

green issue . . . green issue . . . green issue . . . green issue . . . green issue

RESIST or cease to exist!

GREED AND GRAFT IN THE PARK.

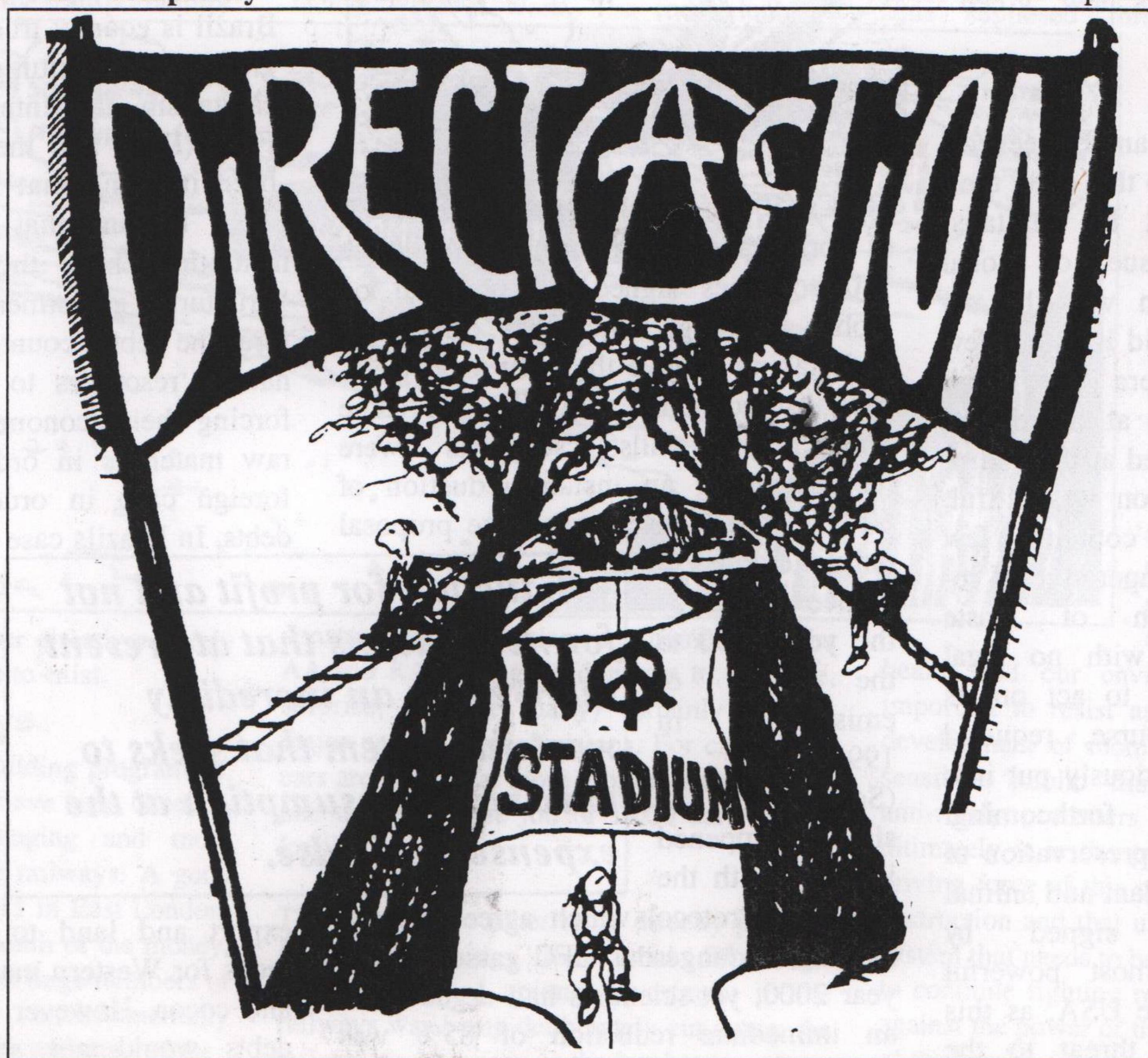
THE GREAT AND THE GOOD (ha ha!) continue to bulldoze through football stadium plans for Leazes Park. The new proposal is completely different from the first two ideas they dreamt up, but just as daft. So huge 'temporary' car parks sprinkled with bushes (to make up for the loss of mature woodland and free public green open space) would leave 8,000 spaces short.

The stadium would be as high as Durham Cathedral, and next to the RVI (with the city's only A&E unit) - a monstrosity saddling the area with a traffic nightmare. Building it would need a year's open cast mining

corresponding pollution. Yet a massive derelict site at Newburn (in the city, on the A1 and railway line etc.) was never even considered.

Sir John Hall may have revitalised the football side of NUFC, but with his business, local media and seedy politician cronies he's poison. In 1991 the 'Green Knight' decided not

to build a golf course at his stately home; in 1992 he pretended the club would go bust if the Benwell training ground wasn't turned into houses. Now they say wrecking Leazes is the only option. All lies! As we said in November, respectable protest (the 'No Business on the Moor' campaign) is all very well, but the legal planning process can't be trusted. Preparing now for direct action is the best way to protect our public space.



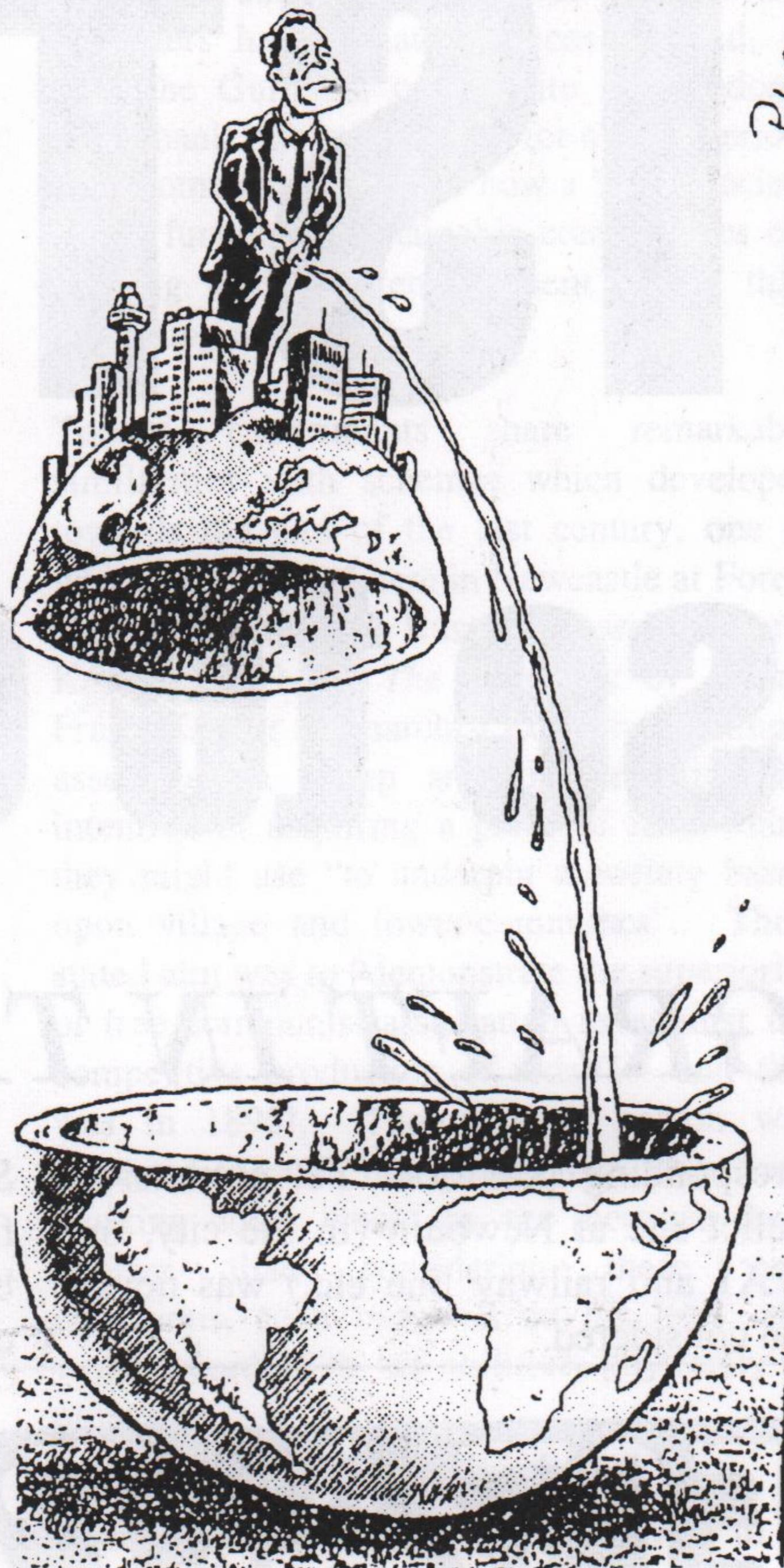
Can Capitalism be Green?

THE LEAD UP TO THE present General election has seen very little debate on 'Green Issues': for the main political parties it seems that the issue of British sovereignty in Europe is of greater importance than the fact that the ten hottest, driest years recorded in Britain have all been in the 1980s and 1990s and that already this year, in April, there are countrywide fears of drought due to, in some areas, less than one fifth of average rainfall.

It would appear that the 'Green challenge' which peaked in the 1980s and led to all the main political parties claiming that they had taken on 'green policies' no longer exists and that perhaps the myth that capitalism can be green has been accepted by the majority of the British electorate. Potentially, awareness of environmental destruction poses an ideological threat to capitalist exploitation of the environment. However, somewhat ironically, the emergence of 'green politics' has served to provide enterprising business with yet a new market: that of the educated middle-class consumer who has sufficient a conscience to wish to buy 'environmentally friendly' products. Companies such as the 'Body Shop' mushroomed in size as this lucrative new market was tapped for all it was worth, with many supermarkets, hardly the 'greenest' of organizations, setting up re-cycling centres on their premises in order to appeal to this new 'green consumer'.

Myth

The idea that capitalism can be greened is undoubtedly a myth. To this date, the most significant attempt by capitalist states to address the issues of global environmental destruction was the so-called 'Earth Summit' held in Rio a few years ago. Although there were high hopes for the conference at the outset, what was actually produced at the end of twenty years of preparation was pitiful. 'Agenda 21', for example, contains a few useful points about the imperative of re-cycling and regulation of waste emissions, yet it came with no legal obligation for companies to act on its suggestions and, of course, required funding in order to be seriously put into effect which was not forthcoming. Another proposal on the preservation of 'biodiversity' (to protect plant and animal diversity) was not signed by representatives of the most powerful economy in the world, the USA, as this would pose a potential threat to the practices of Trans-National corporations



(TNCs: 500 of which control around 80% of world trade and investment). Although 110 countries signed the proposal on global warming, which also carried an undertaking to give the plan legal teeth, capitalist economic rationale still came into play: whilst scientists were recommending an instant reduction of 60% of greenhouse gasses, the proposal only attempted to reduce levels by the year 2000 to the level of emissions in 1990!

(Something similar happened in 1987 with the

Montreal Protocol which agreed on the halving of dangerous CFC gasses by the year 2000, yet scientists had argued that an immediate reduction of 85% was necessary if the Ozone layer was to have

any chance of recovering.) Other proposals at the Earth Summit, such as that on desertification, went the same way. The TNCs were well organised, lobbying the richer nations to ensure they did nothing that would potentially limit their profits, with a consortium of top TNC representatives having special access to the Secretary General of the Summit. Many 'greens' were severely disappointed by the sham that was the Earth Summit. Those who understood the nature of capitalism a little better realised that there could have been no other outcome and that the interests of capitalism will always come before those of working people and their environment.

Debts

Perhaps one of the most graphical cases of capitalism causing and promoting in a very obvious manner massive destruction of global resources is that of Brazil (and much of what is true for Brazil is equally true for the rest of the globe.) The institutions of international capitalism, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank have been insisting that Brazil repays them \$120 billion that it owes. These institutions have the power to impose 'structural adjustment' policies which force the debtor countries to open up their natural resources to TNCs, as well as forcing their economies to export cheap raw materials in order to make 'hard' foreign cash in order to service their debts. In Brazil's case this merely leads to

production for profit and not for need means that at present there exists an incredibly wasteful system that seeks to maximise consumption at the expense of all else.

the increasing rape of that beautiful and priceless world treasure, the Amazonian basin, which provides

hardwoods for export and land to grow luxury cash crops for Western markets such as coffee and cocoa. However, the cancellation of debts would not solve this problem: companies involved in Brazil, as

elsewhere, have no intention what so ever of preserving what represents to them an immense resource from which massive profits can be extracted. Within Brazil itself, a tiny class of powerful landowners reap in their share of the benefits of this destruction: the richest one percent of Brazilian landowners own fifteen times as much land as the poorest 56%, with 20 million people owning no land at all on which to subsist.

Growth

At the Earth Summit, US President George Bush made the incredible statement that: 'environmental protection and a growing economy are inseparable'. What he should have said, if he had wanted to be truthful, was that the concepts of 'economic growth' and environmental protection are absolutely incompatible. John Major was closer to the mark with his line that 'money is the root of all progress', although he perhaps should have added to the end of this sentence the words 'towards environmental Armageddon'.

Green Party

All this seriously throws into question the policies, and indeed very existence of the 'Green Party'. The Green Party stands for many 'radical' policies. For example, it talks of the need for 'zero growth' and to make local economies as self-sufficient as possible in order to minimise the need for wasteful transportation of goods. All fine in theory, but the Green Party is under the serious illusion that these things can be achieved by being elected to government and within the present capitalist economic system. Firstly, the British Parliament, even with the political will, simply does not have the power to challenge both national and international capitalism in this way. Such a challenge requires that, in a period when capital is becoming truly global, this international trend be reversed. This would undoubtedly destroy British business's profitability in the global market and for this reason would be opposed by all the forces of the State, as well as many workers, fearful for their jobs and livelihoods.

Expand or Die

Moreover, the concept of 'zero growth' capitalism is a nonsense. Every company has to grow, produce greater profits and expand into new markets or it will be crushed by its competitors in the global market place: this is the first law of the capitalist system. It is evident that capitalism cannot ever be greened: the imperative of maximising profits will always come before anything else, and production for profit and not for need means that at present there exists an incredibly wasteful system that seeks to maximise consumption at the expense of all else. It is clear, then, that if we want to create a truly green system, capitalism is a non-starter. It must be eliminated on an international scale, and this can only occur by means of an international social revolution. Only then, when production is controlled by all and is for need and not profit can human beings live in a manner which is in harmony with their world. The sooner greens realise this and become revolutionaries, the better for the planet and the human race.

Roads To Nowhere

SINCE THE BEGINNINGS of the anti-roads protests at Twyford Down, the movement has grown in size and importance with the most recent campaigns at Newbury last year and in Devon this year (with the word 'Swampy' coming into extensive media use) attracting much media coverage and public support. With the recent march for Social Justice held in London, it would appear that sections of the anti-road movement are coming to realise that their struggle is interconnected with the struggles of others who find themselves victims of the profit system. And with good reason. A valid criticism of anti-roads movement in the past was that it failed to criticise or even attempt to understand the underlying causes of the phenomenon that it was opposing, thus rendering it less effective than it could have been.

New roads are not just the inevitable consequences of 'progress'. They are both a political and economic response to the imperative of maximising the transportability of goods and services in what is becoming an increasingly global capitalist market. All capitalist governments need to provide for the fast movement of both goods and services and people (either as workers or consumers.) Thus, whilst capitalism and the tendency towards globalisation exist (and you can't have one without the other,) so will threats to our already severely developed country continue to exist.

Railways

At the outset of the road building programme, many argued that it would have been cheaper, less environmentally damaging and more effective to invest in more railways. A good example of this was the M11 in East London. Here it would have cost a tenth of the money, not lead to the destruction of huge numbers of houses and been less environmentally polluting if there had been an updating of the

tube line in the area. Millions of pounds were 'invested' in knocking 5 minutes off the journey time of commuters. Clearly, other factors were at work. The roads lobby of

union power as they had the potential to freeze the economy, if most transportation of goods was done by rail. In order to destroy this supposed threat, the railway was

deliberately run down and subsequently privatised in a further attempt to weaken the unions whilst the roads programme mushroomed.

Profit System

It is clear that the kind of destruction that is brought about by roads development is an inherent part of the system in which we live, the system that puts profit before all else: in this case our safety,

health and our environment. Whilst it is important to resist as much as possible the development of more roads and argue for a sensible 'public transport' alternative, all anti-roads protesters must understand that ultimately it is the profit system that is the driving force of this and other environmental destruction and that ultimately it is the profit system that needs to be removed, if we are not to continue fighting rearguard actions which, against the power of the state and the interests of the bosses, we cannot win.



construction companies, car companies, the AA and RAC (all good donors to, surprise, surprise, the Tory party) certainly plays a major part in these decisions. For capitalism, cars are simply far more profitable than trains: one train does the job of 1,000 cars or 150 lorries.

There were also other more directly political factors stemming from Mad Thatcher's paranoid fear of unions. Investment in the railways was being deliberately cut down: the rail unions were seen as the last bastion of

REVIEW: WHERE THERE'S BRASS THERE'S MUCK.

£1 published by the ACF

This new 60 page pamphlet, subtitled 'Ecology and Anarchism', presents an Anarchist-Communist analysis of the ecological crisis. The four main areas covered are the ruling 'classes' response to environmental concerns, ideas and technology, green politics and ecology and class.

In essence it argues that ecological analysis needs to be part of a wider class analysis, suggesting that both are inter-related and equally important. In coming to this conclusion links between class conflict, ecology and technology are examined. On the one hand working-class history is explored to show why environmental destruction is occurring on a massive scale, who wins and who loses, and how workers have fought this. On the other hand, fundamental capitalist ideas are challenged, particularly those which support the ideology behind the plunder of natural resources. The book goes into Darwin and other intellectuals, while the Luddites get a sympathetic hearing.

Some of the issues are familiar like car usage and road building, but others such as the critique of the 'New World Order', show how far apart ecological harmony and capitalism are. Simply, it's one or the other. Capitalism can be reformed in numerous ways but its ideology and hierarchical organisation can never produce a society of equal humans, never mind animals and the environment.

From this then, the pamphlet explains the alternatives, asking 'is "Lifestylism" Enough?', before introducing the US Green Anarchist and 'Monkeywrenchers'. Finally, we are given a vision of the revolutionary alternative. 'We need to take direct control of every aspect of our lives through the social revolution: collectively seizing control of the land, workplaces and streets, and sharing decisions, work and wealth - deciding what is produced and how, dissolving the divisions between home, work and play, people and the rest of nature'.

WHERE THERE'S BRASS
THERE'S MUCK
ECOLOGY AND ANARCHISM



ANARCHIST
COMMUNIST
FEDERATION

The Clousden Hill Colony - the story of Newcastle's first anarchist communists

THE IDEA OF THE 'common people' reclaiming the land is an idea which has inspired countless fighters against injustice over the centuries, perhaps the most well known being the Diggers during the English civil war in the seventeenth century. That same vision is seen today in campaigns such as "The Land Is Ours", where protesters have squatted pieces of land, as with the Guinness owned site on London's south bank last year, which, for a brief period, gave some example as to how a future society might function: sustainable communities co-existing with the environment rather than exploiting it.

Today's experiments share remarkable similarities with schemes which developed towards the end of the last century, one of which was created here in Newcastle at Forest Hall. Inspired by Russian anarchist Peter Kropotkin's book *The Conquest of Bread*, Frank Kapper an anarchist exile from Europe, assembled a group around him with the intention of acquiring a piece of land which they might use "to underpin a society based upon village and town communes". Their stated aim was to "demonstrate the superiority of free communist association as against the competitive production of today" - and this was in 1895!. Though each person was expected to contribute something, "No fixed working hours would be set [because they] believe that, considering these new conditions, each one will do his best, and work according to his abilities, physically or otherwise".

Difficult start

Though committed, the first years were to be very difficult for the colonists. Subsistence proved to be highly labour intensive. Despite using more scientific methods, the limited numbers coupled with poor land and the inexperience of land and livestock management, did little to advance their plans and spread their ideas. By 1897, however "an air of prosperity was apparent on the farm". The colony by now had established itself as a promising example of what people could do given the right conditions. The paper *Freedom* described the venture as "one of the most hopeful undertakings that has ever been seen in these islands". As its reputation grew, so did its numbers. By the summer of 1897 the colony "was flooded with more members than it could maintain". Furthermore, some of these new entrants, such as Danish gardener Harry Rasmussen sought to convert the colony into a straightforward co-operative venture, which implied a move away from its original aims.

Problems

Problems were to persist, and antagonisms were soon fired between the original members and the new recruits. Kapper dismissed unfavourable reports in the anarchist press however and continued his efforts to defend the principles upon which the colony was founded. The strains were to become too much for Kapper however, and towards the end of the year he found himself forced to leave. By early 1898, all the founding members had left, enabling Harry Rasmussen long with others such as Frank Starr, to convert the colony into a straightforward business enterprise, being renamed the Clousden Hill Co Operative Nurseries Company Ltd. The company struggled on for several more years lapsing from debt to debt, but by the early years of the new century the company was to declare itself bankrupt. As for Kapper, he was to move away from the area, but he never fully gave up his dream of establishing a self sufficient commune with principles founded upon freedom and independence.

Lessons

What then can we learn from such experiments? The first and most important lesson is that on their own, colonies, communes, or whatever one chooses to call them cannot operate on their own in isolation. They cannot exist *outside* of society however much the members might like them to. Scarce resources, limited goals and the daily realities of capitalism: bills, rents, intimidation etc. etc. all combine to ensure that at best such projects are marginalised or at worst crushed. As an example of how we all *could* live it does little to address how most of us live at the moment.

If we are to truly try to change our world, for the benefit of *all* people, we have to work within our own communities, and seek to build resistance in the here and now. Examples are useful in giving people ideas, but they are all too often viewed as being exclusive and elitist, not to mention highly impractical for many people's lives.

Furthermore, it takes people away from the point of struggle and uses up much of the energy that could be put to better use in joining with others to fight back. In a world that at present is in danger from catastrophe caused by capitalism, it could be said that such schemes can only hinder and confuse the ways we should be tackling this rotten system. Choosing the wrong path to proceed along could prove to be a very costly mistake indeed.

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