

Catastrophic capitalism

Last week, Clare Short claimed “the suggestion that trade sanctions should be used to secure (an end to child labour) would simply mean marginalising the poor countries for their poverty”. A few days later this so-called left-wing socialist development Secretary of State found herself trapped behind police lines inside the Sheraton hotel during the disturbances of environmentalists, anarchists and others at the Seattle meeting of the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

On Tuesday 30th November the City authorities introduced an overnight curfew on downtown Seattle when demonstrators marched on the main conference hotel where world trade talks and ceremonies had been due to start. Faced with 100,000 protesters Mayor Schell called in the National Guard and the Battle of Seattle had begun.

The premises of the usual suspects for promoting ‘corporate capitalism’ – McDonalds, Gap, Starbucks and Bank of America – were all attacked by protesters. In the end the demonstrators

forced the WTO to postpone and finally cancel its opening ceremony. Demonstrators forced a change of venue for the WTO meeting from a downtown Seattle theatre to the city’s more secure convention centre.

One Chinese observer at the talks said: “This in as significant for the West as Tiananmen Square was for us”. The spokesperson continued: “It is unprecedented – governments will have to respond”.

An embarrassed President Clinton is now saying the protesters must be listened to, and is seeking talks with some of the activists. Al Gore, the vice-president, apparently sensing that there are few votes in ‘free trade’, has stayed away from the WTO talks. Pascal Lamy, the European Union Trade Commissioner, said of the riots: “What’s happening outside [on the streets] has an influence”. He added that the demonstrators’ concerns had to be answered.

Slavery and the human cost

The demo had been planned over several

months to oppose the new round of trade liberalisation talks. The activists include environmentalists, labour unions, farmers, churches, consumer rights groups, human rights organisations and anarchists.

From Seattle John Vidal, in *The Guardian* writes: “We set off, led by steelworkers and loggers, shouting and singing and drumming. Anita Roddick is there. So, too, the Zapatistas, Tibetan monks, environmentalists, a few British veterans of the anti-GM and Newbury protests, and a rainbow collection of young America”. Everyone bar the Marxists and the traditional left.

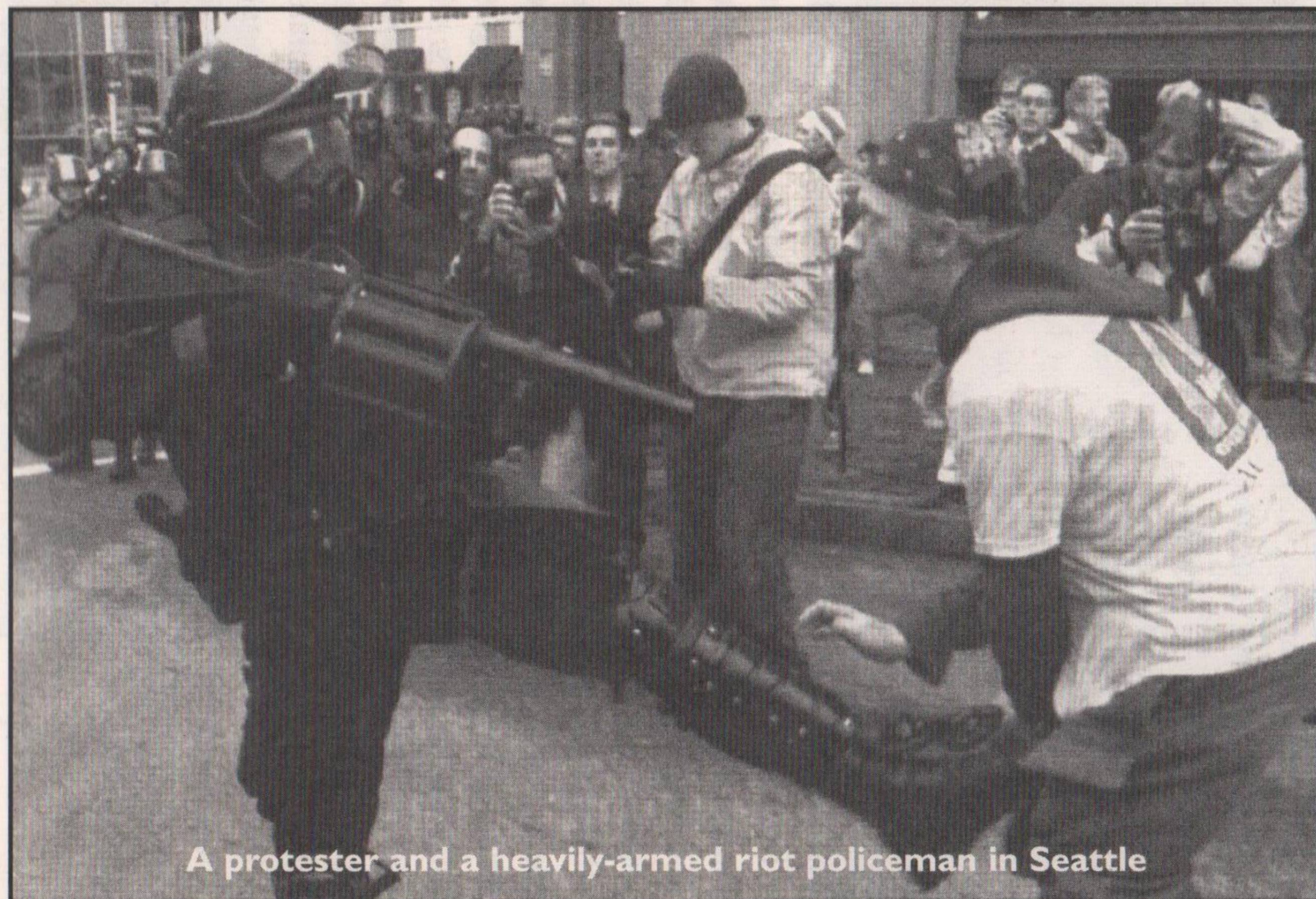
The old left has now been replaced under New Labour by the renovated left with the likes of Clare Short from Birmingham. She denounced the protesters for their knee-jerk reaction to child labour, and attacked the groups in Seattle who want to destroy the WTO. She wants us all to persuade regimes and corporate capitalists to be more humane.

Progress: profit and loss

Anarchists are constantly confronted with the charge ‘you can’t stand in the way of progress’, or ‘there’s no alternative’. When we raise anxious voices about child labour, exploitation, pollution, wage slavery, corporate corruption, we are told to ‘get real’. The proponents of this system of gross upheaval call it ‘dynamic capitalism’.

This system runs in the face of human decency. But it is justified by what Orwell called the Theory of Catastrophic Gradualism. This theory holds that nothing is ever accomplished without human calamities, unemployment, misery and suffering. We are assured that prosperity will eventually come out of all the chaos.

(continued on page 2)



A protester and a heavily-armed riot policeman in Seattle

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So are the rich still getting richer?

Land of Cockaigne

In Peter Brueghel the Elder's 1567 painting, 'Land of Cockaigne', we are shown a Utopia where food and drink are ever abundant, where fences are made from sausages and cooked food flies into the open mouths of the land's inhabitants. Absurd in the sixteenth century, perhaps, but for us at the end of the twentieth century, how close are we to the Land of Cockaigne?

More than a trillion dollars is traded each day on global currency markets (in his 1999 Reith Lectures, Anthony Giddens points out that measured as a stack of hundred-dollar notes such an amount would be over 120 miles high – twenty times higher than Everest). The flow of such wealth, though, appears only to benefit a small number. The 225 richest individuals in the world now earn as much in a year as half the world's population. The share of the poorest fifth of the world's population in global income has dropped, from 2.3 % to 1.4 % in the period 1989-1998, while the share of the richest fifth has risen. In the US, on the back of an economic boom, the Centre on Budget and Policy Priorities found that in 1999 the gap between rich and poor will be as great as at any time since the Great Depression. The richest 2.7 million Americans (1% of the population) will have as much after-tax income as the poorest 100 million (38% of the population). In the UK, according to the Child Poverty Action Group, 23% live in poverty. During the 1980s, income inequality grew faster in the UK than in any other developed country bar New Zealand. By 1991, 52% of the tax cuts implemented since 1979 had gone to the top 10% of income earners. The incomes of the poorest tenth in 1991-92 were 17% lower in real terms than in 1979. In 1995-6 about one in five Britons were living in poverty, compared to one in

ten in 1979. In 1979, one in twelve children lived in households that were poor. By 1995-96 one in three children were living in poor households. Under New Labour, a government committed to 'wealth creation' not 'wealth distribution', according to Trade Secretary Stephen Byers, the policy of cutting the income from benefits of the poorest while boosting the tax breaks of the richest, has continued.

The Land of Cockaigne, then, appears unwilling to share its bounty equally. Some mouths are empty, while others are stuffed full. Jan Leschly is the highest paid executive in Britain, at drugs company SmithKline Beecham. He earns £65 million per year, in salary and share bonuses. As *The Guardian* observed (17th April 1998) it would take an averagely-paid London teacher three thousand years to match Jan Leschly's annual salary.

The Queen gets £7.9 million per annum from the Civil List. The total cost of the monarchy to the taxpayer in 1997 – Civil List income, maintenance of the Crown Estates, etc. – was £45 million (figures from *The National Wealth* by Dominic Hobson, Harper Collins, 1999). The richest two hundred people in Britain probably own £1 in every £50 of the wealth of the nation (Hobson). Lord Sainsbury – whose vested interests now inform Labour Party policy – was, in 1998, worth £3,300 million, almost three times as much as that purported scourge of the establishment, Mohammed al Fayad, whose retail empire has netted him a paltry £1,200 million. The salaried rich, meanwhile, are catching up property-owning 'betters'. Within four years average salaries of the highest paid directors at regional electricity companies had almost quadrupled to £233,000. When *The Observer* investigated the value of the share options owned by the directors of the privatised electricity and water companies in

1995, their value was over £44 million, a sum equivalent to £364,000 a head. Four electricity company directors had become millionaires through shares and share options alone, and another 21 half-millionaires. In all twelve water and electricity directors had become millionaires (Hobson).

In the banking world, millionaires are ten a penny. In 1996, nine people at Lazard's, seven directors at Flemings, and four at Schroders earned over £1 million. In 1995 the average remuneration of the directors of the Deutsche Morgan Grenfell group was £405,966; of the banking arm £558,585; and of the asset management arm, £380,711. The highest paid director in each case earned, respectively, £1.9 million, £1.2 million and £1.3 million (as Dominic Hobson dryly notes, "It was not a particularly outstanding year").

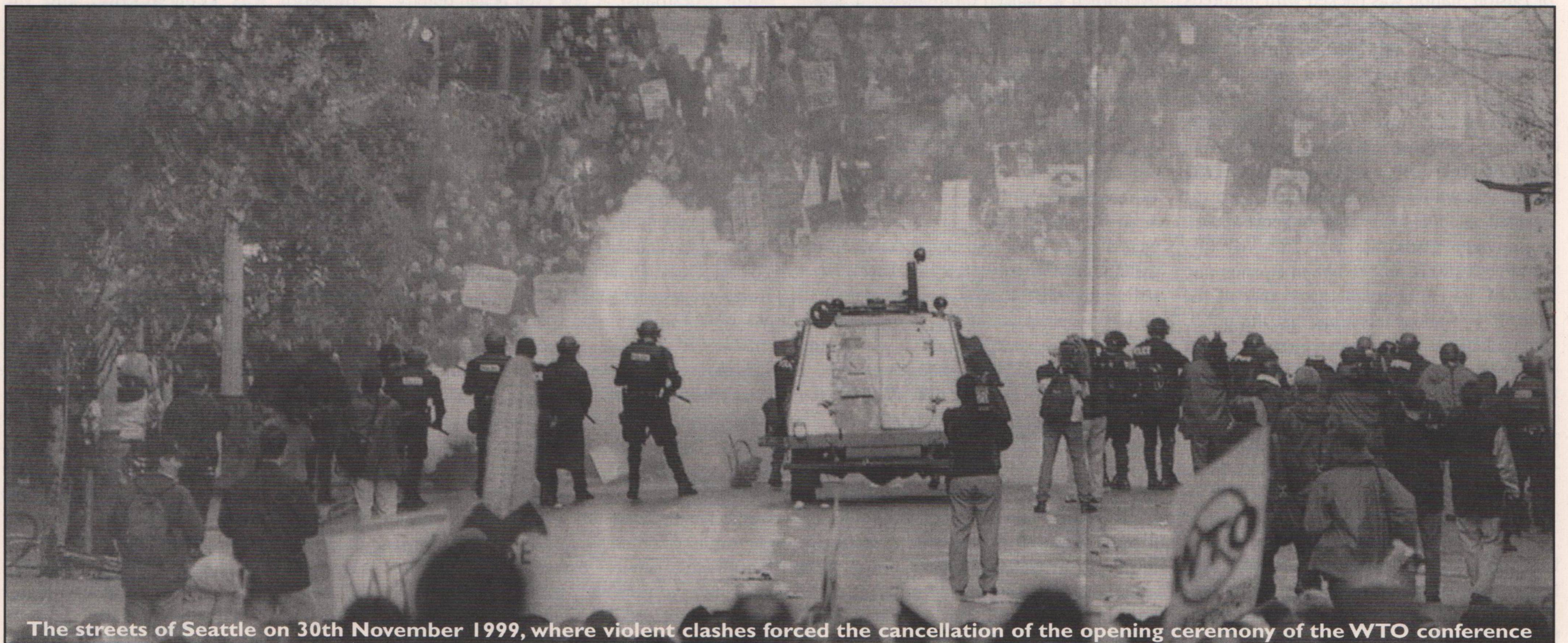
The 1995 Social Trends report observes that whilst the top 1% have 29% of the wealth, the bottom 50% have 6%. Peter Townsend has commented that "Riches are not only inherited or made: to be rich they have to be unavailable to the vast majority of the population. A theory of riches depends not only on theories of acquisition – how much wealth is inherited, accumulated by entrepreneurial effort or by the exercise of scarce skills. It depends, also, on theories of denial of access to wealth – through selective succession, testamentary concentration, limitation of entry to the professions, monopolisation of capital and property or at least severe restriction on the opportunity to acquire land and property" (Abercrombie and Ward, *British Society Polity*, 1994).

As we write, thousands have begun to gather in Seattle to demonstrate against the World Trade Organisation meeting, designed to further expand the mandate of the WTO, and organisation set up to force free trade

upon the poorest nations, through restriction of government interference in the terms of trade. Over the last twenty years the share of global trade of the least developed countries has halved. At the time of the Global Agreement on Tariffs and Trade in 1994 the OECD predicted that Africa would lose out to the tune of \$2.6 billion in the next decade. As an example of the purpose of the WTO: Guatemala abandoned a policy, modelled on UNICEF recommendations, prohibiting any words or images that suggested baby formula was as beneficial as breast feeding. Baby food suppliers Gerber threatened a trade protest on the grounds that the law infringed its trademark of a fat, smiling baby. The WTO has used the threat of the WTO to overturn a ban on lead in products, South African efforts to produce their own AIDS drugs, and Japanese attempts to comply with the Kyoto climate accord. The WTO is part of the machinery of theft and exclusion which maintains the wealth of the few on the back of the poverty of the many; which ensures that the likes of Bill Gates and Lord Sainsbury enjoy the bounty of the Land of Cockaigne while the majority of us are only servants or spectators at the feast.

At the close of the twentieth century, we would do well to act on the words of a revolutionary from the nineteenth century As Bakunin contended, we need to "come to the realisation that liberty was merely a lie where the great majority of the population is reduced to a miserable existence, where, deprived of education, of leisure, and of bread, it is fated to serve as an under-prop for the powerful and the rich ... The social question thus appears to be first and foremost the question of the complete overthrow of society".

Nick S.



The streets of Seattle on 30th November 1999, where violent clashes forced the cancellation of the opening ceremony of the WTO conference

N30: capitalism exposed

On 30th November London saw phase two of the growing anti-capitalist campaign emerging internationally as we reach the end of the century. Timed to coincide with the opening of the World Trade Organisation meeting in Seattle, this well co-ordinated global event was manifest in the UK by actions organised by the loose network that brought us the enormously successful J18 earlier in the year.

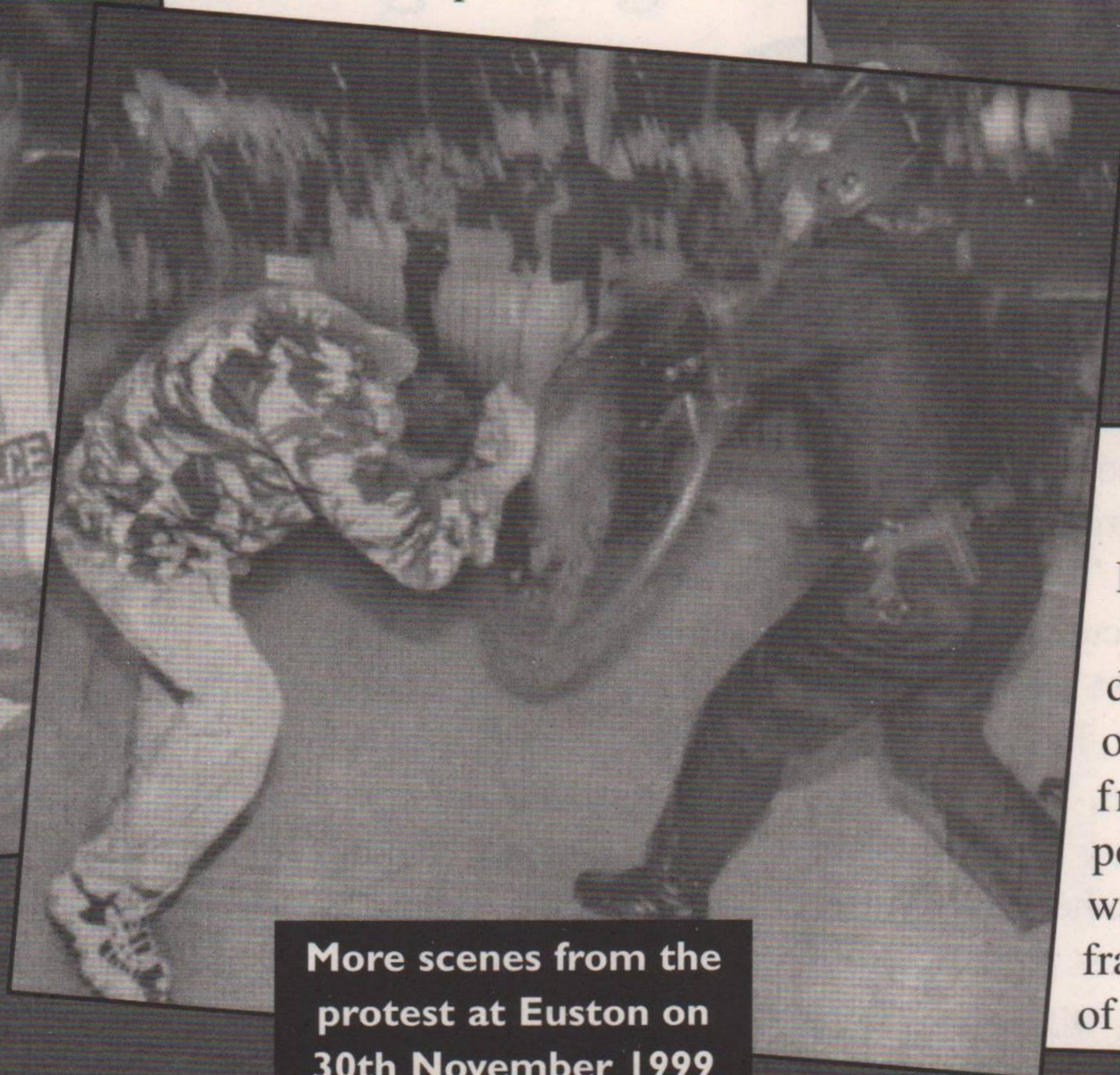
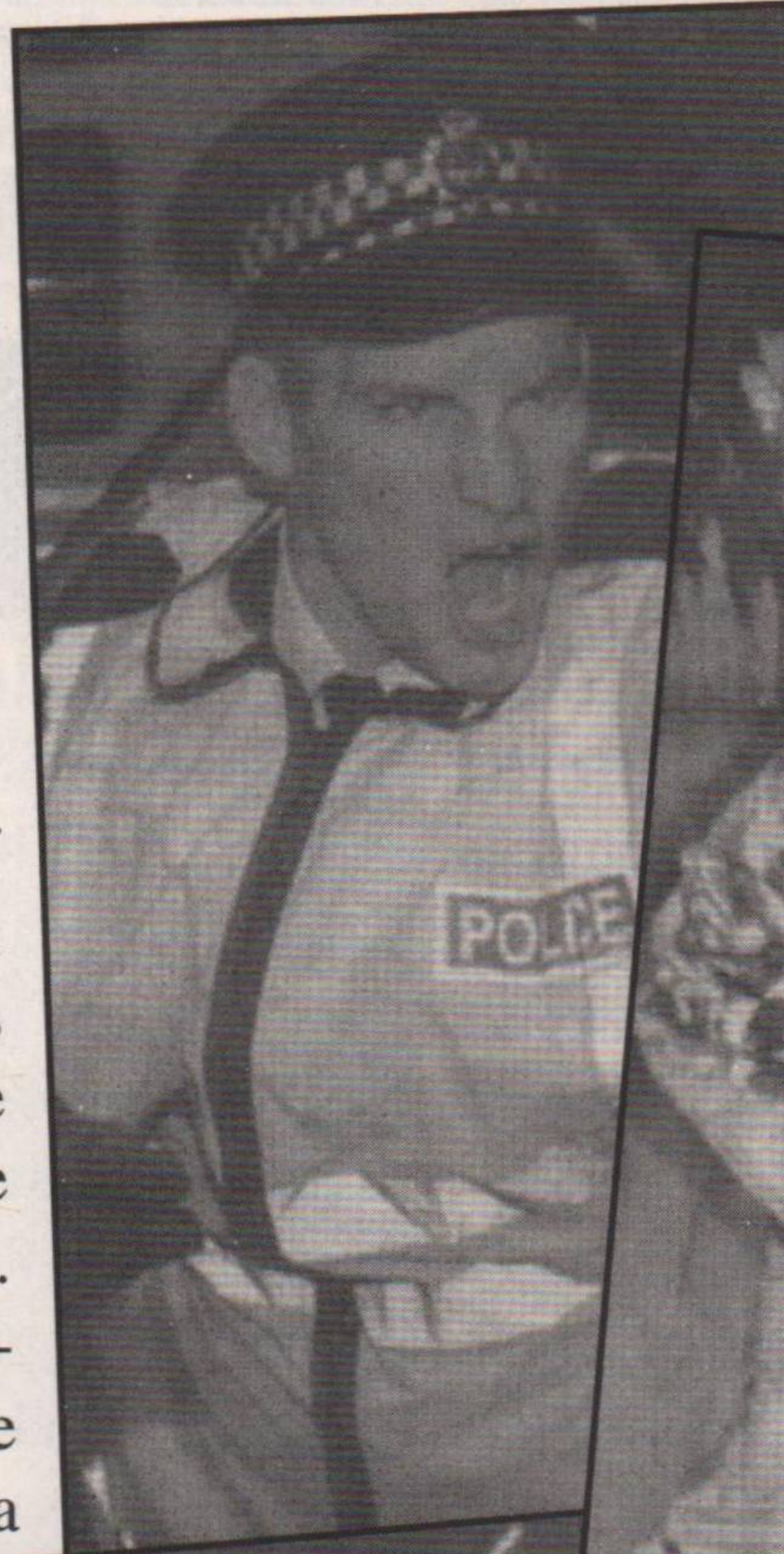
Several small events passed off peacefully throughout the day and at 5pm crowds gathered eagerly at Euston station for the grand finale of the day. The British contribution, like several others around the world, was more than just a protest against the WTO, important though this is. It was a self consciously anti-capitalist event, made possible by a wide coalition from a variety of political positions, many of whom were revolutionary 'libertarian' and several broadly anarchist (contrary to media reports these actions are not yet dominated by anarchists, alas, though as usual many of the active key players are anarchists, allegedly, and the ethos was certainly anarchic – so perhaps we should welcome these media allegations and hope they become ever more self-fulfilling, we could certainly do with the publicity).

The exact form the final action took was an RTS style demonstration (a smaller scale version of the now famous Liverpool Street 'party') against the increasing encroachment of capitalism, and in particular the privatisation of our railways. The demonstration was to be a 'legal' and peaceful one, organised jointly by Reclaim The Streets, the RMT trade union and anti-privatisation groups. Unfortunately, as is often the case these days, the powers that be had other ideas.

The exact unfolding of events is as yet unclear but, as before at J18, I will relate my eyewitness account. By 5:30pm the forecourt of Euston Station was packed with hundreds of demonstrators. Nothing like the turnout at J18, predictably, but a sizeable turnout none the less. Police presence was high, but not provocative (they had clearly learnt at least one lesson since the summer). The RTS drummers were in full swing and speakers spoke worthy words. This went on till gone 6:30pm at which point a small group of us decided the local pub was a good option. Fortunately from the first floor of this building we were able to obtain a panoramic view of the entire south east corner of the area. It was about this time that the police claim elements of the crowd began to attack them and the riot squad was called in. From my vantage point, however, I saw no such activity. The first thing that was apparent to us was that police in riot gear began to surround the entire area. When a large number of people tried to leave the area en masse they were pushed back by a line of police – a strange move to make if there was 'violence building up' in the area. The area immediately around the station was now under police siege and it was clear they would allow no one to leave. This led to an

increasing violent exchange between police and demonstrators at the exit roads from Euston. Though it should be added this was nothing like the level of violence at J18 and consisted mostly of cat and mouse police charges and counter-pushes from the crowd.

At one point a surreal battle seemed to be taking place between police and

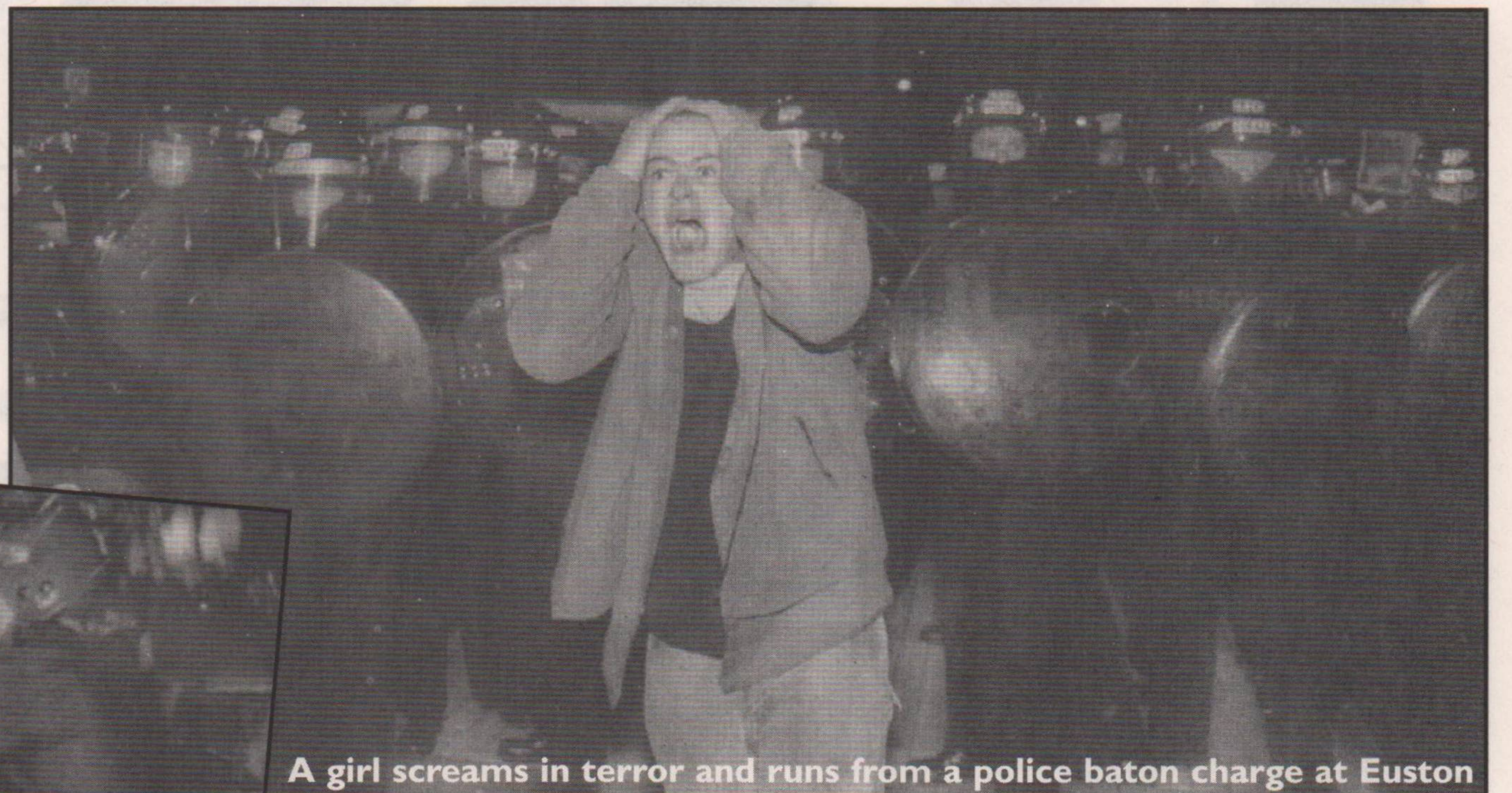


More scenes from the protest at Euston on 30th November 1999



demonstrators for control of an empty bus lane. The police at one stage advancing and guarding it zealously, only to be pushed back by a sit-down protest that created perhaps the first temporary autonomous bus lane in history. Surprisingly throughout this the level of aggression was minimal – I never saw a single bottle or brick thrown at any time, contrary to police reports. Things heated up, literally, when the besieged demonstrators discovered a suspiciously abandoned police van in their midst. Naturally, in their frustration, they overturned it, danced on it and set it ablaze. Fortunately there seemed to be little petrol in its tank and the blaze was contained, being also conveniently parked under the stations sprinkler system (fostering further suspicious speculation). The police used this incident as an excuse to advance *en masse* and clear the area.

However this was only the beginning. Whereas the policing at J18 could be described as stupid, brutal and crass, the tactics here were calculated, devious and insidious (an improvement? Perhaps). As the police advanced in units openings were made and the crowd carefully carved up and divided into small groups, which they attempted to shepherd out of the area in different directions. But like many devious plans this backfired to a certain extent. The groups were still large enough to cause trouble for police units and at some places violence kicked off dramatically. More significantly as many of these groups dispersed they began spontaneous demonstrations wherever they went, occasionally routing small groups of police, blocking roads and causing traffic chaos. Chaos spread over large parts of the region,



A girl screams in terror and runs from a police baton charge at Euston

with reports of trouble as far apart as Kings Cross and Baker Street.

At this point many of us decided we had had enough of 'revolution as spectacle' from our coliseum-like position (entertaining as it was) and decided to join the fray (in an investigative role of course).

there were still some outrageous acts of individual police brutality – one of the worst in which an invalid on crutches left behind by departing demonstrators was battered with a police shield for 'not getting off the street quick enough'. Members of the public remonstrated with the offender and he withdrew sheepishly. Eventually after pushing back the demonstrators with repeated charges (despite their chants of peaceful protest) and thinning them out over the region, the day's

events began to come to an end. Reports of 38 arrests were heard and that at least one police officer had been badly hurt; we saw several injured demonstrators, one covered in blood, but amazingly it seems the event passed with relatively little collateral or

human damage – perhaps partly due to the much lower turnout and police 'restraint'.

An anarchist success? Difficult to say not knowing the exact aims of the action. But at least the real foundation of capitalism – state power – was publicly exposed in the suppression of peaceful dissent and the 'temporary police state' invoked. The positive public response to this was also interesting. In general the anti-capitalist campaign was kept ticking, and the tactic of spontaneous, de-centred, multiple demonstration with apparent motive seemed to confuse and confound police tacticians. We shall see what the coming year brings.

Prometheus Rex

(continued from page 8)

Market capitalism 'running wild' and 'red raw in tooth and claw' is seen in Seattle by the World Trade Organisation as a progressive force *on balance*. Just as 58 years ago the socialist Kingsley Martin argued that Stalin had served the cause of 'progress' *on balance* and that a few million 'liquidations' must not be allowed to disguise this 'fact'. The objection to us and the environmentalists is that we are either 'unrealistic' or 'sentimentalists' or both. An editorial in *The Times* last week declared: "There is little evidence that the protesters in Seattle are a rising tide of angry humanity dammed by a wall of unresponsive corporate concrete. Observers must hope that they, their sentimental attachment to various forms of protectionism and their willingness to use violence represent an ebb tide in the

affairs of men".

What anarchists must ponder is how the distinguished statesmen in Seattle, and corporate businessmen who tell us 'you can't make an omelette without breaking eggs', go about measuring the progress they claim will ensue from the mess in the frying pan of the world economic system. As Wittgenstein pointed out: "A historical change may be progress and also be ruin". Anarchists and environmentalists suspect ruin for many and progress for a few. But, as Wittgenstein made clear, there is no way of weighing one against the other to claim we are getting 'progress on the whole'.

How will we gauge the progress between the mentality of Ms Short and that of the distinguished statesmen of Seattle?

BB

A Change of Perspective

In the aftermath of the recent train crash near Paddington, certain attitudes towards the railway network have been expressed. Sections of the media have appropriated the rage of the victims' families and targeted it at Railtrack and the government, who are accused of valuing economic health more than the installation of more effective, but costly, safety mechanisms. Hardly any sympathy has been expressed towards the driver of that ill-fated train, and this change of perspective seems to be a result of privatisation.

In 1957, the train driver John Axon, who was killed in an accident near Buxton, was posthumously awarded the George Cross. Judging by the personal recollections of his friends and colleagues, as recorded on Ewan McColl's 'radio ballad' entitled *The Ballad of John Axon*, it seems that there was once a sense of pride and dedication (which was rewarded with public respect) amongst railwaymen which is not so prevalent, at least in self-presentation, now.

The various rail and train operators are promoting themselves as retail businesses, with their most crucial employees serving ever-shorter apprenticeships. The driver of the Paddington train had been with the company for three years; his counterparts on the steam trains of the early twentieth century had to spend 21 years 'on the footplate' before being passed as drivers. It is hard to imagine us now paying tribute to the glorified waiters, salespeople and shop assistants who happen to take us from A to B.

Is there any serious credibility now attached to the assertion that a public service should be run by out-and-out capitalists? Why have successive governments allowed this social, as well as physical, tragedy to occur? Presumably because social well-being is not their main concern.

Ben Ward

— COPY DEADLINE —

The next issue of *Freedom* will be dated 15th January, and the last day for copy intended for this issue will be first post on Thursday 6th January 2000.

If possible contributions should be typed using double-spacing between lines, or can be sent as text files on disc (with a print-out please).

Please renew your subs early

More than half of subscriptions to *Freedom* expire at the end of the year. Your subscription is one of these if the number 6024 appears on the address label (the current issue is 6022, i.e. volume 60 number 22).

Our one-person volunteer subscriptions department would like subscribers to spread the load of year-end renewals by renewing early, and will reward those who do so by writing a thank you note on the acknowledgement slip.

Thanks from all of us to those who have already renewed early.

For Philip

Philip Sansom was the first anarchist I knowingly met. John Rety asked me to do a piece on the Malatesta Club for his coffee house magazine *Intimate Review*. "It's rumoured that anarchists meet there" he said, "Go and see them".

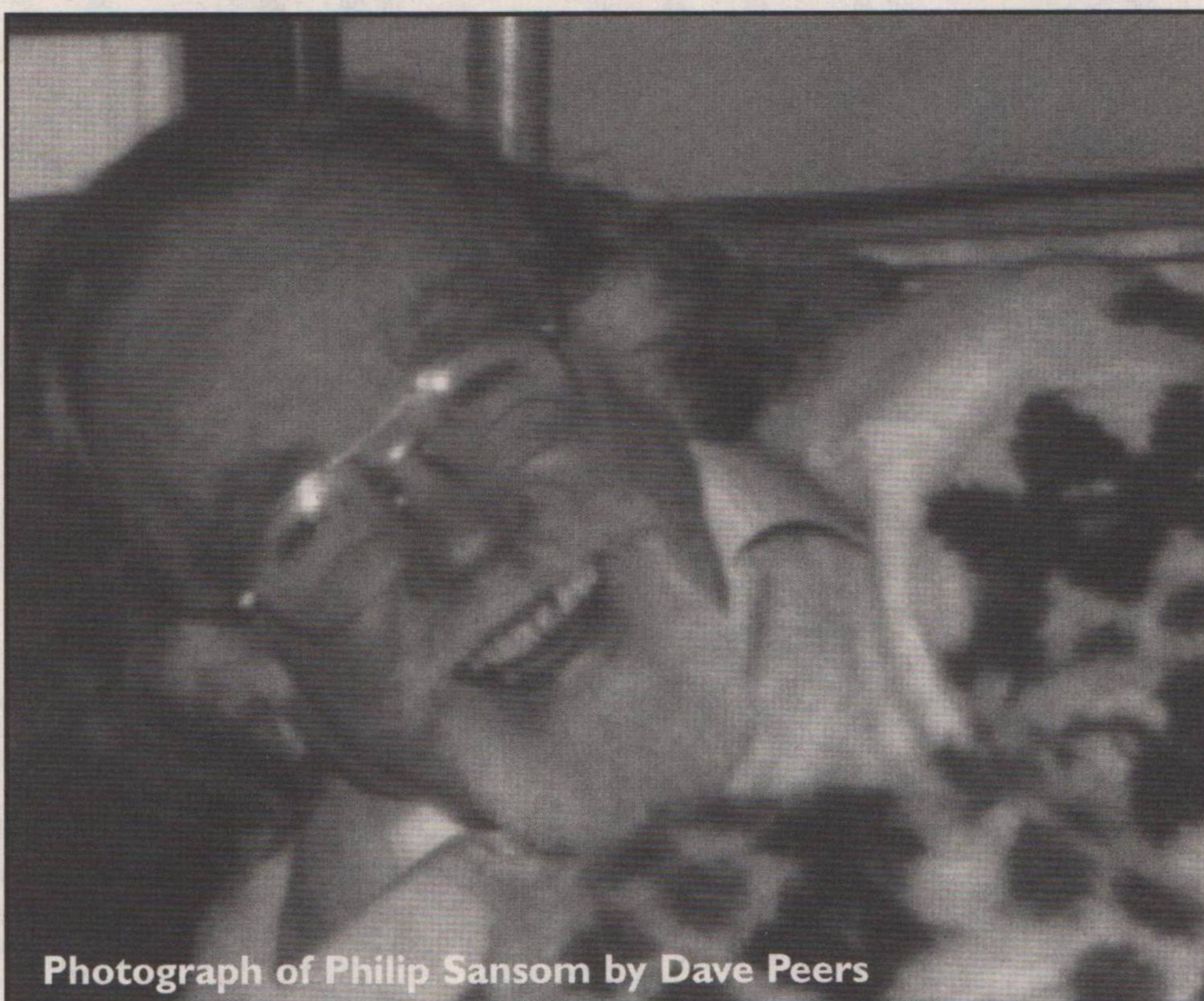
With some trepidation I went ... and met Philip Sansom. The piece I wrote on that occasion has thankfully been forgotten but I fell under the spell of Philip's persuasive personality and my life was never the same again.

Politically illiterate, I acquired the rudiments of a political education from Philip. It was he who taught me the basics of public speaking, and provided me with a reading list that was still remarkably useful ten years later when I went to read politics at Hull. Like many others I listened to him in Hyde Park, entertained by his eloquence and convinced by his ability to argue a case. This ability, as I have written else-where, so impressed one magistrate that he recommended that barristers take lessons from him. In Philip's role as orator he influenced thousands of people to think differently. They may not have called themselves anarchists but they altered their ideas as a result of hearing him.

Our paths diverged for a number of years and during that time tragedy hit both our lives. In Philip's case the murder of his daughter unsurprisingly sent him into a clinical depression and he became something of a recluse. He disabled his front door bell to avoid answering the door and more or less cut himself off from public activity. For a while even close friends like Donald Room found it difficult to get through to him. That isolation was never total though. It was usually possible to see him by phoning first and with regular company the fight against depression became more assured.

During his last three years I stayed with

him whenever I could get to London. He was always welcoming and stayed up long into the night playing records, telling stories and jokes, and arguing with much of his old relish. Some of the stories – like the time that



Photograph of Philip Sansom by Dave Peers

the police mixed up his surrealist connections with his politics and put him, John Hewetson and Vernon Richards into the 'Surrealist Party' – produced paroxysms of laughter that left him helpless.

My memories of Philip in his last years are good ones. He lived on Income Support it is true, his furniture was worn out and his sheets threadbare. But I remember the user-friendly kitchen – indicative of a man who loved cooking – the elaborately prepared breakfasts always with a clean tablecloth, the informed way with which he discussed the issues and political scandals of the day. The entertaining dissection of the current *Freedom*. The eager sallies out to Ronnie Scott's and the 100 Club to listen to music. This was not a man who had lost interest in life or was sunk in gloom. This was an active mind who was sensibly adjusting his lifestyle to the growing physical problems of age and was determined to relish his remaining years as best he could.

Also important perhaps was the intellectual start he gave many of us. We may not all have used that start in ways of which he approved but that was our problem, not his. I at least owed a massive debt to him.

John Pilgrim

Activities in Greater Manchester

Riotous Assembly

Originally named Activist Network, the Riotous Assembly in Manchester is a kind of clearing house for environmental, radical and libertarian activities in the area. This month's meeting was overflowing, with about fifty in attendance. Most of the meeting was taken up with a video and a talk by members of the Spanish group who earlier had occupied the Millennium Wheel in London. This group is protesting about the building of dams in Spain and India. Many libertarian affiliates were present.

Libertarian Socialist Discussion Group

The Manchester Libertarian Discussion Group is now up and running. The November meeting was mainly dedicated to organising the forthcoming Northern Anarchist Network Conference in January.

Bury Unemployed Workers' Association

The BUWA is a group of unemployed activists which has been involved in Groundswell and other campaigns against the JSA and New Deal. Its members are on the management committee of the Bury Unemployed Centre. It is at present trying to form an alliance with the Manchester Libertarians and Tameside Unemployed Workers' Alliance to organise joint projects in the North West.

Tameside Unemployed Workers' Alliance

The TUWA has members who have been involved in a number of local actions. It was historically in the forefront of Groundswell campaigns against the JSA. More recently members have been active in support of the Tameside careworkers and the campaign against the Council's sell-off of council houses. Some are involved in environmental activities. *Freedom* probably sells more here than in the rest of Manchester.



The New Military Humanism

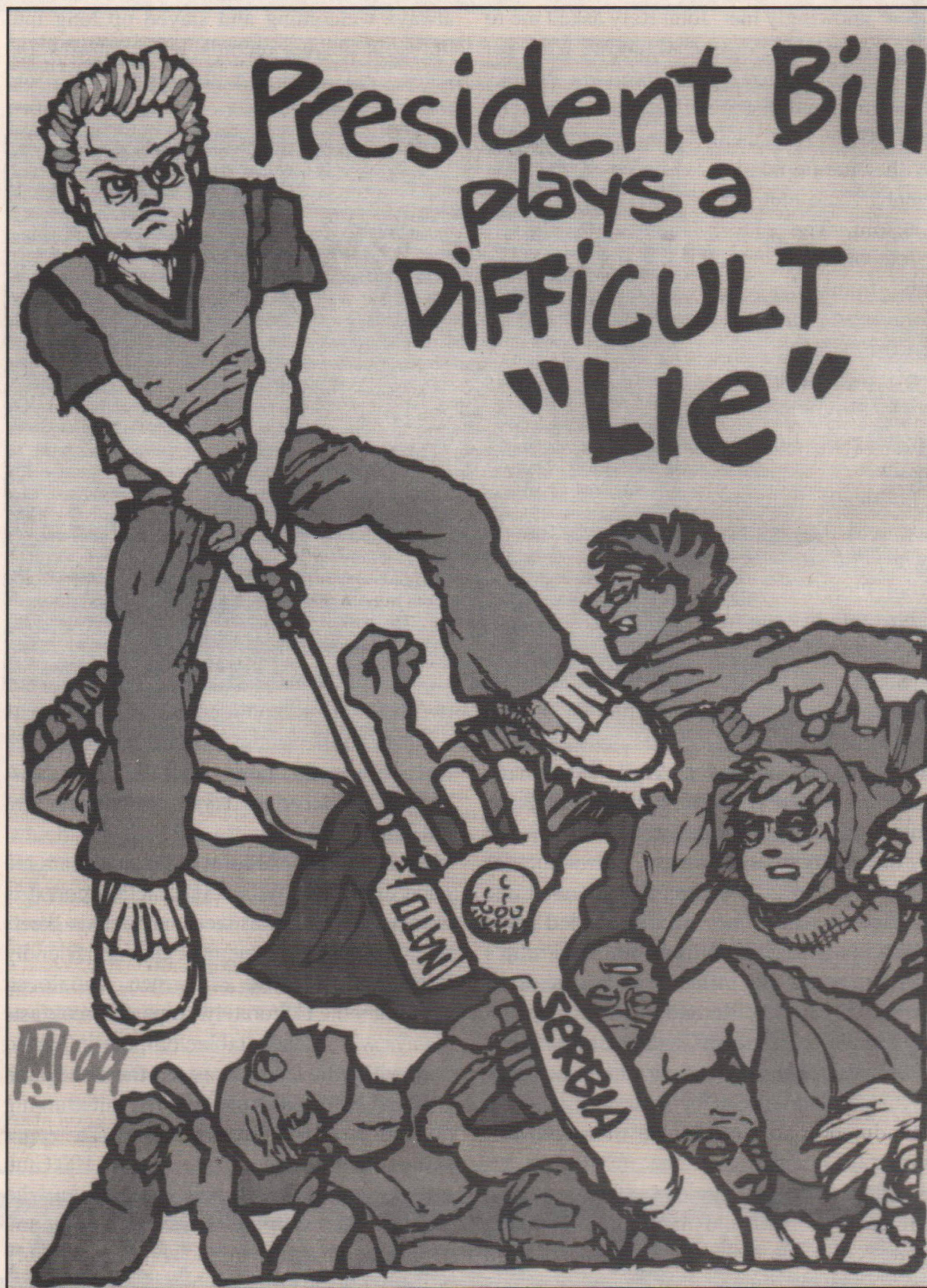
The New Military Humanism

by Noam Chomsky

published by Pluto Press, £9.99

In 1966, in his *The Responsibility of Intellectuals*, Noam Chomsky wrote that “intellectuals are in a position to expose the lies of governments, to analyse actions according to their causes and motives and often hidden intentions. In the Western world at least, they have the power that comes from political liberty, from access to information and freedom of expression”. Since then, that responsibility has been more defiled than honoured by the majority of those who would pass as intellectuals in public life today (Chomsky apart, only a very few others – Edward Said and Edward Herman among them – have performed their duty “to speak the truth and to expose lies” with any consistent integrity. Whether it be the silence over shoot-to-kill in Northern Ireland, or the refusal to acknowledge US machinations in Colombia, the capacity of many, (including many on the left) of those who purport to speak truth to power, to continue to confuse ‘truth’ with ‘national interest’, allows the bloody crimes of those elected to act in our name to pass unchallenged.

In his latest book, Chomsky addresses the claim that NATO’s recent intervention in Kosovo was carried out in pursuit of “an idealistic new world bent on ending inhumanity.” NATO claimed that its war with Yugoslavia was a “just and necessary war”, aimed at “upholding our [NATO’s] values, protecting our interests, and advancing the cause of peace”. As Chomsky observes, ‘The New Interventionism’ was hailed by intellectual opinion and legal scholars who proclaimed a new era in world affairs in which the ‘enlightened states’ will at last be able to use force where they believe it to be just, discarding the “restrictive old rules” and obeying “modern notions of justice that they fashion”. Chomsky contends that it would take a “determined stance of intentional ignorance” to continue to uphold – in light of all the facts available – the position that the war was pursued on the basis of moral principle. As he states, the notion that the air war was pursued to prevent refugee evictions cannot be sustained against evidence that the air war was the trigger for “a rapid and vast escalation of evictions and other atrocities”. He argues that the claim to moral principle is undermined by the US’s continued support for Turkey’s brutal military suppression of the Kurds; that the military deployment of brutal force is legitimated if it coincides with Washington’s interests and condemned only where it does not. Chomsky draws out the issue that the dreamers of a ‘New Humanism’ conveniently forget: “the self-described bearers



This illustration by Mike Flugennock is taken from *Alternative Press Review*, vol.4, no. 1, spring/summer 1999 (£3.50), which also includes an article by Noam Chomsky entitled ‘The Current Bombings: Behind the Rhetoric’.

of enlightenment happen to be the rich and powerful, the inheritors of the colonial and neo-colonial system of global dominion, they are the North, the First World”.

Throughout the bombing campaign NATO leaders emphasised that the decision to bomb on 24th March was necessary for two reasons: i) to stop ethnic cleansing, and ii) to establish the “credibility of NATO”. As Chomsky notes,

the first claim can be put aside. Until 1998 the US had happily tolerated Milosevic’s bloody pursuits – he was someone with whom business could be done. That Kosovar Albanians were denied even the semblance of democracy had not previously troubled Washington a jot. Wesley Clarke observed at the start of the war that the bombings were likely to precipitate a further wave of ethnic

cleansing and evictions. The ‘humanitarian’ claims are a convenient smokescreen. What was at issue was more straightforward – stability in the Balkans. “Turbulence in the Balkans qualifies as a ‘humanitarian crisis’ in the technical sense; it might harm the interests of rich and privileged people, unlike slaughters in Sierra Leone or Angola, or crimes we support or conduct ourselves”.

There were, further, ‘side benefits’ to be had. Chomsky speculates that “a possible benefit is a more aggressive posture for NATO, a useful outcome insofar as Europe remains under control, not at all a certainty. US planners are surely ambivalent about the decision of the European Union, in the wake of the war, to move towards a ‘unified defence policy’ that will enable it to act independently of the United States”. A further side benefit is the stimulus for military production and sales. The *Wall Street Journal* reports that the war is likely to boost defence spending generally, with Raytheon alone expected to receive about \$1 billion in orders for replacement Tomahawks. The ‘real winners’, though, go beyond the military and high-tech industry. Major US construction companies – Brown & Root, Halliburton, Bechtel – have made clear their ‘eagerness’ to rebuild roads and bridges blasted in the war. Chomsky drily notes that “War may be ‘the Health of the State’, as Randolph Bourne observed, but we have to understand ‘state’ in terms far broader than mere government functions”.

The war in Kosovo allowed the US to contemptuously violate concepts of sovereignty and international law, to tear up the rules of world order it occasionally paid lip service to at the UN, and to attempt to do so in the name of ‘morality’ – as to matters of morality more generally, it should be remembered that the US only ratified the UN Genocide Convention with a reservation that “the specific consent of the United States is required if charges are to be brought against it”. In *The New Military Humanism*, as in all his work, Chomsky urges us to pay “attention to historical fact and the documentary record, not simply [the] adulation of our leaders and the ‘principles and values’ attributed to them by admirers”. The fact that so many such admirers seek now to cheerlead imperialism from the left, because it comes cloaked in the garb of ‘humanitarian concern’, makes this book an essential weapon in the struggle against both the gunpoint globalisation of the US and the ‘State Department socialists’ of our post-Cold War age.

Nick S.

A primer in libertarian education

Wheels in the Head

by Joel Spring

published by McGraw-Hill (New York), 1994

Some twenty years ago Joel Spring produced a little book called *A Primer in Libertarian Education*. It offered a very readable, radical critique of ‘schooling’. It was commended by Ivan Illich as a useful, clear-sighted text, and was translated into several languages.

Spring, professor of education at the State University of New York, has now produced an up-dated and much expanded version of the same text. It is titled *Wheels in the Head*, a phrase taken from Max Stirner, to whom the book is dedicated. Education – free education that is – has always been of a central concern to anarchists. Stirner, as is well known, was himself a teacher, and wrote one of the earliest anarchist tracts on

education *The False Principle of Our Education*. Spring offers his book as a textbook, and as a “statement of educational philosophy”. It is sub-titled *Educational philosophies of authority, freedom and culture from Socrates to Paulo Freire*. But in essence it is first and foremost, like his earlier book, *A Primer*, lucidly written, critical, animated with personal vignettes of the various ‘educators’, and is imbued with a radical vision. The aim of the book, Spring tells us, is to enlighten and stimulate the reader, contributing to the wider debates on the nature of education. This it does admirably.

The core of the book focuses around some of the key figures of the ‘dissenting traditions’ in education – Godwin, Stirner, Wollstonecraft, Goldman, Tolstoy, Ferrer, Neill, Reich, Goodman, Illich, and Freire. To each Spring devotes a short but critical introduction, outlining their basic ideas. But the discussions are linked together, and the

book is rounded-off with extended discussions of education and the authoritarian state (Plato, Makarenko), on democracy and education (Dewey, Guttman, Giroux), on the politics of culture (Bloom, Hirsh, and afro-centricity) and on the issues of gender (Locke, Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Gilligan and Paglia). As a Choctaw Indian himself Spring writes perceptively on the politics of culture, but although critical of liberal ideology in its support of capitalism, he tends to be a little too generous – and gentle towards the likes of Bloom and Paglia.

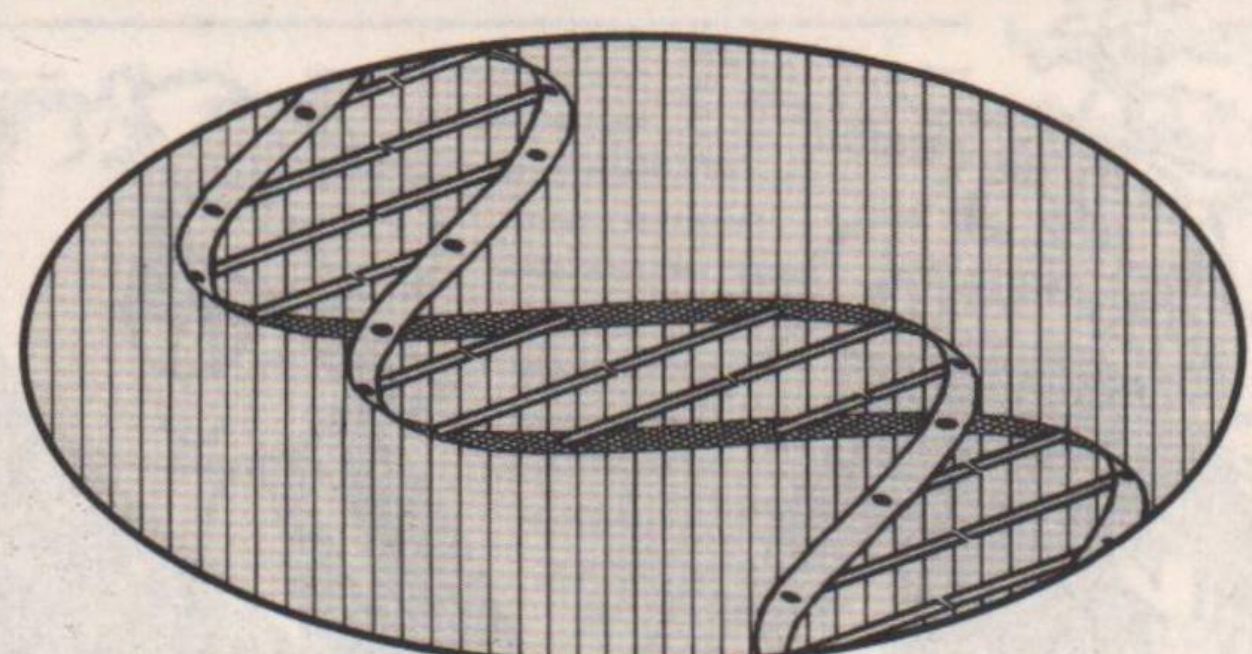
Although Spring does not feel that education alone “can change the world”, he does offer some interesting and thoughtful reflections on how, through education, we might attempt to enhance non-authoritarian forms of social life. The book deserves wide circulation.

Brian Morris

(note that this book is not yet available in the UK)

Number 40 of the anarchist quarterly

The Raven on Genetic Modification



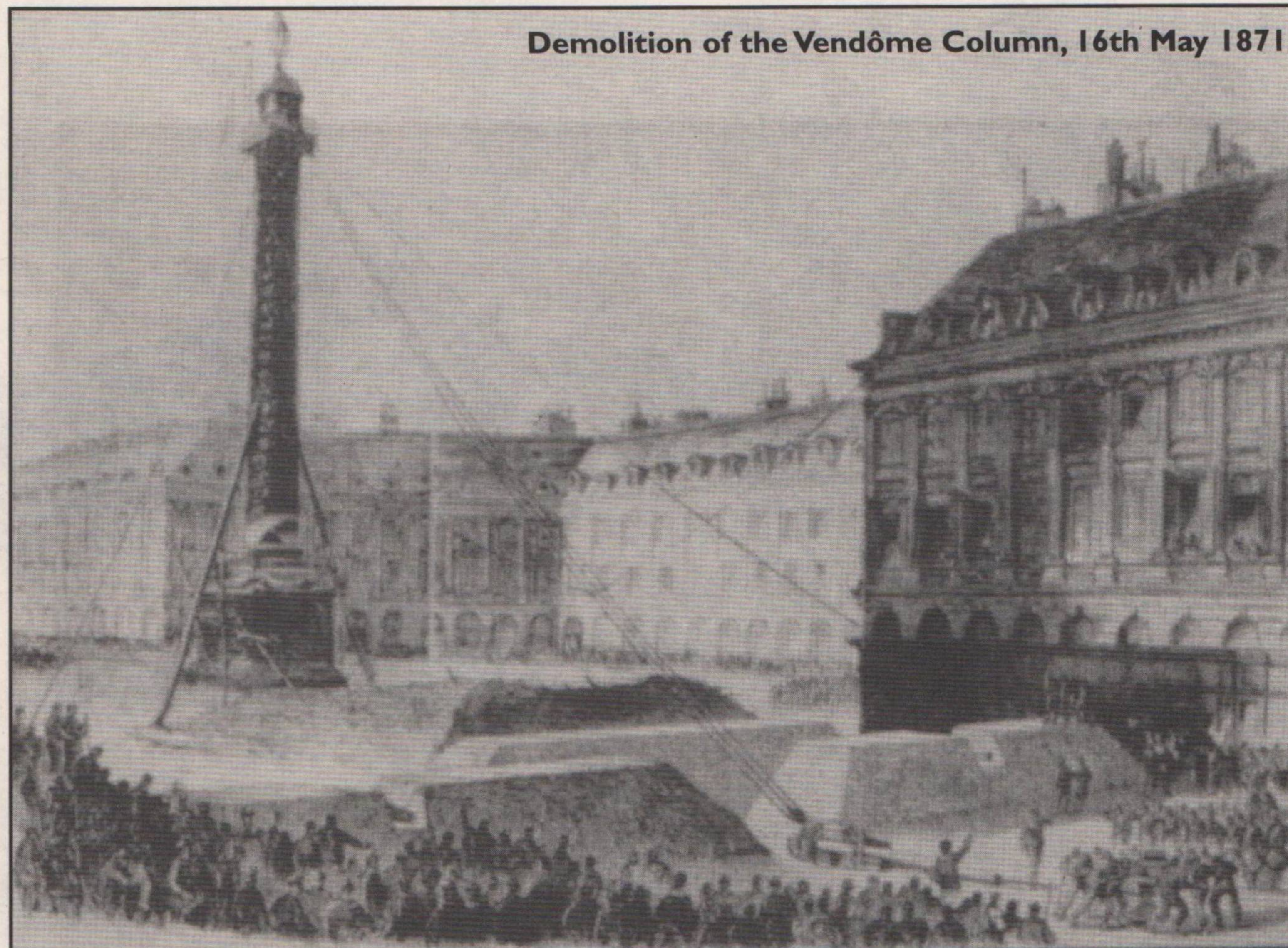
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Food for thought ... and action!

New and recent arrivals at Freedom Press Bookshop

Net Spies: *who's watching you on the web?* by Andrew Gauntlett, Vision. This book's thesis is that the internet, boon though it may be in some respects, poses a threat to everyone's privacy and civil rights, whether we're computer users or not. Most computers that store confidential details about us are vulnerable to hacking. In addition, people who use the internet – whether for e-mails, purchases or any other reason – are being monitored by all sorts of organisations. Corporations and private businesses can find out a lot about you while you're browsing their sites, and use the information to construct 'consumer profiles' to predict, and even manipulate your spending patterns. You are also being spied upon by numerous state agencies: police and Special Branch, Customs & Excise, MI5, GCHQ to name but a few. It is child's play for them to hack into a computer hooked up to the net and obtain the user's home address, credit card and other personal details, quite apart from any social and political information which may be on it.

And don't think that by simply deleting your files after use you can forestall such incursions: retrieval of information from computers, as Paul Gadd a.k.a. Gary Glitter has just found out to his disadvantage, is rendered immeasurably easier by the fact that the hard drives are virtually undeletable. GCHQ sends the hard drives and tapes from its decommissioned computers to Sellafield, where they are dipped into the nuclear reactor, just in case anyone with even better data retrieval software than they've got should get hold of them in the future. Spying on you through your computer can even go beyond the information on the computer itself. Hackers, be they freelance or state-sponsored, by using an ISDN line (such as BT has been heavily promoting for several years) can turn the computer's speakers into microphones which can pick up conversations anywhere in the room and even further afield. Some computer users adopt passwords and other ID systems to try and deny access to other users, but these can be easily circumvented by a determined hacker. Indeed some computers make this easier than others: one of the complaints about the Pentium III processor is that the microchip's electronic ID system actually

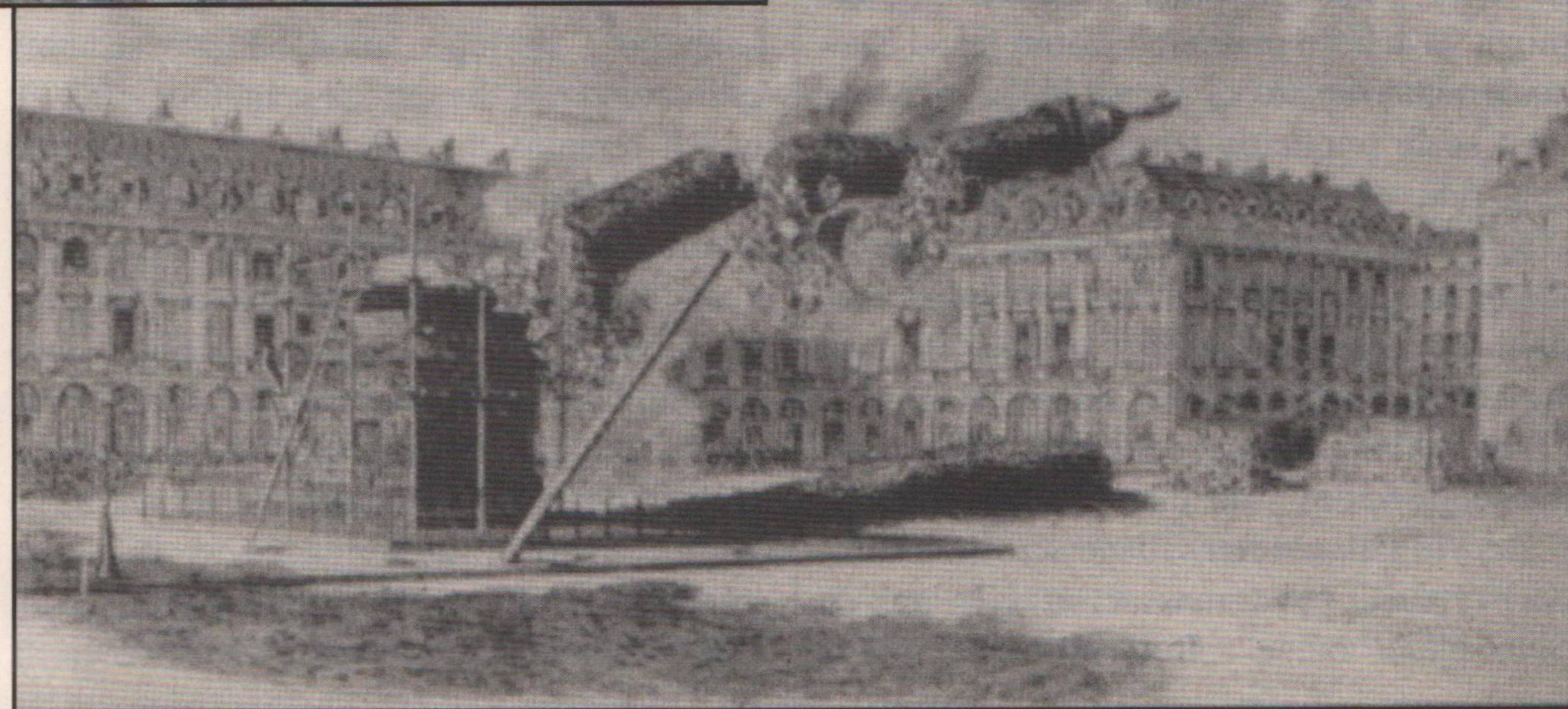


Demolition of the Vendôme Column, 16th May 1871

enables other web users to monitor your on-line activity.

Many people think that we are approaching a situation of mass surveillance, given the proliferation of computers and CCTV cameras, which threatens to bring with it a new era of social control. This would seem to be borne out now with the increasing complaints about employers using cameras, often hidden, to spy on their workers, sometimes even installing them in staff toilets. The verdict on the internet phenomenon so far must be that it is very much a curate's egg. But at least you can still decide whether to have your egg with or without SPAM (the electronic junk mail that swamps many e-mail addresses)! The book comes with an index, glossary and a 'useful resources and recommended reading list'. 209 pages, £9.99.

Gustave Courbet* by Gerstle Mack, Da Capo Press. A large, well-written book on the life and work of the flamboyant nineteenth century artist and revolutionary and one of the fathers of the Realist school, which foreshadowed both Impressionism and Modernism. He was certainly one of the most important painters of his time, having the temerity to upset the art establishment



by employing unheard-of practices of choosing his subjects from real life and portraying them with the same dignity and importance hitherto only accorded to kings, queens, the aristocracy and politicians. Instead of the Classical and Romantic pictures of idealised "knights and damsels, gods and nymphs", he painted "honest, earthy pictures of contemporary French peasants and townsfolk, and forthright landscapes and seascapes".

Courbet also upset the political establishment with his socialist ideas, for while he played only a minor role in the 1848 revolution, he was much more involved in the Paris Commune of 1871, even taking part with friends in the tearing down of the detested Vendôme Column, regarded by republicans and socialists as a symbol of Napoleonic imperialism and self-glorification. After the fall of the Commune he was unfairly accused of responsibility for the demolition of the Column, tried and convicted and imprisoned and then, on his release, told that he would have to pay the entire cost of its reconstruction. Understandably he declined, fleeing to Switzerland where he spent the rest of his life in exile. He was greatly influenced by his anarchist friend Pierre Joseph Proudhon, who called Courbet "the first true socialist painter", and he put up with, and sometimes put up, the poet Charles Baudelaire, even when the latter was pissed as a newt or out of his tree on opium – and even though Courbet hated poetry!

According to John Hewetson, Marx and Engels described the Paris Communards as "the imbeciles of Paris and their ridiculous manifesto" and he makes an illuminating comparison of their attitudes to both the Commune and the 1848 revolution, and Proudhon's, in *The Raven* no. 8.

Mack's well-documented book contains an entire chapter on each of these events, plus

one on Proudhon, another on the Vendôme Column, others on Courbet's arrest, trial and imprisonment, and many others on his work and his struggle to get it accepted. The 440 pages include a map of the Franco-Swiss border region, a bibliography, index and 30 pages of notes, not to mention 60 illustrations and photos including many of Courbet's portraits and landscapes, notable among which are the two paintings of Proudhon and his family. Previously £14.00, now only £6.50.

We have now sold out of the *Anarchist Calendar 2000*, but for those who still want a calendar we now have stocks of the *Class War Calendar 2000*, a large A3 spiral-bound wall-hanging month-to-a-view calendar. Each page has a photograph of the kind you

The red and black flag flies in Barcelona, from the *Class War Calendar 2000*



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Kosovo: the truth will out

The truth will out and it is revolutionary. The imperialist propaganda behind NATO's bombardment of Yugoslavia earlier this year, based on exaggerated claims of mass Serb atrocities against the Kosovo Albanians, is slowly but surely being exposed.

Spanish pathologist, Emilio Perez Pujol, sent to investigate Serb atrocities, recently estimated "that the final figure of dead in Kosovo will be 2,500 at the most. This includes a lot of strange deaths that can't be blamed on anyone in particular" (*Sunday Times*, 31st October 1999). Perez Pujol was apparently warned to expect 44,000 dead only to find this to be gross exaggeration with "few in mass graves". His own Spanish team found 187 bodies, several of whom had died of natural causes.

How does this compare with official estimates? In May this year, at the height of NATO's bombardment, US Defence Secretary, William Cohen, estimated that up to 100,000 Albanian men were missing and might have been murdered. Clinton and Blair consistently spoke of 'genocide' in Kosovo on a scale implicitly comparable to Hitler's genocide of the Jews during the Second World War. On 18th May, Robin Cook told the House of Commons that the Serbs "may now have killed 20,000 to 30,000 men, women and children ... All of them were killed deliberately and callously". The image he conjured up was massacre on a grand scale: "In village after village across Kosovo, Serb forces have massacred civilians at point-blank range". But only one month



An American B52 bomber loaded with 'humanitarian aid' roars towards its targets (photo: CNT magazine)

later, on 17th June, Cook had revised this estimate down by at least half to 10,000, which remains the official one despite the latest evidence. The *Sunday Times* has now reported that the United Nations is expected to announce next month that the total number of victims directly attributable to Serb paramilitary atrocities is fewer than 2,000, some having died from NATO's bombing.

What do all these statistics tell us? The simple truth that emerges is that the imperialist states of NATO colluded in exaggerating the atrocities in Kosovo so as

better to justify their bombardment. Reports such as the claim that 700 bodies had been dumped in the Trepca mine in Kosovo have been shown to be nothing but fabrication – not one body was found there. The stark irony is that NATO's bombardment was itself responsible for the killings of up to 2,000 civilians across Yugoslavia – or as many as the Serbs committed once NATO had decided to bomb. This amounts to at least 4,000 innocent civilians who would be alive today were it not for NATO's 'humanitarian' devastation.

But there is yet another truth which deserves recognition and which our media has conveniently sidelined. This is the truth of events in Kosovo since the end of NATO's bombardment and its occupation of the region. The latest report of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) of 3rd November records that during the past four months there have been 348 murders, 116 kidnappings, 1,070 lootings, and 1,106 arsons in Kosovo, all this in the context of a campaign of ethnic cleansing against the Serb and Roma minorities in Kosovo which NATO has failed to halt. On 15th October 1999 the Yugoslav Red Cross and local authorities indicated that the total number of internally displaced persons who had fled from Kosovo to both Serbia and Montenegro stood at 230,884. As the report of the United Nations Commissioner for Human Rights on Kosovo of 7th September observed: "Killings, oppression, harassment, expulsion, rape and other violations continue to take place at an alarming rate, particularly targeting the non-Albanian communities of Kosovo – a campaign to vindicate the rights of the Kosovar Albanians [has been] followed by a campaign of atrocities against the Serb, Roma and other minority communities."

The situation in Kosovo today contrasts starkly with the one envisioned for it by Robin Cook in the House of Commons on 14th June. Then he said that "our commitment is to protect all people in Kosovo, whatever their ethnic identity. Our objective is to create not a single ethnic state but a multi-ethnic state under the democratic rules and values that we understand". Exactly the opposite has happened. As Alex Renton of the *Evening Standard* reported on 12th November following a return visit to the region: "Multi-ethnic Kosovo is a fantasy today. The Serbs, a presence in this land of long memories since the very beginning, are finished here – the Albanians are the persecutors now".

To those who believe that human rights can be safely left in the hands of NATO's imperialists, Kosovo today is proof positive that it cannot. Far from offering a Third Way, Blair offers nothing but the same old lies and myths propagated by imperialist states for as long as they have existed. As Marie-Louise Berneri once wrote: "There is indeed a third way. But it lies only in opposition to any kind of State, for, where the State continues, the restriction of freedom at home and imperialist ventures abroad are inevitable".

Brian Martin

Prostak

Australian Republic: so what?

On Saturday 6th November 1999 there was an Australian national referendum. The question: should the constitution be changed so that Australia becomes a republic? The people's decisive answer: no!

Australia is a constitutional monarchy. The head of state is the British Queen, whose agent in Australia is the governor-general, who is appointed by the (Australian) prime minister. The referendum question proposed getting rid of the monarchy and replacing the governor-general by a president, who would be selected by parliament.

There are very few monarchists left in Australia. Nearly everyone wants a republic. The referendum failed because the republican camp was seriously split. Many republicans wanted a president directly elected by the people rather than by the parliament, and rather than accept what they thought was a flawed republic, they voted no in the referendum.

Interestingly, analysis of the vote showed

support for the republic was highest in the most affluent suburbs and lowest in working class areas. Class divisions were stark. Many individuals with 'progressive' views are ardent republicans.

The most worrying aspect of this whole affair is how worked up people got over something that changes so little. The proposed president was to have the same powers as the governor-general: virtually none. In other words, changing to a republic means exchanging one figurehead for another.

At a referendum in Tasmania years ago voters were given a choice between two dams. The government did not include the important option of not building a dam. Environmental campaigners pushed for and achieved a large write-in vote of 'no dams'.

For the republic referendum, I wrote in 'no head of state' plus a few comments about direct democracy. My vote was 'informal', a term for an improperly completed ballot paper that doesn't count in the tally. However, my individual action had little impact since

the 'no head of state' option was not mentioned in the referendum campaign.

Incredible passions were raised in the campaign. The media covered the issue extensively for months and letters columns and radio shows were inundated with comment. It seems that Australians do want a head of state and that it matters to them how the head is chosen and what the head is called. There was little discussion of more substantial changes in how the country is run. Needless to say, self-management was off the agenda!

The illusion that the head of state is really important appears to be deep-seated. Suppose that BHP, Australia's largest company, proposed to change the name of the chair of the board to 'president' and ensure that the person was an Australian. Few people would get excited about this. After all, the structure of power within BHP would be unchanged. Yet the equivalent symbolic change in the political sphere was treated with great concern and seriousness.

Personally, I don't mind the Queen being Australia's head of state. It is so ludicrous that it promotes public disdain and inhibits patriotism. More dangerous would be an Australian republic in which nationalist sentiments could be more readily mobilised against dissent, global solidarity and humanitarianism.

One consolation from the outcome is that many people voted no because they don't trust politicians, in this case to pick the president. The challenge is to convert this distrust of politicians to initiatives to do without them at all.

Information Liberation: challenging the corruptions of information power by Brian Martin

Information can be a source of power and, as a consequence, be corrupting. This has ramifications through a number of areas. There is a need for a radical critique that is accessible and oriented to action. Several topical areas are addressed, including mass media, intellectual property, surveillance and defamation. For each topic, a critique of problems is given, examples provided and options for action canvassed. Not every topic relevant to information power is addressed – that would be an enormous task – but rather a range of significant and representative topics. This book will fill a major gap in a very popular field.

Freedom Press 192 pages \$7.95

INFORMATION
LIBERATION

Brian Martin



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Deepening Democracy

Dear Freedom,

It was interesting to read Nick S's comments on the 1999 Reith lectures (*Freedom*, 13th November), and I hope you will give me space to look at Anthony Giddens' final lecture in a little more detail. Titled simply 'Democracy', it is essential reading and Nick is right to draw our attention to it. But before anyone rushes off to buy a copy of *Runaway World* eager to savour Giddens' "fascinating ... erudite ... progressive ... insights of real value", consider the following snippets of wisdom: "Democracy is a system involving effective competition between political parties for positions of power" (page 68); "Our runaway world doesn't need less, but more government – and this, only democratic institutions can provide" (page 82).

The problem with Giddens is that he equates democracy with "representative" democracy, and that means politicians, governments and states. "In a democracy" Giddens explains "there are regular and fair elections". No there aren't! In a democracy people contribute directly to decisions that effect their lives – there is no middle man, no compulsion, no institutional authority to fix, spin and manipulate our lives. Giddens doesn't see this, he can't. Like all establishment intellectuals, he is beyond reason. Hence his doomed-to-fail solution to what he calls "the paradox of democracy".

Giddens explains the paradox thus: "democracy is spreading ... and yet ... there is widespread disillusionment with

democratic processes". No surprise to anarchists, but a major quandary for the big-brain professional. You can shout as loud as you like, but Giddens won't hear you: there is disillusionment with the democratic structure. Pardon? It's the structure, stupid! That has to change. Of course, Giddens has a different solution: "democratising democracy". What's that then?

Well, as Bill Hicks might have said: democratising democracy is 'like a turd dropping in your drink', a stale fart of a concept that will, I fear, linger long after Giddens has gone. 'Democratising democracy' means less secrecy and less corruption in governments, "people's juries ... or electronic referenda" and a move 'above' the nation-state towards transnational institutions like the UN or the EU.

Less secrecy? The latest Bildeberg meeting was held last week, the British American Project continues (see *Lobster* no. 33 for details), Trilateralism, the Transatlantic European Partnership, ... global decision-making is out of our hands and behind closed doors. At the state level Jack Straw's Freedom of Information Act will still preclude the release of information used to formulate government policy.

Less corruption? The entire European Commission was suspended in March on allegations of corruption. People's juries? From a government that will pass law denying trial by jury to 42,000 people a year! Electronic referenda? This reduces democracy

to the level of a *Who wants to be a Millionaire* contestant asking the audience for advice, and less entertaining! Perhaps Giddens should include a 50/50 option into his concept of democracy, perhaps he needs to phone a friend! National Government is unaccountable, transnational governance is unaccountability to the power of infinity. Political parties have one overriding concern: to get re-elected, this will remain true at whatever level Giddens throws at us. States will continue to monopolise coercive power over us however much sovereignty global

forces take away.

People realise this, hence the disillusion with our 'democratic' system. Democracy is incompatible with state institutions. Giddens is right to say that people want democracy ... they just don't want his contaminated version of it. Anarchists must support direct democratic initiatives. A society based on representative decision making means corruption, instability and chaos. The Giddens solution would take us further down that road.

A.H.

A Darwinian Left

Dear Freedom,

Some important little books are being published. I recommend that anarchists read Colin Tudge's *Neanderthals, Bandits and Farmers* if only to reinforce a context for us all in the biological and evolutionary continuum. I have just read Peter Singer's *A Darwinian Left* – and was impressed, though with some reservations.

The problem for the left, and ultimately for all of us, is that Darwin's theory of evolution continues to defy serious contradiction and must now underpin any account of human behaviour or formulation of social ideology. In particular it must be accommodated if there is to be any born-again socialism. I suggest the same is true if anarchism is ever to become more than a nice idea.

Singer identifies the rocks on which traditional socialism has foundered. Firstly an anthropocentric (humanist) prejudice resisting the reality laid bare by Darwinism that the human being is the human animal. We are not somehow exempted from natural laws of interaction and development just because we have large brains and can use them to create noble ideas. As long as we fail to jettison our delusions of grandeur it remains impossible for us to develop and sustain a rationale for co-operation and collectedness. If, for example, we pretend that despite the ubiquity of hierarchy in the mammalian world it is not the background nature of human relationships and social structure we make it difficult – if not impossible – for us to intervene at the fundamental level necessary to have any hope of changing such structure.

The second great problem for socialism has been its failure to recognise the range limits to human behaviour imposed by biological or constitutional components, in particular the limits to malleability of those aspects of ourselves each of us is born with. Of course the Darwinian Wars rage and neither extreme position is tenable, but the left needs to move right and allow for far greater genetic control over behaviour, and the right – the so-called social Darwinists – need to move left and recognise that you can 'teach a dog new tricks'.

If Singer recognises the main stumbling blocks for socialism past and future. I'm not so sure he succeeds in providing solutions. In a way I feel he falls into the very trap

acknowledged as handicapping socialism: an unrealistic optimism that we can wish away evolution's abhorrence of equality or the empirical evidence that altruism is a luxury simply not safely affordable by the oppressed and disadvantaged. His examples of altruistic behaviour seem merely to be the exceptions which confirm the overall eat or be eaten competition imperative.

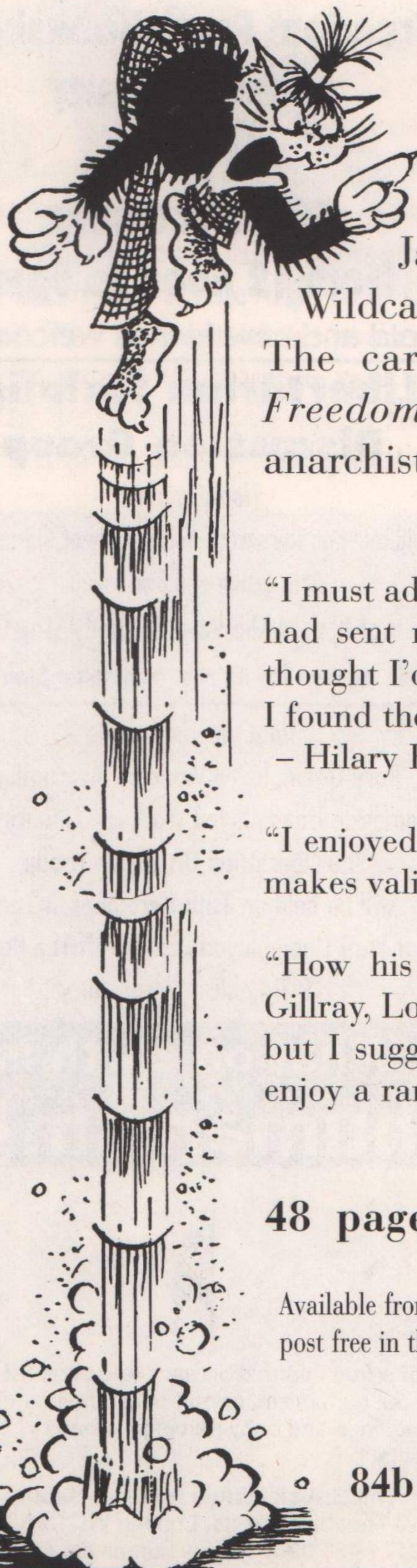
As he says in his closing page to reverse the present momentum and create a new socialist system based on co-operation and altruism – behaviour upon which anarchists also depend – we would have to begin to use our definitive human property of advanced consciousness to arrest the momentum of an evolutionary process which has up till now been built round self centred competition and has thereby produced that very consciousness on which such future hopes rest.

Tom Merrington

Another new title published by Freedom Press

Donald Room

Twenty Year Millennium Wildcat



The cartoonist Donald Room is perhaps best known as the political cartoonist of *Peace News* during its heyday in the 1960s. An anarchist since 1944, since January 1980 he has been contributing the Wildcat strip to the anarchist fortnightly *Freedom*.

The cartoons are copied and translated from *Freedom* (and the Wildcat books) by various anarchist publications in other countries.

"I must admit that my heart sank when I discovered that Matt had sent me a collection of anarchist cartoons to review. I thought I'd find them unfunny, obscure and pedantic. In fact, I found them humorous to the point of laughing out loud."

– Hilary Robinson in *Society for Strip Illustration Newsletter*

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– Tony Gibson in *Freedom*

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Bouquets

Dear Freedom,

Jeanne and I would like to thank all those who put the celebration meeting for Philip together. It was very good to see so many old friends. The tributes to Philip were moving. We hadn't expected to be fed and 'watered' so I enclose a small donation.

Tony Smythe

♦ ♦ ♦

Dear Comrades,

Pleased to see I disagree with *Freedom's* writers at least as much as I ever did. On that note, I was sorry to hear of the death of Philip Sansom, one whose views and expression of them were always worth disagreeing with – even agreeing, too!

My experience of the press is too long to be relevant, but I'm grateful you are there, whoever you are, to ensure this point of contact is still there for me when, as now, I feel the need for it again. Cheers and thanks.

Paul Campbell

London's Mayor

Dear Freedom,

The convolutions over the election of a mayor for London mirrors exactly those of maggots in a tin of catfood that has gone off! I feel sorry for the city dwellers who have to put up with it.

Garry Bradford

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— PROGRAMME 1999 —

10th December Discussion on the programme
for the year 2000.

17th December Christmas social

24th and 31st December no meetings

7th January General discussion

Anyone interested in giving a talk or leading
a discussion, please contact Peter Neville at the
meetings giving your subject and prospective
dates and we will do our best to accommodate.

Peter Neville for London Anarchist Forum

Red Rambles

A programme of guided walks for Libertarians,
Socialists, Greens, Anarchists and others. Bring
food, drink, suitable footwear and waterproof
clothing. A rota of cars will be used — full cars will
travel to walks.

Sunday 19th December

Woodthorpe, Beacon Hill, Windmill Hill: Meet
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01509 230131 or 01509 236028

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the next conference will be
held in Hebden Bridge
on

15th January 2000

For more information ring
Martin on 0161-707 9652

This year's Freedom Press Bookshop Christmas Party

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18th December
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old and new friends welcome

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Tameside Unemployed Workers' Alliance and
the Libertarian Discussion Group
will be held on 16th December at 1pm
at Bury Unemployed Centre (off The Rock)
12 Tithebarn Street, Bury

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