

Outta Control

AUGUST 1980 No.7

Spence

News & Views of the Belfast Anarchist Collective

OUTTA CONTROL... of the state, bosses, patriarchy, schooling, churches... As Anarchists we oppose the authority and exploitation of this society, and advocate one of FREE Association and Self-Management. This paper comes out every 2-3 weeks and we welcome contributions, criticisms etc.

THE CRUNCH THAT DIDN'T COME

During the month of July, both Martin Meehan and Seamus Mullan were on hunger strike when the N.I. office issued a statement virtually claiming that he was bluffing. Both were near death, but were persuaded by many different quarters, to end their protest.

Meehan was framed on a kidnapping charge, and Mullan wrongly accused of blackmail.

Meehan came off the blanket to try and keep his case clear from the dirt protest before he went on the hunger strike. It was none-the-less seen by many people as the final and ultimate step the blanket men and women could take to achieve their demands for political status...it was a continuation of that struggle.

It was also a way for the British government to gauge public opinion had Meehan died... a guide to what might happen should the blanket-men take the same course. It was

Continued on inside

NEVER AGAIN!!

THE GOOD NEWS

Our old friend Irish Base Metals and Northgate (the multi-nationals involved in uranium exploration in Donegal, and through their subsidiary--Ulster Base Metal Metals, in Armagh and Down) have packed up and pulled out of mining operations in Tynagh, Co. Galway.

THE BAD NEWS

After 15 years of mining the area, and

making £30m, for their shareholders, and sweet f.a. for anybody else, there are no more metals left to mine...only huge mounds of polluting shit which Northgate and their public relations team plan to miraculously transform into green pasture. At one time they employed 300 people, but now all the jobs have ceased and no likelihood of people getting another job in the area. Gone too, for ever, are the precious ores ripped-off by the multi-nationals aided and abetted (as always) by the silent jorbenese state...and the ITGWU, bought off initially with the prospect of jobs, and now with redundancy payments. NEVER AGAIN!!

CRITIC DEPORTED

Elsie Van Hout, a Dutch feminist and freelance journalist, sat on the tribunal Women Against Imperialism organised earlier this year into the Feb. 7th attack by male screws on the female protesters in Armagh prison.

She returned on July 13th along with other Dutch women to help rehabilitate a house for use as a women's centre on the Falls Rd.

She was arrested by Special Branch and initially held for 3 days at Caslereagh.

This period was extended for a further 7 days. When a Habeas Corpus order for her appearance in court was asked for by her solicitor, the Secretary of State served a deportation order allegedly because of her connection with the INLA. This was based on Elsie's lifelong friendship with a Dutch woman (they went to school together) who married someone from the IRSP.

She appealed this realising it was an attempt to silence international criticism of British rule here. After being removed to the protesting wing of Armagh prison, her appeal took place there before a high-up Civil Servant. She wasn't given reasons for her deportation but was expected to guess these and give justification of her right to stay. The civil servant then passed this information to the S of S. who, not surprisingly, ruled against her. Within days unknown to her solicitor and friends, she was sent to Dublin, from where she had made the last leg of her previous journey.

PICKET STOPPED

On the 2nd August Women Against Imperialism tried to stage a protest outside Armagh prison to highlight the conditions of Pauline Mc Laughlin. On the way down the bus was stopped by the RUC who said that they couldn't go any further with the band which was accompanying them. The women, after deliberation, said OK to this, but the RUC had another trick up their sleeve. They told the women that they'd have to go through a protestant estate on their way to the prison. This the women refused to do and staged a sit down protest beside the bus for about half an hour.

On the way back from Armagh the bus took a detour and went past Long Kesh. They left the buses and walked over the fields to beside the prison, where the band staged a performance, which the blanket-men must have heard.

After about 45 mins. the RUC finally approached and the women returned safely to bus.

This is a nuclear power station with soldiers guarding it. The world is so crazy full of police stations & prisons and nuke stations and the world should be free and full of flowers. Mickey



ANARCHY

By a collective member. More in future.

I've seen blacked cloaked people giving out leaflets, and I can imagine twined jacketed bomb throwers. Anarchists have been both of these, but the black cloaked bomb thrower is a figment of Fleet Street's imagination.

The word anarchy comes from the Greek and means without government. This divides us from other socialists. Yes we are socialists, but we are anti-authoritarian. When we call for the overthrow of hierarchy, we mean not only its exploitative role (capitalism), but also its authoritarian role (the state). During the First International, Michael Bakunin warned of the rise of Red bureaucracy if the state was not destroyed along with the other forms of tyranny.

As we have seen from Russia and more recently in the social-democratic countries of W. Europe, the state and capitalism are becoming increasingly interdependent. The state has taken over many of the functions of private capitalism, and has become the sole employer in the case of Russia, and a major employer in the case of W. Europe, not to mention its increasing control over all aspects of life.

There is of course the parallel (but not conflicting) growth of multinational firms who are based in the most powerful Western countries.

Ironically Marxism has played a leading role in providing the ideology of the state intervention for the more progressive forms of capitalism, both in the reformist politics of social-democratic, and the 3rd world 'revolutions' which have changed the country's dependence from one imperial power to another.

The state and capitalism have been the two big baddies for anarchists. But the third pillar of hierarchy which is even older than the other two has only recently been taken up generally by socialists - Patriarchy.

The various women's liberation groups have finally forced on to the attention of all, what was exposed before by such as Alexandra Kollontai and Emma Goldman, but was not faced up to by the majority of socialists of the day, who 'happened' to be men.

Although the question of confining roles, which we are all conditioned to play, was raised by anarchists it was usually on an abstract level or as it applied to men.

When anarchists are asked what they want, they usually reply with a long list of what they don't want. This may appear negative, but it is based upon the fact that we live in and are influenced by an authoritarian society, and so visions of life free from shackles can only be speculative. There can be no programme or blueprint of what life will be like. Which is surely what makes anarchist society attractive. The possibility of CREATING history, of fulfilling ourselves as social individuals and not living as cogs for our wealth to be stolen.

But of course there are guidelines and directions. We do believe in spontaneity, but not in the sense of things falling out of the sky, but in the sense of individuals, groups, society freely choosing to take certain directions, unrestrained by promises of false rewards or by threats of punishment.

Here are some of the characteristics which we would argue an anarchist society would have:

1. It is fundamental that all relationships (work, social, sexual etc.) should be based on the principle of voluntary association, with people coming together because they want to, and as important, withdrawing when they want to.

2. Decision-making to be based as much as possible on direct democracy. If due to numbers, time, distance, etc., delegates are elected, they must be subject to instant recall and posts to be rotated as often as possible or necessary.

3. The nature of work itself would be changed. Production would be for the needs of the community, as it decided through its producer and consumer collectives. Some modern technology and a degree of specialisation would make work less tedious and time consuming, but would be discarded where it lead to alienation and/or pollution. Wages would be abolished and distribution of resources based on the maxim - from each according to their ability, to each according to their need.

4. Sexual relationships, without losing their intimacy, would shed their possessive traits and people remain partners or monogamous for as long as they wished, no external pressure being brought to bear (unfortunately other than centuries old conditioning).

5. Education would become learning and shed its institutional framework. Much of work, losing its alienation, would become a way of learning, as would indeed life itself. Other learning resources and facilities would open for use by old and young alike, they as a community creating such resources in the first place. Children would be brought up collectively and share experiences with their peers and adults in a more total environment.

6. Anti-social behaviour would be treated by the community as a whole. With property and authority abolished many of today's typical crimes such as theft and violence will no longer be widespread. It is obvious that prisons, as rehabilitative measures, are counterproductive.

Hopefully these characteristics will sow a few seeds in the readers speculative mind. We don't want (this has been one of our 'failings' throughout history) to give you the answers. We fight against governments because they claim to have all the answers, and in fact punish us for daring to solve the problems we face.

We are anarchists because we want to create a society which will allow us to BEGIN to answer the problems of life - violence, exploitation, depression, anxiety, and leave behind a society which creates them and then glosses over them.

NOW, HOW?

Well for starters the means we use should reflect as much as possible the ends we hope to achieve. This applies to all, because as can be seen from marxist and nationalist groups, their aims of a marxist or nationalist state are reflected in their hierarchical organisation, with its central committee making decisions for the members to carry out, and in their methods of struggle, with their standing in bourgeois elections, and instances of civilian bombings.

Once again the slip into what not to do. To some extent we all have authoritarian/obedience traits, but it is very important to make our efforts at change as consciously anarchist as possible. And this brings our actions and ideas into 2 fronts.

Firstly that of defending ourselves and others from the everyday onslaught of repression, sectarianism, boredom, sexism, etc., which are the trademarks of government and capitalism in N. Ireland.

And here it is easy to get caught up in the reformism of trade unionism in defending the rights at the workplace; the nationalism of wanting the Brits out without also a challenge to government per se; the reformism of equal rights for women and homosexuals and lesbians, rather than a critique of sex roles and possessiveness; the struggle against H-Block, without pointing out that all prisons are the weapon of the ruling class.

The 2nd front is that of creating liberated zones of the mind, of areas, and of relations with each other. This is done through learning, both by yourself and others; keeping the authorities at bay, by either force (as happened in the early 70s)

or by alternatives (work coops - media, music etc.); and trying to establish work and social relations on an equal and voluntary basis.

Ideally there should be a synthesis of the two fronts, as it is impossible to create alternatives within a hostile environment, and disillusioning to resist only to create new shackles, whether they be the trade union bureaucracy or our own police force.

Our policies must stem from the reality we live in. We are not utopian, nor are we realists in that we want to change reality. We are anarchists.

Liz Lagura was released 4 weeks ago from Armagh prison after spending 2 months (on the protest) for picketing the prison. Asked about the conditions inside she referred to the deterioration in health as the most worrying.

There has been only one change of clothing (not underwear) and blanket since February 7th so there have been many infections. A few girls have had white discharges and she herself had cystitis - an infection of the urine. Many girls have contracted psoriasis, a nervous disease causing an irritating skin rash. At least one girl, Marie Mc Clennaghan, has an ulcer and cannot eat the cold greasy prison food, and so lives on bread and jam.

Dr. Cole, the prison doctor, is described by Liz as a sadist. For her cystitis she was given anti-biotics and was not examined. The girls are usually given aspirin, painkillers, and valium and are rarely examined. With heavy periods, which are common, he just laughs, said Liz, and says its all in the mind.

On the day of printing we attended a press conference by Margaretta D'Arcy who spent 3 months in Armagh after being arrested with Liz. Words seem inadequate to describe the hunger and intimidation the young women suffer inside.

Also for Margaretta, coming out was like going from one hell to another, as Miriam Daly, who was assassinated for her work for the prisoners, was a close friend of hers and she often stayed in the household of Ann-Marie Mc Donnell who was shot in the head with a rubber bullet at the weekend.

Pauline Mc Laughlin was sentenced when she was 16 years old on the basis of a signed confession, but the girl can not read or write. She was 9½ stone when she joined the protest for political status 3 years ago, but because she couldn't eat the prison food she lost weight rapidly reaching 5 stone on one occasion.

Dr. Cole put her on the sick and she was removed to B wing where she received food parcels. On reaching 6 stone again, she was pronounced fit for work, which she refused to do, so was taken back to the protesting wing. Her health deteriorated again and the vicious circle repeated itself several times. At one stage Dr Cole made a tape recording in her presence saying that she would die if she did not come off the protest, that he would not take responsibility, and could not be sued if she died.

In March she came off the protest because of ill health, but was placed in a locked cell all day and received no medical attention. About 3 weeks ago she was rushed to Musgrave Park Hospital because of dehydration due to constant vomiting. She was briefly taken to the City Hospital coronary ward but then returned to Musgrave and within a few days sent back to Armagh prison.

cont. from P.1... MARTIN MEEHAN
not surprising, therefore, that Sinn Féin were initially hesitant about throwing their full weight behind Meehan. Some of the men on the blanket were wanting to escalate the issue by the same means as Meehan, in a last ditch attempt to gain political status. Some judged it to be a premature action without the necessary ground-work and back-up needed outside the prisons.

As Meehan approached death things started to warm up. Many demonstrations with a fair degree of support, combined with serious rioting in some Catholic ghettos. Fortunately Meehan and Mullan ended their strikes, much to the relief of some. The full extent of public support or the eventual outcome will not be known after all. However, because of the publicity given to their case, the courts may think twice about finding them guilty on appeal....many eyes will be watching them.

But this is not to say that everyone in jail must be guilty because they haven't gone on hunger-strike to prove their innocence. The Diplock courts have convicted people on even less evidence than that against Meehan and Mullan. But it takes a certain set of circumstances and a certain type of person to go on hunger-strike to prove their innocence. Many people in Ireland's history have died in the process.

The courts and prisons are used as a weapon by the state--any state--to preserve the interests of the few at the expense of the many. People in prison, whether consciously or sub-consciously, rebel against the system which daily exploits them and uses them. All prisoners are political; all prisoners should be released.

Windscale

WINDSCALE nuclear reprocessing plant (where nuclear 'wastes' go to sift out that which can be re-used and that which must be dumped) lies just across the sea in Cumbria. It has been leaking deadly wastes for the past 8 years! For the past 8 years, we've had an out-pouring of hypocritical lies from Sir John Hill and cohorts about how safe it all is. Now they've been found out once again. But the British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. escape prosecution, because as the govt. nuclear installations inspectorate say...."they did such a good job at putting matters right".....after 8 years of contamination by wastes that will be deadly for centuries!!!

Is it any wonder that the Irish Sea is the most radio-active sea in the world? It just gets worse and worse. Now we know why the Dept. of the Environment have been out monitoring radiation levels along the Antrim coast....and doing so during turbulent tides to give a more dispersed reading hence a lower radiation rating. Very clever.

Anti-internment weekend

The weekend of August 9th saw an increase in protest against the RUC and British Army, and a determination on their part to stamp out all resistance. Their lead and rubber bullets left 2 young people dead and another 2 seriously injured, one of these being 16 year old Ann Marie McDonnell. Along with her mother, she was active in support of the Armagh prisoners.

On Sat. night she had her skull fractured by a rubber bullet fired at close range. The car taking her to hospital was stopped by a British army patrol, checked and waved on, but only to be stopped 20 yards further on by another patrol, one of whose members fired a live round through the window above Ann-Marie's head.

According to her sister this caused a release in Ann-Marie who had to undergo a 7 hour operation in the Royal, where she now remains in the intensive care unit.

As in its treatment of the prisoners, the British state is prepared to kill those who protest either peacefully or go so far as to throw a stone.

This letter is a reply to enquiries about the poem.

I will try to explain what I was trying to say in the two poems I sent you. In 'Late', the Christmas Parliament is very much a personal image. I don't like Christmas myself, I always associate it with commercialism and with an ideal gone sadly wrong. Also, I went to an all-boys catholic school, something for a time which really fucked up my mind, and every Christmas all the priests came up with loads of shit about the importance of Christmas and its religious significance, while at the same time trying to sell tickets for the Christmas parents evening--so I never really liked Christmas.

Another thing I don't like is governments mainly because they tell lies and blow peoples minds with propaganda etc.. But that's beside the point. To really explain this image I will start by saying that it was conceived about 18 months ago when the catholic school education had really screwed me up. I was confused and filled with hate. I hate where I was living, the school, the teachers, the pupils (especially the pupils) and it was then that the image came: Mr. Callaghan patting babies on the head, cuddling his wife affectionately, supersocialist with his wife and children gathering around the Christmas tree for some family bliss, what life is all about, what labour stands for, what parliament is all about! It made me spew then, it makes me spew now, this supposed connection between the government and the Family Scene has always riled me and that is what the image is all about. Now I realise that I should have made it clearer in the poem but as I said, it's a personal image, more or less put in for my own satisfaction..

The other query is easier to clear up. 'You've taken away love' means what it says; governments, businessmen, men of the world who know how hard it is because they made it that way, to avoid being swindled they became swindlers, people like this have turned the world into what it is today, loveless, hopeless. They are incapable of love, only interested in money, not caring about anyone else (manufacturing guns, bombs for their own profit). Since they rule the world they are the ones who tell us how to live, they tell us not to be naive, it's a hard world and all that crap, they usually beat any emotional weakness out of someone before they've left school, through the teachers, by teaching them competitive spirit, to fight their way to the top and so on.

'You won't let us do that here' again refers back to school where I learnt really fast what I was supposed to believe in, how I was supposed to live, and that anyone who failed to conform to these standards was branded a freak. When you're a freak you have to stand there and take it, if you try and do anything about it they always get you down one way or another. The world they've created isn't worth living in but if you try and kill yourself, they stop you and put you in an asylum. They can put you in prison for 30 years but they won't let you kill yourself rather than spend the rest of your life there; they can execute you but they forbid you from killing yourself, that's a sin!

Of course I agree they let people die in Ireland, anywhere, they don't give a shit about life, that's why they build prisons in the first place, that's why they build bombs, have wars.

I don't know if I've explained very well but, that is what I was trying to get across in the poem.

Now I'd like to ask you something. It's a minor point really but one that I'd like to clear up for myself. What is your attitude to violence, do you believe in violent revolution? Personally I do not simply because I think we would be sinking to their level by using violence against them. But then again I've had it pretty easy, I was born into a middle-class family, and have never experienced their antagonism to such an extent that I'd want violent rebellion, I've never had to work 6 hours a day to make money for them at a boring job, so it's hard for me to really judge. Maybe you could give me your opinions on the subject. S.B. (Liverpool).

LATE

I think it's too late
for your law and order,
too many bloodstained treaties

Too many people thrown in your cold cells
for us to believe
your architects
could ever build a hospital.

I think too many soldiers boots have found
a home
in too many Catholic groins,
too many Airey Neaves
have shouted too many odds,
too many parliaments
have done fuck all.

I think you shouted once too often
across some lightless alley
Catholics need not apply
Niggers go home
Hello Freak

And now you hold your Christmas parliament
swagger like peacocks
proclaim new ideals
ask for peace in the world,
expect us to believe you now

Not this time
Camels are extinct
You broke their backs.

VIDEO ON PRISON PROTEST: On Sat. 23rd August there's the first showing of a new one-hour, colour video on Armagh and H-Block - Interviews with ex-prisoners and relatives - 10.30am, 12 noon, 2pm, 4pm. at Just Books, 7 Minsteren St., Smithfield.

The Southern Irish government have this plot hatching in their heads and policies: the British gov. are totally into it as well; and certain state corporations - like the NIES - are central and vital to its working ... and its so simple ... the Northern state generates as much electricity as possible by whatever means, whether oil or nuclear, which it then links into the British grid and into the south ... the south develops its natural gas which it sends northwards while at the same time feeding Dublin with British gas, and the British get northern electricity for sending gas to the south of Ireland. Meanwhile the EEC showers funds everywhere to see such an emerging centralised, yet diverse, energy system which can cross national boundaries. A very clever plot for industrialists and corporation businessmen and eurocrats who see energy as money ... not so good for the likes of me or me.

What has been happening in the north since the early 70s is that the NIES has become central to the northern energy plans - seemingly unlimited funds granted by successive British gov. big investments. Kilroot was planned as an exclusive oil based producer of electricity, and wild talk of the next station in the north being nuclear, then the oil panic, the slowing down of the mad pace of so called industrial development - suddenly it became clear that Kilroot was not needed as had been thought, that the huge amounts of electricity (steadily getting dearer) were not needed by the northern economy. But that didn't matter, its expansion went ahead, the British gov. continuing to put up the millions or write off the loans, prices kept going up for electricity ... but the corporation leaders (Gray and Gaston) were delighted - real power-freaks in every sense.

Despite the lack of demand for energy the NIES kept their expansion going - the aim had always been to sell it to the South (the provos keep blowing up the cross border lines) and this is what's intended, with the additional advantage of linking into the Brit grid as well ... that way demand becomes unlimited. The NIES sent preliminary plans to the Brit Nuclear Inspectorate as early as 1976 for the construction of a nuclear reactor in the North and in the same year they started running propaganda classes outlining the benefits. They had even picked a site to be started after the oil-electricity station at Kilroot was fully completed in 1980-1, St. Johns Point in Dundrum. The whole scheme was knocked in the head in 1976 by a gov. inquiry (report which said the demand was not there. So it was shelved. But now the plans to artificially create that demand are out - a link to the south and to Britain - a virtual unlimited 'market' for N.I. electricity. And again the possibility of nuclear power in the north is being considered ... as the price of oil zooms up, the costly error in choosing this as the fuel for Kilroot is causing many problems and the British government a fortune ... they tried to change part of Kilroot to coal, and have axed another part of the earlier expansion plans. Oil is too expensive. Just maybe they are considering a conversion of Kilroot to nuclear. Not as crazy as it might seem - all its needs is a nuclear core and a host of ancillary equipment ... everything else is there. (Failing that, and assuming plenty of effective opposition from the nearby population of Belfast, Larne and Carrick to the idea of a nuclear Kilroot, they may revert to their original idea of Dundrum, Co Down).

Nuclear or not, all finances, all aid was to go to electricity generation. And just for good measure, the NIES and the British gov. have joined forces to effectively destroy their only serious competitor - the Gas industry.

Gas production in the north is based on an expensive oil-

GOING ELECTRIC

based fuel - Napthe. It is becoming very uneconomical - it needs a link up with cheap North Sea gas to survive. In July 79 the Brit gov. said no! - and the gas industry had to go ... and the commerce minister Giles Shaw falsified figures to 'prove' that a north sea link up for N.I. gas was too expensive and would cost more than closure and conversion. (Blatantly untrue as amongst other things, the EEC would help finance it, and the British gas corporation is making huge profits every year, and the gov. is taking £300m of these profits in the next 4 years to pay for armaments ... a mere £25m of these profits and a North Sea link-up is sufficient to save the gas industry ... but the British government are not interested. The role for the N.I. state is ELECTRICITY and that's what gets the funding and that's why the gas industry is killed off. No matter that the gas users are being ripped off and victims of gov. blunders and policies - the competitor to the all-electric madness must be wiped out. And that's exactly what's going on. (Gaston the no.2 in the NIES hierarchy, was suggesting this policy as early as 1977 ... it didn't take the new British gov. long to set about doing it).

Meanwhile and in return for the Northern electricity, the South exchanges gas from the Kinsale field. Ironically enough, if Carnore is not built soon the £4 billion saved through the importation of Northern (nuclear?) energy will help develop the gas industry. All so very clever and so callous.

The all-electric Northern state brings with it many problems for those of us who live here. More and more we are forced to turn electric - and despite its wasteful nature, despite the price, despite our total lack of decision-making in it's production - despite we get huge bills, and the promise of new meters after 1981 which makes it very difficult to fiddle. Despite the needless investment and wastage at Kilroot, the subsidy to industry, but not the likes of you or me, and despite the blunders in debt collection made by the NIES in the early 70s, that bastion of socialism - Roy Mason - so eagerly brought electric debts under the payment of debt Act ... now they can steal your money, even your supplementary benefits! And still they propagandise with the timeless lies that the reason why electric prices are so high and rising so often (3 times this year so far and 25% higher than in Britain) is because of bad debt - nothing whatsoever to do with the blundering of their mad schemes.

So that's why the gas industry, seen as a competitor, is killed off; that's why Colley is considering Cork gas to the North, why the British may send gas to the South, why the North becomes an electric socket and why the EEC thinks it's all great.

A British government trying to build one new nuclear station every year, prepared to accept US-NATO cruise missiles, and eager to spend millions on updating the useless Polaris is surely capable of anything - it is they who provide the money for Kilroot and it is they who decide to make it go nuclear.

And Carnore? It hasn't been scrapped - far from it. Colley now talks about the need to slow it up and cost it properly, now that 'industrial development' can't follow their plans. The Confederation of Irish Industry (the employers) are more blunt ... 'planning for a nuclear option should proceed', (1980).

In July, 25,000 people made their way to Lisdoonvarna to occupy a large bit of County Clare to consume E-L-Harris plus others.....£10 a go for those who didn't find a way past security. The music was great, reported the media.....but the facilities left much to be desired. A handful of toilets, only rip-off tasteless food on sale, and the surrounding villages and country-side left looking like a huge rubbish tip. "It'll be bigger next year" threatened the entrepreneurs, looking for a tourist trap to increase their profits. And 15,000 people in Dublin paid to hear Bob Marley praise the dictator, advertise ganja, and express his solidarity with the poor as he made his way back to the Gresham by chauffeur-driven limousine. Ballinacorney in Sligo... another week-end of guinness and profits.

'The Police'---thousands of people ripped off because the technical media-hype failed, yet again, to reproduce in real life.Van Morrison in Belfast---pay your money to endure the hypocrisy of the drug squad.

But there are still good festivals, like Carnore. Success depends, not on lining up the super-stars to perform, but on people turning up to contribute whatever THEY have got to offer. No passive consumption, but a free peoples' festival with everyone united (however tenuously) in the common aim of implementing alternatives to a nuclear society. Carnore's success depends on people getting involved, NOT sitting around getting drunk, complaining, seeking ways to rip-off..... just leaching on the energies of others. Carnore is a potential---trying to organise with others is the way to CHANGE things!

There was also the Rock the H-Block open air concert by the Pop Group, Au Pairs and competent local groups. And this weekend there's a 2-night Punk and New Wave Festival at the Ulster Hall organised by Good Vibes.

really ours?

So the grand old Opera House, another monument to bourgeoisie ideology, is to re-open after a false start...when some 'uncouth lout' set it alight last year. But open its doors to whom? Well...not for the likes of you or me...

The workers have done a magnificent job of renovating the building, with the Arts Council spending millions in the process. However I doubt if the workers will ever get a say on what goes on in it, or will ever set foot in it again. Sheer spectacle for the middle classes.

The forthcoming events, bolstered by huge subsidies of our money, reflect their culture, to reinforce their position, their ideas... never challenging or upsetting the power they exert over us.

Just watch the clientele on opening night...not a worker in sight.

radical events

These articles are written about the Lower Ormeau Road, Belfast by people living in that community. They describe the experiences and events of that community. The article "Where we live" first appeared in *Scarlet Woman* and "Lower Ormeau Exposed by R.U.C." is a supplement to *Outta Control*, paper of the Belfast Anarchist Collective available from Just Books, 7 Winetavern Street, Belfast

WHERE WE LIVE..

This area is one of the smallest Catholic ghettos in Belfast. It consists of ten existing streets surrounded by Protestant housing and business and the river Lagan. Many of the houses do not have bathrooms, some do not have running hot water. They are damp and too small for the families who live in them. Many people are on drugs, whether valium, sixty fags a day or drowning ones thoughts in alcohol. Some women are battered by their husbands, one woman died a couple of months ago from a brain haemorrhage after she had been stabbed repeatedly. Families are suffering the effects of the Payment for Debt Act - the Electricity Board comes armed with two policemen at nine o'clock at night, to turn off a family's supply of electricity because they can't afford to pay for it - these problems are common to all working class areas in Belfast, but where this area really stands out from the others is in its accessibility to loyalist assassins.

We must have one of the highest sectarian murder rates in the North of Ireland. Over fifty people have been shot or blown up and considering the size of the area that is one hell of a lot. There is even a case of local people identifying an assassin in court and him being let off on evidence made by a minister to the contrary. Bombs have been left outside pubs and blown people inside to bits - statistics in English papers or on the television but an horrific reality for anybody living in the thick of it. The straight media and the left papers tend to concentrate on what the IRA or the Brits are currently doing, they neglect those areas suffering sectarian attacks and the vindictiveness of those attacks - if its Catholic and it moves shoot it.

It is difficult to express the fear and hysteria when someone is assassinated. Instantly, you want to do something to defend yourself and indeed this was tried. Vigilante patrols were set up but they found that they were continually being hassled by the British Army. There is, after all, only one police force and the Brits are here to normalise the situation so that they can operate: they will undermine all attempts by Catholics to defend their own areas. The choice is simple - acceptance of a force partial to knocking off a few tairs or hoping that you are not in the wrong place at the wrong time. People do not walk around late at night: they take a taxi 500 yards down the road to various social clubs, such is the fear. Interesting parallels were drawn in discussion with the fear of women in Yorkshire to the ripper and the same attitudes to "cleansing" society of prostitution, or here, republicanism.

The power of the British Army is felt even when they are not physically patrolling the streets. Regiments change on average every three to five months and at one time, house searches and interrogation was carried out whenever a new regiment settled in. Searching can mean anything from the Oxford dictionary definition to ripping up floor coverings and floorboards, poking holes in the plaster of walls and ceilings, doors, panelling, furniture and if you're not looking, stealing anything worth having. They do

maintain what they call 'a low profile' these days, but we are still stopped at any time of the day or night - name, address, date of birth, where are you coming from, where are you going, - taken down to be interrogated further in the city centre barracks or up to Castlereagh for the torture routine. The Brits think of their own protection first and not that of the people living here. There has been little success in pressurising them to restore lighting to the streets or put up barricades to discourage sectarian attack until it is much too late. We have experienced blanket searches of the area, with one exit and one entrance and being searched on both occasions, we have seen twelve foot screens going up at the end of our streets when the Orange bands are parading during their silly season. At that time it is virtually impossible to get out even if you wanted to mingle with the hundreds of police and soldiers on the other side.

One of the other decisions made by the State in the late sixties, early seventies, is still having repercussions on peoples lives today. That decision was a proposed ring road.

The ring road was planned to carve up the inner city. All the areas it passed through were poor and working class. Religion did not come into it, the land was cheaper and a lot easier to disturb than that with industry on it. Good fast road communications were wanted between Belfast and Larne so that big international companies like Michelin, ICI and Ford and local firms like Mackies could ship their goods to Britain and overseas quicker. Easy access to Belfast city centre would attract people living in districts like Craigavon - a new city, many people from Belfast received grants and went to live there - to do their shopping.

There was resistance. Meetings were held and community associations, tenants associations and lots of local people attended. They picketed, protested and blocked the roads.

Remaining Protestants moved out. People tried to sell their homes for the highest price before the area was vested. Several things happened. The shortage of housing for Catholics and the possibility of a "safe" place to live meant that more Catholics moved into the area. Many squatted in the houses. (Squatting was a very common practice all over Belfast). The British Army also moved in on the empty houses. Generally they were amongst the first to know about them. They called them 'derelicts' which was what they were after they had searched for weapons. Because nobody lived in these houses they were not obliged to leave details of the search or of the terms of compensation. Local scrap merchants also moved in for the kill to make a few quid out of stripping the houses of lead piping, copper tanks and electric wires. The end result was a bricked up house. The disease spread. Anybody who was at all mobile wanted to get out. Houses on either side suffered dampness, fungi and green slime down connecting walls, blocked sewerage and rats.

Continued on Back Page

LOWER ORMEAU EXPOSED BY R.U.C.

OUTTA CONTROL SUPPLEMENT

On 12.30a.m. Thursday July 24th., Michael Mc Cartan (16) was shot dead near his home in Artana St. in the Lower Ormeau District of Belfast.

He and 3 of his friends were daubing a hoarding with the word 'provos' with paint found nearby when an police-car pulled up near them. A policeman in plain clothes got out. The youths immediately ran off, leaving Michael. The policeman shot him in the stomach without warning....killing him. The police-man got back into the car and drove off. A couple of minutes later an ordinary police land-rover appeared on the scene 'to take over'.

ANSWERING BACK

It was the last straw as far as the people of the Lower Ormeau were concerned. The following day the people of the area blocked the Ormeau Rd. holding placards reading... 'THE RUC MURDERED MICHAEL MCCARTAN'...For the next 5 nights there was rioting, hijacking and burning of vehicles by the young people of the area... something that hasn't happened in years. Extreme measures from an otherwise quiet area. So why did this killing cause such an outrage?



BLATANT LIES

After the killing, the RUC issued statements claiming that Michael McCartan ran away when the police approached... they called to him to halt,he turned round and pointed a paint-brush at the police-man who (thinking it was a gun) shot him dead. They also claimed that the police were under a lot of pressure that day... a gun-man had been seen in the area...there had been serious rioting...and a blast-bomb had been thrown at them. They deliberately gave the impression that these incidents all occurred in the area where Michael was killed. But the truth is different....

The Lower Ormeau has been 'quiet' for years.... no attacks on the security forces... no rioting... not known as an area where gunmen operated....not regarded as a militant republican area. To the people who live there, the RUC statement was just a pack of lies. In order to 'excuse' their murder, they concocted a statement for the general public... knowing they would never be given a chance to find out the truth. The TV and press tell the RUC side of the story, rarely giving much credence to eye-witness accounts of people in the vicinity.

THE AREA

The Lower Ormeau is mainly a Catholic ghetto. It lies above the catholic 'Markets', with 'The Pass'--a hardline Protestant area lying in between. It consists of a series of streets branching off the main Ormeau Road. One quarter of the houses in the area have been demolished to make way for the notorious ring-road. The rest of the houses reflect the general working-class housing situation in Belfast....most of them lack a bathroom and are in immediate need of repair.....everything is dilapidated with abandoned burnt out shells of factories. In one of the streets--Balfour Ave.--the residents have to contend with giant sewer pipes being laid outside their front doors. Rehabilitation work has been going on but at a snails pace. There are NO social amenities in the area which people can use although right in the middle of it all is a huge cricket ground complete with a grand social club.

IT IS USED EXCLUSIVELY BY PEOPLE FROM OUTSIDE THE AREA.

For the last 6 years, the City Council have promised to build a community centre, but this has yet to reach the final planning stage.....they hope that if they delay long enough it will be abandoned due to the 'cuts' with little local opposition.

'What you haven't got, you won't miss'.

JOBS

Industry in the area is practically nil except for a potato packaging factory in the middle of Cooke Street which treats the rest of the street as an extension to their premises. They conveniently dump crates of spuds and derelict cars around the street and block it with their heavy lorries which knock down street lighting, destroy the foot paths and are a continual danger to the playing children. A large price to pay for a few local jobs. And all that from the so-called Fane Valley CO- OPERATIVE! which does not co-operate with the local people who have to live there. The small handy shops have been squeezed out of the area by the blight of "redevelopment" and because of lack of trade. They will never appear again.

ASSASSINATIONS

Throughout the 'troubles' it has suffered more than most areas, at the hands of the marauding sectarian assassins, always out for an easy target. The area is particularly vulnerable as it gives easy access and a quick getaway to cars patrolling up and down that part of the road looking for someone—anyone—to shoot. The most infamous incident was the no-warning bombing of the Rose and Crown bar, killing four people and injuring many more. Michael's father was one of those badly injured. And within the last 6 months, 2 men from the Lower Ormeau were slaughtered by sectarian assassins. One was Michael's uncle.

PLAYING DEAD

Assassination attempts, pub bombings, and killings have been a regular occurrence in the area during the height of sectarian violence (1974-76). They have never completely stopped, but now they are less frequent. The residents have remained quiet, perhaps in the hope that the assassinations would disappear if the area appeared not too militant. Not so long ago even the Lord Mayor (complete with chain!) was invited to walk ceremoniously round the streets judging the wall murals in the "Spruce Up Competition". This was engineered by the 'volunteers' the government agencies throw in every summer in a feeble and pathetic attempt to improve the kids' holidays in an area permanently neglected of things for the children to do. In the quest for respectability, the people conveniently forgot that the Lord Mayors, past and no doubt future operated vicious discrimination in housing and jobs and are responsible for the state of the area. During Orange parades (mainly June-August) the streets are sealed off, and no-one is allowed to leave the area while they pass by at the top of every street. Despite loud, provocative and aggressive playing of the most extreme orange songs, they are allowed to pass unchallenged. With the increased presence of the British Army and the RUC patrols perhaps people felt this might also deter assassins. Alas this has not happened....people are regular targets; sometimes it does get reported to the police, sometimes not (for fear of the RUC investigating the person with an interrogation to find out why an attempt was made....maybe they are in a political group and want no more hassle from the RUC....). When the RUC—the so-called 'security forces' — start killing people, that was the last straw.

S.S.R.U.C.

The RUC had been filtering back into the area, patrolling the streets in land-rovers and gaining confidence for foot-patrols. This killing is a set-back in their attempt at gaining a foot-hold in the area, and in creating good community relations. However, they are determined not to loose any ground gained, no matter what. The young people of the area, angered at the shooting of their mate, and with nothing else being done about it, rioted. During the rioting, the RUC saturated the area, heavily armed, intimidating residents, and arresting 9 peoplesome of them being dragged out of their homes. (To date, one person has received 9 months). In the early hours of the morning, police land-rovers were seen cruising the area with about 20 Brit snatch squaddies running behind wearing pilmsolls hoping to scoop up anyone around and not making too much clatter in the process!



Some of Michael McCartan's Friends

The local power figures, including SDLP councillor Alaister McDonnell and local priest Fr. Newbery (hoping to ease tension, and gain a bit of credibility and voted in the process) met the Chief Constableover a cup of coffee, he politely told them to piss-off. If the people are waiting for their local representatives to achieve justice, they have a long wait. A. McDonnell has never given two farts for the area, except at voting time and then it's the usual string of broken promises. The priest wouldn't even let his youth club (the only building available in the area) be used for a general meeting about the situation....(he doesn't let the tenants assoc. meet there either!)... the public meeting had to be held on waste ground. They talk to the press about "the sinister elements exploiting the situation" and went on to imply that the "Release Martin Meehan Campaign" was in some way responsible for young Michaels murder. The politicians and the other power figures are the sinister elements, they use the opportunity to do deals behind our backs for their benefit.

JUSTICE

But the people are determined to get some kind of justice...preferably to get the RUC-man who shot Michael, suspended and up on a murder charge. A lot of people from many different parts of Ulster, have tried to get 'justice' from the RUC....but with little success. Perhaps with regular road-blocks, petitions, and an independent tribunal to get publicity, just maybe the RUC will be forced to admit their mistake and Michaels innocence.

MOVEMENT OF THE PEOPLE

The people who now live in the area are almost a different community that existed 10 years ago. Many people were the emigres and spill-overs from the Markets, Falls or Pass Short Strand areas of Belfast, forced to leave because of shortage of housing and others intimidated out of other areas. This is an area without our grannies or granpas or close relatives living near us who could be relied on for help and support. Perhaps now after living together for 10 years we begin to feel ourselves as a community relying on each other. And perhaps Michael McCartan symbolised the fruition of our community, a child belonging not only to his family, but a child protected by all the people of the area.



IT'S UP TO US!

And more importantly the killing should act as a catalysis for EVERYBODY to wake up to what is happening in the community to the wider issues involved. It is no good kidding ourselves that the wee man or woman in the Housing Executive or our "kind, thoughtful" Alliance and SDLP representatives can solve the problems of this community. However secure and efficient their offices may make us feel they are as much caught up in the mesh of a society geared to making high amounts of money for the privileged few, out of the hard work of us, the working people of Belfast.

We are forever having public meetings to discuss various solutions, most of us don't turn up any longer to elect people, often the same people onto never ending committees, to grapple with the vast social and economic wretchedness in this community. When we elect people to committees as potential leaders we encourage ourselves to lose sight of our own insights and power. We project our potential qualities onto others instead of developing them in ourselves. We remove the problem from ourselves. Until we grasp that the government, itself, sold out to the multi-national firms, will only give us money if it sees that money multiplying or as part of its welfare programme which keeps the hardship we have to suffer, bearable, and puts off the day when we will rise up and control our own lives.

The area has more than its fair share of people prepared to contribute towards a better community (Some unfortunately finding themselves doing a spell in Castlereagh, or worst still, Armagh or the Kesh) There are others whose dignity has been crushed by continual unemployment, large families living in cramped conditions, and bad housing whose children run wild with nothing better to do than create havoc and destruction. We should help them regain that dignity by lending a hand and support. There are people in the area who only want to see the dark side, who see only decay, who don't want the area to live and who exploit the weakest. They use the opportunity to seek profit for themselves at the expense of the whole community. We should confront these people who are destroying our community and making it a hell for the people living here.

Everybody should play a part in deciding and creating the community they want their children to live in, and not to moan about it and rely on others to get things done.

Continued from front page

The legacy today is that many of the streets are destroyed. An area of rubble and desolation.

They are still going to build the road, in a more disguised form and have promised to squeeze in as many houses into the remaining area as possible! But if there is a chance of getting something people will go for that chance. Members of the Housing Executive can come to local meetings and indulge themselves. They produce a carrot, an improvement and although people know that the bureaucracy has dictated the terms all along, after all these years they feel that they have been given 'something'. The majority has been convinced. QED.

Social life is restricted to three pubs and bingo. There is nothing for older children. Right in the middle of the area is a cricket ground where supporters roll up in their mercedes and rolls to enjoy either the cricket or the rugby season. We did get in once and protest that we should have access to some of the ground, after all it takes up to a third of the area up, maybe even one half. It was all a bit of a joke when you consider what the authorities really did for children in this area. They took one street of bricked up houses, ripped up the pavements and tarmacked it level, put 2 signs up "No Entry" and called it a playstreet. What they overlooked was that the danger was the bricked up houses, not the cars! A bricked up house is a great place to play if you are a child and not aware of the dangers. Every summer for two months, the authorities would throw in a couple of volunteers, English people over to do their bit for the natives. They organised playbuses once a fortnight and a bus trip to greener pastures for the lucky ones. They painted the streets and covered all the



slogans with Walt Disney scenes. The river Lagan is also a death trap. Several children have been drowned because the fencing has been neglected. It is a filthy river anyway, Belfast's sewerage system overflows into it, being so old and the Blackstaff, reputed to be the most polluted river in Western Europe, joins the Lagan in our area. It runs under Belfast and all the industries use it to dispose of toxic waste.

The Catholic Church with the aid of a grant from local government built a playschool. All the kids go to it. Even for those amongst us who are lapsed Protestants or who have rejected Catholicism, this playschool is a welcome sight, such is the deprivation. Nearly all the children go to Catholic schools only one of which is mixed primary (boys/girls). Some children do go to the State primary school which being between the University catchment area and several working class areas has a racial mix as well as a social and religious one. Catholic parents who want

their children brought up in the religion tend to take their children away from the state school system. A lot of time is devoted to preparing 5-7 year olds for Holy Communion which is obviously not done in the state schools. The Catholic church advises the Billings method and conducts classes although the existence of a Health Centre on the main road has undermined them with many women going there for the pill. There are many large families interrelated with other large families and redevelopment has not destroyed the extended family completely—the latter is probably quite rare in European cities these days. Many children are brought up by their grandparents or aunts, particularly if a father is away a lot, separated, dead or in prison.

Official unemployment must be as high as 40%. Very few school leavers are lucky to get jobs. Women work in low paid, non unionised jobs, for 70p an hour to supplement the family income.

The early seventies was a time of grass roots rebellion on many issues, not just civil rights. People were beginning to question all sorts of issues which affected them in their day to day life. We have tried to show how people tackled those problems, they did meet and discuss what to do, they did come out and block main roads, they did refuse to pay their rates. However, the State moved in. Field Officers arrived from the Community Relations Commission, various agents from the City Council were assigned to set up committees with acceptable constitutions and the more "responsible" citizens on them if possible. It was impressed upon us that committees were the best way of getting things done: their structure gave us the illusion of power to change circumstances through negotiation and small concessions were made from time to time to keep the illusion credible. Nothing ever came of it. We have no say in what goes on around us. We are not apathetic. We have been ripped off and sold out and crushed under the heavy boot of the State and its Army. Very few people go along to public meetings now to elect people (often the same people who make a good speech to take the bad look away) onto never ending committees grappling with the social and economic wretchedness in this community. Electing people onto these committees lulled people into a false sense of something being done — we lost sight of our own imagination and power and projected our potential for change onto others instead of developing them in ourselves. We removed the problem from ourselves.

Everybody in this area has suffered from the repressive nature of the State: its laws pervade every aspect of our lives. This is not exclusive to Catholic working class areas. All the problems we have written about exist in Protestant areas, some like the consequences of the Payment for Debt Act to a much greater degree. The exception is of course the role of the British Army and the RUC and the political attitudes of the people towards them.

