significant network of industrial railways here, and it would have been easy to have erected on these a high-speed train network.

Amenities in the various old towns are of course attracted to the higher profits of the town centre. Even when the Wrekin was an overwhelmingly rural area (and it was predominantly rural up until about six years ago) the decay of the iron industry, associated works and the desolation that surrounds a major military installation like Donnington left Oakengates (and other smaller parts of what is now north-east Telford) looking like the proverbial decayed inner city slum. Of course nowadays they are 'tidied up' for the benefit of passing motorists, streets of houses pulled down for ring roads, and since Oakengates centre is now effectively a large roundabout it has been pedestrianised, but it is unlikely that in this area the residents feel that they have the combined benefits of enlightened planning and libertarian self-confidence.

As yet, of course, the planners haven't found a way of destroying our two great advantages — they are not, as yet, capable of moving/destroying either the Wrekin or the line of the Severn through Iron Bridge Gorge. So despite this Telford is still a town where the spirit leaps at the wonder of nature and the interest of history. But that there is anything worthwhile owes nothing to planners and not a lot to Kropotkin.

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## NEWS FROM Angel Alley

# TELL MORE LIGHT