

Direct **Action**

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breaking

barriers

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200million child slaves: **welcome** to 1997

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editorial

There is a curious thing. Why is it that after so many struggles and so many barriers falling in recent years - Berlin Wall, South Africa, Eastern Europe to name but 3 - that our daily lives are more fraught with barriers than ever? Various explanations spring to mind. Will the simplistic summing up of the archetypal lefty suffice? - that it's all a case of us and them, and them is just about anyone from the prime minister to the poor bastard behind the fast food counter. P'raps not.

Of course we can start linking various barriers to forms of oppression in our daily lives, and putting these together into a unified whole. We can even come to the obvious conclusion that the system is all wrong. But where does it get us? What is the point of dismissing every active pressure group as 'only interested in single issues and not the whole problem' if there is no way of coherently addressing the whole problem? A medical scientist doesn't just come up with a cure out of the blue, any more than you can plan your life on a rainy Sunday afternoon.

The musings of a mad editor exploring the navel area? Probably, but there is more. It is quite common I find, when reading people's thoughts on linking relatively un-linked strands of thought together, that they suffer from an involuntary twitch which leads to them repeatedly hitting the question mark key on the keyboard. And why not?????

The point is we are chasing the theme of the issue of DA you have in your hands - breaking barriers. You will find an exploration of various topics here, and it's not just about breaking things. Maybe the theme is really 'constructing freedom', but let's face it, that just doesn't roll off the tip so well.

Maybe the various contributions to the debates you find within these pages will raise more questions. It is only by answering these to our personal satisfaction that we can gather confidence in our own thoughts and beliefs.. ..confidence which is necessary for us all to go out and put them into action. And on the question of questions..

How many rock stars have proclaimed that they have more questions than answers, and they think they are the first to realise this? (there goes another question mark)

And how many have really helped to change the way the human world is organised?

And how many answers really are blowing in the wind?

Suppose actions speak louder than words - or promised future cures. So to it.

Enjoy breaking barriers

Convenor, Direct Action Collective.

make contact

Bring out your Views!

Readers' views are welcome on all aspects of Direct Action Magazine. If you have something to say, help yourself and help us by saying it. Whether it is good news or otherwise, opinions, additional information or letters responding to articles or raising issues of interest, we want to hear from you.

Notes for Contributors

If you would like to contribute more than brief opinions, we request you send articles (between 500 and 1500 words if possible) in hardcopy and on disk in either Word for Windows PC version not greater than 6 or ASCII format. Contact us for electronic mail addresses or alternative formats. While unsolicited articles are welcome, they can only be returned if an SAE is enclosed.

Know More!

If you have questions for the DA Collective, would like to know more about us or the Solidarity Federation, do not hesitate to drop us a line at the address/phone number above. Do not expect high pressure sales, paper-selling requests or demands for this or that, do expect a reasonably prompt reply.

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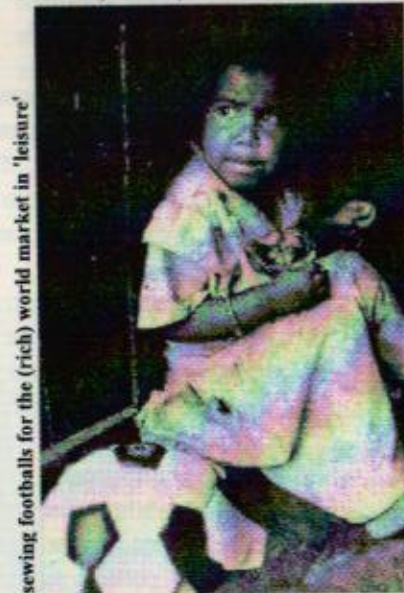
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The fight to be human

Perspectives on feminism and anarcho-syndicalism



What this article seeks to do is address the similarities between much of what feminists write and say and what anarcho-syndicalists are saying. With no agenda or understanding set in concrete, and being a man writing on feminism, I make no secret of the fact that in exploring ideas as presented by women there is much to address. We are talking thousands of ideas and approaches, all of which you can read in hundreds of big thick books on feminism. Having got the insecurities out of the way, this space is for searching out and cherry picking ideas, not seeking to sum it all up in an article.

it just isn't
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Firstly, there is close correlation between modern radical and socialist feminist ideas and practices, and the ideas and practices of anarcho-syndicalism. Evidence comes from many areas, from the criticisms by feminists of liberal and radical ideas when applied to the oppression of women and the way to end it, to the recognition that this will mean a complete social and economic change in society. Furthermore, the understanding that this change involves a decentralised structure as a way not only to organise on the fairest principals, but also allowing people to be empowered through the very organisational structure.

It is telling of the depth of the subjugation that the feminist stereotype

as either an individualistic middle class careerist wanting a seat on the board or a bunch of separatists is so overwhelmingly accepted, not just in the mass media but regretfully also in the libertarian movement.

Modern feminism is a broad spectrum, with many different women applying the term to what they do. The fall back stereotypes are all too often used as an excuse for not doing anything, for ignoring patriarchy, our own behaviour, or failing to actively address the real issues of women's oppression. It just isn't true to say that feminism is about middle class women getting on in their careers. Also separatism, (meaning permanently exclusive and separate) whilst in anarcho-syndicalist terms I would criticise it as having no long term political justification, is a reaction by women to their experiences at the hands of men. Their experiences, often in radical groups as well as in society in general, have led them to the conclusion that men are not worth the effort and they would rather sort themselves out away from the distraction of men. I respect these reasons, but cannot accept separatism as a justifiable long term political strategy. It is counter to my basic understanding of libertarian principles.



Now a brief interlude to knock on the head a few myths about anarcho-syndicalism. Anarcho-syndicalism is not trade unionism with the union bosses removed. It seeks to unify the

whole of the working class in the community and in the workplace, addressing immediate and long-term political, social and financial aims. Just as feminism should seek to address the issues specifically facing women as a result of oppression within all aspects of society, anarcho-syndicalism should seek to do so for all people. We are all interested in hierarchical power relations and how to end them. The feminist and anarcho-syndicalist do have a lot to share. Feminism should not and does not see all women as the same, affected by patriarchy in the same way.

While feminists recognise that working class women are affected as members of the working class as well as women and that the effects of patriarchal society are not uniform, anarcho-syndicalists also recognise that not all members of the working class are affected within society in the same way and that the effects of capitalism on women are compounded with the effects of patriarchy.

Just as anarcho-syndicalists recognise that not all oppression is due to economics (taking economics to mean access to food, shelter etc., rather than a definition which would include the environmental, social, emotional, etc.), we need to be clear that not all oppression is a result of capitalism.

Capitalism makes full use of existing forms of prejudice and inequality,

adapting them for its own use, but in capitalism it doesn't matter who is making the money and who is getting ripped off, as long as someone is. Feminists recognise that whilst in much of the world the structure and nature of the existing patriarchal system is due to capitalism, patriarchy existed long before the advent of the modern capitalist system and can survive long after it unless it is addressed. The one place it cannot exist is after social revolution. Not because 'all we need is a revolution', but because there can be no social revolution and no libertarian communism until patriarchy (and every other form of discrimination) is ended. As anarcho-syndicalists our thought and practice has it that we start building for a new world in this one so we need to actively seek to undermine and eradicate the patriarchal system now. Without the end of all forms of oppression we cannot achieve our aims of a better, fairer, society.

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A basis for much of feminism is that organisation should be non hierarchical. Sound familiar? It is not surprising that people seeking a way to transform society and end oppressive forms of organisation should use non hierarchical methods. I am more surprised that many people fail to see the dichotomy between fighting oppression and being part of a highly centralised and hierarchical system. Now the organisational structures proposed and used may not be strictly anarcho-syndicalist in intent, but I would argue that the differences are more in the order of the words than the meaning of the sentences.

Both radical feminists and anarchists have been known to utter the cry that the personal is political. The political is about control of all aspects of our lives, from interpersonal to international relationships. Removing the barrier between the 'public' and the 'private' spheres of activity is fundamental to both understandings of society. As is the recognition that just

because there is no law saying you cannot, does not mean that society does not have other ways of controlling our lives. As also is the recognition that it is no good just saying okay there is nothing in law to say you cannot, if the means to do so are still kept in the hands of existing privilege.

Women's rights to the control of their own lives, bodies, minds, sexuality is a fundamental part of anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist thought. Anarcho-syndicalism simply seeks to provide a framework within which this is possible, within which all people can fight to control their lives starting now in the short term, whilst recognising that the only real solution, and the one that needs to be kept in sight and constantly worked towards, is the total social and economic reorganisation of society. Through its recognition of the unity of community and work, the interlinking of social, political and economic, and its attempts to seek suitable ways to organise and address these realisations, anarcho-syndicalism can and should be a position that many feminists can feel happy with. Indeed, anyone who recognises that oppression is wider than patriarchy and that to overcome patriarchy we have to transform society, and that we have to start today, should have few difficulties with anarcho-syndicalist practice.



Another common thread is the belief in the need for education and empowerment. This runs naturally from understanding of the nature of oppression and ways of overcoming it, and from action and involvement in the fight back and the fight forward. Both ideas recognise the power of being active, and in small victories on the road to something greater.

In summing up it is interesting that when looking at the historical ideas put forward by women on the questions of their oppression, those which seem most ahead of their time include those that were put forward by the likes of

Emma Goldmanⁱⁱ and the Mujeres Libres in Spainⁱⁱⁱ.

Goldman and the Mujeres Libres rejected the term feminist, believing it only of relevance to the middle classes, as then it could fairly honestly be said to have been. But the ideas they proposed on the control by women of their own lives, their own sexuality, their oppression in the social as well as the political and economic spheres and the role of women within the radical movements of their times virtually mirror those of today. These women were steeped in the anarcho-syndicalist current, which has always sought to learn from its history, and from that of others. So we as anarcho-syndicalists must seek to embrace the ideas of feminism which so often correspond to our own, whilst at the same time encouraging feminists to look at our ideas, our methods and our aims and to consider their relevance to them. If fellow followers do not take up each other's ideas, both feminists and anarcho-syndicalists will lose the chance of joint benefit from fertile and active flows of thought and action which run, at least mostly, parallel..

We can bring much to each movement from dialogue and mutual action.

RAC

next issue: review of 'feminist pornography': tales from the clit

ⁱ This definition does not include opposition to all autonomous women's organisation (self organisation to meet peoples self defined needs), only to those which see complete separate development as the way forward.

ⁱⁱ In my readings of feminist writings the name of Emma Goldman has popped up a number of times, but nowhere near as many times as examples of ideas which were proposed as radical and fresh in the sixties and seventies, but which she had written on just a while beforehand. There are numerous books, pamphlets and the like which contain writings by, on or about Emma Goldman, try the Traffic in Women and other essays.. or Living My Life volumes 1 and 2, her autobiography.

ⁱⁱⁱ For details of this see the book 'Free Women of Spain' Martha Ackelsberg (Indiana University Press) 1991, or if you can still find the old pamphlet 'Mujeres Libres: Women during the Spanish Revolution', Martha Ackelsberg (Brixton DAM) 1987.

direct actions

At the end of 1995, two Southwark Council building workers were sacked for refusing to transfer over to a cowboy contractor. Terry Mason is being backed by his union EPIU, for an industrial tribunal. John Jones didn't get the backing of UCATT (arguably Britain's most corrupt union and a strong contender for least effective) so he is taking his case via the local law centre. UCATT's role in the dispute was ignominious, with the unelected full-time convenor Tony O'Brien encouraging workers to cross the two men's picket - hardly good trade unionism at the best of times.

Brian Higgins, secretary of the building worker rank and file group and of Northampton UCATT branch wrote to the Irish Post after they carried an article in praise of the local UCATT full timer, Dominic Hehir, for winning an industrial tribunal case. The successful case was actually won by

Building

another full time official, but the same couldn't be done for John Jones.

Almost immediately Brian Higgins received a letter from UCATT connected solicitors Christian Fisher on behalf of Hehir. Referring to the letter, some BWG leaflets and Brian Higgins' pamphlet "rank and file or broad left - democracy vs. bureaucracy", the solicitors letter stated "these publications have caused considerable loss and damage to our client" and went on to demand costs and damages with the threat of legal action.

This attempt to gag a principled opponent of the UCATT bureaucracy by a full time official is a disgrace and breaks all standards of behaviour within

the labour movement. If Hehir disagrees with Brian Higgins he should say so within the labour movement,

picketing of sites where safety is an issue, particularly where an accident has occurred and feelings are running high. Building employers and the press are currently operating a virtual news blackout on construction accidents to pre-empt the campaign.

Workers Group

not in the bosses courts. There is a further question to be raised, apart from Hehir's motives. Litigation is not cheap and a full time official's wages couldn't cover it, so where is the money coming from? If Hehir's action is successful it threatens our very right to criticise bureaucrats. The timing of the attack is also suspect - the BWG were about to launch a major health and safety initiative in the industry, based on the kind of solidarity and direct action the Solidarity Federation supports. This 'construction safety initiative' involves active

For more info, contact:

**Brian Higgins Defence Campaign, c/o Colin Roach Centre, 56 Clarence Rd London E5 8SW
Tel 0181-5337111.**

We particularly urge UCATT members to take up this case through their union branches. The BWG pamphlet is available from the same address.

JSA update

The Job Seekers Allowance has now been in force long enough (since last October) to start really taking hold. The fact that evidence of widespread harassment of 'jobseekers' is now being recorded doesn't surprise those of us who put 2&2 together (the new conditions and targets of staff and the new prejudicial rules) and predicted such a result.

But the anti-JSA campaign is fighting back. Initiative and action has come from various local groups such as Norwich

Unemployed Action Group (01603 611072); national networks such as Groundswell are also actively opposing the JSA. Edinburgh claimants have a 3 strikes policy for reporting and then smearing JSA officials (Edinburgh 332 7547).

Forthcoming in DA:

The effects of JSA on workers' conditions on a macro scale will mean lower wages and more insecurity for all. But simply fighting the JSA is itself reformism, no more. What is needed? - Write with your views.



Pre-strike Post-strike

Across the country posties are getting their sick bags out. According to the Communication Workers' Network (SF-CWN, Box 29 SWPDO Manchester M15 5HW), it is becoming increasingly likely that the main official union (CWU) which organised last year's strikes is in the process of both putting things off until after the election, and selling out its members wholesale.

The strikes were mainly about the Royal Mail's proposed Teamworking, which would

undermine working conditions and lead inevitably to job cuts.

The interim agreement which ended the strikes was sold to the membership on the basis of 'no to a new way of working'. "Talks" behind closed doors and periodically circulated garbage from the joint working party (bosses-CWU) does not impress. The resounding cry from members is 'talk to us and we'll tell you what

WE want - why ask the bosses what THEY want?' Don't throw away the picket placards just yet.



Flickering Flames

In praise of the spirit and practice of direct action in Liverpool, France, Greece, Korea, Lima, and hopefully soon a place near you.

The 500 sacked Liverpool dockers are a shining example amidst the prevailing apathy and anticipation of a Labour Party election victory in 1997. In December, 15 months after being locked out for refusing to cross a picket line, they overwhelmingly rejected the Mersey Docks & Harbour Company's "final" offer of a £28,000 pay off per man and the chance of up to 40 reinstatements.

Abandoned by the paper tigers of the TUC, but supported by their families, the extra-parliamentary Left and an international dockers' network they've built up themselves, the Liverpool dockers and their heroic stand refute the orthodoxy that says nobody believes in the class war any more. Despite now facing crushing hardship they rejected £28,000 in favour of defending a principle. Beside this noble and selfless gesture by and for workers, spineless TGWU bosses, MDHC and the silent "New" Labour politicians are revealed as the mediocrities they are.

In November, French lorry drivers showed how workers have the muscle to bring a country to a standstill if only they recognise their own strength. They were demanding shorter hours, more pay and earlier retirement, in a country which long ago accepted the EU Social Charter so beloved of social democrats and "progressive" employers here. Evidently French lorry drivers couldn't put their faith in the myth of a safe European home and had to resort to good old tried and trusted direct action. They quickly paralysed the country and won their demands. This is a stark contrast to strikes in Britain which are so often defensive, hesitant,

and end up as long drawn-out lock-outs like at Liverpool and the Magnet factory in Darlington. In December, Greek farmers seemed to have learnt the French lesson and initiated their own massive blockades.

On the other side of the world, in Lima, a group of left-wing guerrillas gatecrashed the party at the Japanese Embassy in honour of the Emperor's birthday in a daring operation, taking hostage hundreds of diplomats and businessmen. When the Peruvian

authorities cut off water and services to the Embassy, the hostages held placards up at windows pleading for them to be reconnected. Perhaps it has given them an insight into the conditions endured by the poor in

Lima's shanty towns with no sanitation, water, electricity, etc., conditions that are direct result of the neoliberal dogmas imposed by these very businessmen and diplomats. So it's hats off to Tupac Amaru gatecrashers for the most imaginative political intervention in Latin America since the Zapatistas emerged out of the Chiapas jungle to spoil the NAFTA party in 1994.

December ended with a general strike in South Korea, so often trumpeted in Britain as the model of labour flexibility. The Korean workers were striking against parliamentary moves to make it easier for employers to hire and fire at will and stretch a flexible workforce even further. It would appear that in this particular Tiger Economy the workers are not prepared to offer themselves for sacrifice at the altar of "competitiveness" so important

to employers. The threat is cheaper labour in South Wales. Sound familiar?

In nature, fires break out in tinder dry country as part of the order of things, and within weeks new growth breaks through the scorched earth. Events like those in France, Greece, Peru, Korea and Liverpool are sparks from which a fire can be kindled under the feet of the rulers of our parched world. Everywhere politicians, business and union bureaucrats desperately try to stamp out the flames. But just as they succeed in putting out the fire here, it breaks out somewhere else, proof of the continuing contradictions of capitalism.

The Liverpool dockers called for an international boycott of the port on Jan 20th, with further excellent examples of international solidarity from dockers around the world. But what about here in Britain? If French lorry drivers can blockade ports, why can't their British counterparts? It would certainly be a refreshing change from the TGWU card carrying drivers who have been crossing the picket line. Liverpool could have been brought to a standstill on Jan 20th if the working class had really wanted it. Who delivers mail, catering to the MDHC? Who takes away refuse? Who maintains their computers? Get the idea? Everyone is involved whether they like it or not. Everyone is needed to do what they can - even if it is only a whip round for the dockers' fund or spraying on a wall 'VICTORY TO THE LIVERPOOL DOCKERS!'

...or get the Dockers Video "Port in a Storm" and raise a few quid by doing a showing or two - £10 from Video News, PO Box 10395 London N7 9DN, UK.



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Racist Laws in a 'free' democracy?

Update on the oppressive acts of 'our' elected ministers - in particular the 1993 and 1996 Asylum and Immigration Acts

The need to tighten up the immigration laws is a recurrent theme spouted by many British politicians and echoed slavishly by much of the press. They constantly harp on about having to sort out bogus refugees from the genuine ones and having to be firm but fair. A typical quote from the *Daily Mail*:

"To be ruled by misguided sentimentalism...would be disastrous...Once it was known that Britain offered sanctuary to all who cared to come the floodgates would be opened and we would be inundated by thousands seeking a home."

You might think the *Mail* was trying to justify the recently passed Asylum & Immigration Act, but you'd be wrong. It actually appeared on March 23rd 1938 supporting the increased immigration restrictions then being imposed on refugees from Nazi Germany. It belies the myth of "the long standing welcome this country gives to those genuinely in fear of persecution". (Peter Lilley, UK Secretary of State for Social Security).

the focus has shifted on to asylum-seekers from almost anywhere in the world

From the Aliens Act of 1905 to the

Daily Mail
shows its
neo-fascist
true colours
-some things
never change



UN Convention

For the record, a refugee, according to the UN Convention on Refugees, is;

"a person who has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, and is outside the country of his nationality".

This, nominally at least, is accepted by the British government. However, it excludes people who are

1996 Asylum & Immigration Act, Britain's immigration policy has tried to keep out those who are deemed as undesirable. 50 years ago it was Jews escaping persecution in central and eastern Europe; later it was Black and Asian people; and now the focus has shifted to asylum-seekers from almost anywhere.

refugees just because they live in a dangerous or unstable place due to civil war or famine, for example. So, despite Michael Howard's gesturing, most of the world's refugees are not knocking on the doors of Knightsbridge or Belgravia, but remain near their own countries. In fact the real truth is that the highest numbers of

refugees are in some of the world's poorest countries. This is just how the likes of Howard would love to keep it.

In Britain the road to refugee status has already been turned into even more of an obstacle course by successive pieces of legislation, each more restrictive than the last. The Home Office maintains a list of "visa national" countries whose people must have visas to enter Britain for any purpose, even for short visits. As soon as a country begins to produce refugees in any number it is placed on the list. This makes it harder for refugees to even reach Britain in the first place to make their asylum claims. It happened to German refugees in 1938, Iranians in 1980, Sri Lankans in 1985, Turks in 1989 and people from former Yugoslavia in 1992. In 1987 "Carriers' Liability" was introduced making airlines and ferry companies liable to large fines for bringing people to the UK without proper visas. The net effect is to make it well nigh impossible for refugees to make it to the UK unless they resort to using forged documents and corrupt agents.

The '93 Act

The Asylum & Immigration Appeals Act, 1993 was the first to deal specifically with asylum seekers. It was the culmination of an increasingly restrictive policy which had begun with the arrival of Tamils from Sri Lanka in the mid-1980's. The Act and the rule changes that went along with it brought in finger-printing of asylum-seekers, including children; reduced their homeless rights; and codified and strengthened the practice of attacking their credibility on grounds that are thinly disguised attempts at denying as many people as possible the right to a proper hearing. Such grounds include failing to make an asylum claim immediately upon arrival at a British port of entry; making false representations, including the possession of a forged passport; destroying travel documents; and

political activity in the UK. Much of this breaches the UN Convention despite claims that *"nothing in the immigration rules...shall lay down any practice which would be contrary to the Convention"*.

The vast majority of asylum-seekers are now dealt with under a nasty and vicious set of rules called the "Short Procedure". The Home Office brought this in not through any Act of Parliament, but by merely issuing a new set of guidelines. What it means is that refugees face a full political asylum interview almost as soon as they arrive without any rights to arrange for representation. The usefulness of the new "Short Procedure" to the Home Office can be gauged from the fact that between May 1995 and June 1996, of 6,734 cases considered only 3 were granted asylum.

The '96 Act

There is a distinction to be made between asylum claims made "at-port" and those made "in-country". The latter category is more likely to result in the granting of refugee status, because the UN Convention obliges the Home Office to "not impose penalties...on refugees who...enter or are present in their territory without authorisation". Therefore someone claiming "at-port" can be far more easily removed than those claiming "in-country" who have to go through lengthy deportation procedures due to the UK's international obligations. The Home Office has managed to dress up the whole debate in a "bogus" versus "genuine" mystification claiming that asylum-seekers have nothing to fear from "greater honesty and clarity at ports". The real reason behind all the rhetoric is, of course, to get more people to claim "at-port" who can then be easily removed.

To encourage this "greater honesty and clarity" the '96 Act brings in a whole array of housing and benefit

restrictions on those who do not claim asylum upon arrival. Such people are now denied any access to local authority housing. Moreover, related provisions in the 1996 Housing Act further deny asylum-seekers access to local authority waiting lists. This leaves accommodation under the homelessness legislation as the only way out but, guess what, only for those who claim asylum upon arrival. On top of all this comes a barrage of benefit restrictions. Asylum-seekers now have no entitlement to child benefit whatsoever, while their entitlement to Job Seekers' Allowance, Housing Benefit and Council Tax benefit is once again dependent upon having claimed asylum upon arrival.

The message conveyed by this vindictiveness is clear. Yes, you can still continue to evade the immigration authorities until you are safely inside the country and then claim asylum but don't expect us to make life easy for you. These measures attempt to strip refugees of what remaining dignity they may still have after having to flee halfway around the world leaving behind relatives, friends and livelihoods. In a strange, new and unfriendly country the only welcome they get is to be left homeless and destitute. Of course, the Home Office's response is that all this hardship can be simply avoided through "greater honesty and clarity". However, even the government's own Social Security Advisory Committee balked at these proposals and advised against them. It recognised that

"lack of knowledge of their procedures, arriving in a confused and frightened state, language difficulties or fear of officialdom may all be insuperable barriers to making any kind of approach to the authorities at the port of entry".

Fair enough? But no, the Home Office isn't concerned with fairness, only with the need to remove as many asylum-seekers as possible with the minimum of fuss. The '96 Act brings in a number of other provisions aimed at

the usefulness of the new "Short Procedure" to the Home Office can be gauged from the fact that between May 1995 and June 1996, of 6,734 cases considered only 3 were granted asylum

FEATURE: breaking barriers to free movement

preventing refugees getting their cases considered in a proper fashion. It introduces a list of designated countries where "there is no serious risk of persecution", the so-called "White List", which the Home Office is free to amend as and when it sees fit. Asylum claims by nationals of these countries are automatically assumed to be without foundation unless a "reasonable likelihood" of torture can be established. So far the White List comprises Poland, Bulgaria, Romania, India, Pakistan, Ghana and Cyprus. Michael Howard had originally wanted to add Nigeria but was thwarted by the outcry caused by the Nigerian military government's legalised murder of the Ogoni environmental campaigner, Ken Saro-Wiwa. A refugee from a "White List" country is automatically entered straight into the special appeals procedure.

The special ("fast-track") appeals procedure deals with those people who are refused entry into the full (or "substantive") asylum process. It originally featured in the '93 Act, being mainly applied to refugees who had passed through a "safe third country", giving them only 2 days to appeal, at best resulting only in the case being referred back to the Home Secretary for re-consideration. The '96 Act has now expanded the "fast-track" appeals procedure to include people on the "White List". It also includes those without a valid passport with no "reasonable" explanation and not telling an immigration officer on arrival; those considered to be outside UN Convention grounds; those who make a late claim; and those whose claim is deemed fraudulent or deemed to contain false or "vexatious" evidence, however minor. In effect this third way in which the '96 Act tries to cut refugee numbers is to disallow appeals from those who fall foul of the "safe third country" rule until after they have been returned back to the third country. The list of such countries includes the EU member states, the USA, Canada, Norway and Switzerland and anyone passing through them

the Home Office isn't concerned with fairness, only with the need to remove as many asylum-seekers as possible with the minimum of fuss

means that almost any asylum claim can now be "fast-tracked" by-passing the full asylum process. A before making an asylum claim in Britain will be returned there.

Only then can an appeal be made against this form of removal. There is no provision for people to then return to the UK after a successful appeal, nor is there any assurance sought that that country's immigration authorities will allow the asylum-seeker to remain there while their appeal is being decided in Britain. Of course, trying to appeal in one country from another while being unfamiliar with the legal processes in both is fraught with enormous difficulties but then this is exactly how the Home Office wants it. Another part of the Act makes it more difficult for imprisoned asylum seekers to get bail. The home office has a long history of trying to deter and punish people claiming asylum, by locking them up. Hundreds of asylum seekers are detained for months on end. Over the years, many of these detainees have fought back, organising and protesting against inhumane and degrading treatment. At the time of writing, refugees imprisoned at Rochester are on hunger strike in protest against their continued abuse by a racist state.

Other measures brought in by the '96 Act include a new immigration offence of assisting someone to enter the UK who is an asylum-seeker, illegal entrant or who has otherwise used deception; an increase in penalties for immigration offences; and increased powers for police and immigration officials to enter and search premises. It also introduces sanctions against employers who take on people who do not have permission to work in the UK.

This part of the Act will be dealt with in more depth in the next DA.

This Act, in common with all previous legislation, has resulted in an ever more tough and restrictive immigration and asylum policy. The employer sanctions, the housing and benefit restrictions have effectively introduced a pass law situation. Black and Asian people find themselves more and more liable to passport checks as they go



about their normal daily lives because various authorities are desperate to avoid breaking the law by giving services to asylum-seekers or "illegal" immigrants. Already cases have been reported of people being asked to prove

their immigration status while trying to gain access to educational and medical facilities.

Also in line with past policy, is the institutionalised racism written all over this Act. The British state is fundamentally racist being built upon centuries of systematic denial of humanity to other races and cultures all over the world, imposing supposedly superior British values wherever the imperial armies went. The non-white people of the world have never had a chance of equal treatment in the eyes of the British state. They were only to be exploited for the glory of the British Empire.

Asylum-seekers might come here from former colonial countries plundered by British capitalists, ruined by an unstable political system left over from the Empire and bled dry by IMF and World Bank dictates; they might come having fled from some repressive regime propped up by British aid and arms. Wherever they come from, though, they are greeted with the same message - you're black and we don't want you! So don't be taken in by Michael Howard's claims of a fairer asylum process - far from fairness it is riddled through and through with suspicion, hatred and racism.

Homeworking

Personal parent to person view of school homework, standards, and the farce that passes for 'education'.

New Labour and Old Tories are working in brilliant synchronisation. They're a sort of Nightmare Team of politics; one sets up the ball and the other spikes it down for another cop-out. Unemployment, poverty and the homeless. What is Tony's policy on this? *'I don't give to beggars.'* Subtle, penetrating philosophy. And Jeffery Von Wilkington-Smythe (or whoever) tells us beggars are an identifiable group, near enough a race- beggars are Scottish, so you can pick 'em out by their accent. What's the point of hate, if you can't recognise the enemy. So that's housing and welfare sorted.

Onto education. This time Tony's formed an unholy alliance with the Prince of Wales - that great thinker of our times. What can we do to improve our children's chances of a decent education? More funding? Better facilities? Smaller classes? No, forget the 9-4 bit, that's gone down the pan-More Homework. There's the solution. Let them get on with learning at home, in their own time, and blame the parents if it's not done properly. Do they think we're all living in some sort of Cluedo game?

Off you go to the library or the study, Claude; I'll be in the ballroom if you need any help.

Isn't seven hours a day, five days a week enough time to pore over books? University students get by on a fraction of that time. The logic is pretty basic: 7 hours good, 9 hours better. So why not make it 12 hours? Start school at 8 in the morning, go on till 6 and finish off with a couple of hours at home. 90 minutes homework an evening! How many adults could bear it?

Did you hear the one about the man who drank whisky and soda the first night and ended up with a terrible hangover? He changed to rum and soda and then brandy and soda and still got a hangover, so he decided to give up soda. The same joke logic holds together the argument that pupils from schools that set most homework do best. Let's not mention the fact that those schools happen to be privileged in lots of other ways - including the trump card of doing the exams run by the Oxford and Cambridge Board, recently dismantled for ludicrously overmarking their independent schools' papers.

But they say parents are all in favour of homework. That's because it's hard to say 'No' to some things - like when the Jehovah's Witnesses come to the door and say *'Do you care about your children's future?'* You have to say



Education and school are vaguely connected.
Homework and life skills are unconnected.
More homework per se is pointless.

'Yes' and then they're inside and you've got a copy of the WatchTower. Poor parents. We're being conned. We think they're saying 'Do this and your child will succeed.' What they're really saying is 'They haven't got a chance anyway, but this way, it'll be your fault.'

Are we really supposed to believe that if everyone does homework, they'll all get better exam results? Just think of the fuss they make every summer when the GCSE pass rate goes up half a percent. *'Falling standards'*, they scream. What's happened to their maths there? That's Rising Standards. But Standards can't rise, because Standards (capital S) means only the select few can ever make it. The system has to fail a comforting mass of people, otherwise 'Passing' won't mean anything for Giles and Henrietta.

And teachers will have to spend most of their time setting homework and marking it. There won't be any time left for working your way round subtle issues through discussion and thought. Because Homework means things you can write down. It doesn't mean thinking or talking or even reading.

'OK, for homework, I want you to think about this and talk about it with other people. Oh, and make sure you're keeping up with Popular Culture. I expect you to keep a record of the soaps you're watching and there'll be a test on the Indie charts next week.'

There must be visible marks on paper. Ideally these should be right/wrong answers. Lots and lots of them. The trouble is you can't do this work unless you understand it, and if you understand it, why do you have to keep doing it.

Homework is practice. It's repetitive. I know there is nothing wrong with this concept. If you want to play the piano, you have to keep practising. Same
cont'd on page 15..

A different kind of union

Ode to a lost empire; Britain is nothing more than a Great has-been. With Labour taking the wind out of the separatists' sails, the final nail in the empire coffin is in the offing.

Nationalism has enjoyed a measure of popularity in both Scotland and Wales over recent years. After voting overwhelmingly in election after election for Labour, the Scots and Welsh have continued to find themselves being dictated to year after year by the Tories because of the preference of English voters. So the rise of nationalism should come as no great shock. Ironically enough, it now seems that under a New Labour government, some of the wind will be taken out of the nationalist sails - though not without a few twists and turns.

The reason is that Labour is proposing to bring in some form of limited self-government for both countries. There are to be referenda on the setting up of a Scottish parliament (and whether or not it can have tax-raising powers) and a somewhat more toothless Welsh assembly. The reception has been predictable enough across the "mainstream" political spectrum. The Tories, complete with their unionist baggage, are full of dire warnings of the break up of the Union (i.e. the UK).



the Scots and Welsh have continued to find themselves being dictated to year after year because of the preference of English voters

The nationalist parties, mindful of the shambles that resulted from Labour's last devolution attempt in 1979, want more. In Labour, confusion is more the order of the day. More importantly, how should anarcho-syndicalists and anarchists react to the issues thrown up in this debate, namely Scottish and Welsh nationalism, independence and the suggested demise of the UK?

First, it's worth a look into the background against which this debate is happening. Britain is well past its economic and political heyday, a time when areas like the South Wales valleys and the central belt of Scotland saw great economic benefits fed by imperial adventure. Now, with economic and political decline still continuing, Scotland



and Wales are suffering more than most. The last two decades have seen whole chunks of Scottish and Welsh industry sacrificed in the Tories' vicious attempts to strangle working class resistance throughout Britain.

Some quarters of the ruling class believe that Britain has a God-given right to still rule the waves. This

mentality has it that Britain can be "Great" again if only we return to the old ways when everyone knew their place in the scheme of things; if we could sweep away all these modern ways of thinking and teach young people some proper respect for their elders and betters. Inevitably, such harking back to the days of Empire is nothing but a dream which never really existed anyway. It is the same way of



thinking that sees Britain being better off by isolating itself, both economically and politically, as much as possible from the rest of the world,

especially those upstarts in Germany, France and elsewhere in Europe. After

all, the whole European unity thing is nothing but a conspiracy to punish Britain for its imperial glory of the past. They

couldn't do it openly by war so now they're trying it by stealth. While this may sound somewhat far-fetched it is echoed by attitudes found throughout British political circles where even



those who see the need to participate in the wider world still find it difficult to stomach the idea that Britain can no longer stand up for itself.

The very essence of British "Greatness" is seen to be "the Union", that institution which means that Scotland and Wales are ruled from London. So the pure horror that greets the idea of loosening Scotland's and Wales' links with Westminster is no surprise. It would be the final nail in the coffin of the British Empire and a massive body blow to those who continue to fantasise about it.

The Scottish Nationalist Party and Plaid Cymru, by contrast, are of the opinion that Labour's proposals don't go far enough. Both parties stand for independence, seeing "independence within a United Europe" as a viable goal to strive for. They point to the economic successes that a small independent but enthusiastically European country like Ireland has been able to produce as a result of its EU membership.

There is also talk of a "Europe of the regions" which holds up regions like Catalonia in Spain, the German Länder (the states that make up the Federal Republic), Lombardy and other regions of northern Italy. These all have a large degree of autonomy from their central governments. Their separate regional cultures and identities are seen to be reinforced and encouraged by the increasing movement towards a United Europe in which they can exert their own influence.

It is hard not to snigger at the thought of some Colonel Blimp choking on his breakfast at the Daily Telegraph's latest doomsday predictions of the UK being swept away in a tide of Eurobureaucracy and anti-English fervour in Wales and Scotland. However, anarchists should give the matter more thought than that and work out some clear ideas on how to respond to it rather than treating the whole thing as a situation upon which we

can't possibly have an influence or from which the revolutionary movement can't possibly benefit.

One of the most basic anarchist principles is our implacable opposition to the state - any state. That includes a future European superstate (no matter how de-centralised and federalist) as well as any independent Scottish or Welsh state or regional government. The state is the institution through which the ruling class defends its own interests and keeps the working class down. Whether the Scots are ruled



whether Scots are ruled from Edinburgh by a Scottish ruling class.. is of no more significance than if they continue to be ruled by London. The significant fact is that they are ruled at all

from Edinburgh by a Scottish ruling class, and the Welsh by a Welsh ruling class in Cardiff, is of no more significance than if they continue to be ruled by a predominantly English ruling class in London. The significant fact is that they are ruled at all.

The question we must always address is where are the advantages for the Welsh and Scottish working class in such a change. The answer is none. There will be no advantage as long as the fundamental relations in society between those who are ruled and those who rule remain as they are now.

Labour's proposals are not going to change anything materially, nor will any other measure up to and including independence as envisaged by the nationalists. Independence or devolution based on the current capitalist system is a mirage and cannot



bring about a society that is organised for the benefit of all - they are not even a step in that direction. In short this road does not lead to anarchism and therefore anarchists cannot support it.

However, this is not to say that the debate should be ignored. Discussion of political change is an ideal opportunity for anarcho-syndicalists to put forward ideas on changing society to something more viable. This includes pointing out what is meant by

concepts such as autonomy, self-determination, federalism and decentralisation. Anarchism is a vision of society organised from the bottom up, ensuring that power is dispersed throughout society and exercised at the lowest level instead of being concentrated in a few hands. It is a vision which can offer greater independence than mere nationalism can ever hope to.

Anarcho-syndicalists see a society which is built upon the foundations of local associations which decide upon the production, distribution and consumption of the various goods and services. These are then federated together with others in the same locality on one hand and with others in the same industry on the other. Further co-ordination can then take place in regional federations and so on to a "national" or country-wide level as well as on an "international" or global scale.

Decisions affecting a locality are taken at a local level and are not handed down arbitrarily by some remote civil servant in Whitehall - or Edinburgh, for that matter. Thus, "natural" British regions, the Scottish highlands, for example, which has distinct requirements from the urban centres of central Scotland or west Wales, will enjoy an independence in decision-making which will be much more meaningful than simply changing the seat of government, as the SNP and Plaid Cymru would have it, without changing the whole nature of society itself.

What we need is such a framework within which regional and cultural distinction can thrive while at the same time achieving unity - a different kind of union - different from the unity the UK is meant to represent, which is no unity at all.

International Identity

People who choose not to stay in the same dwelling 'permanently' (who does?) have long been victimised; travelling people have no country and no rights. Which way for the road back to true global citizenship?

From a socio-cultural perspective, one has the impression that Europe (or, a stereotyped image of Europe) is becoming more popular. Continental cafés and design restaurants are proliferating in British cities, and, in the last years, there seems to be more interest in other cultures from Europe and the rest of the world. Suddenly, it is "trendy" (sic) to buy records of Spanish flamenco and to eat in the latest bohemian restaurant open in town. Unfortunately, some things never change and racism shadows this optimistic picture. The truth is that, while the Gypsy Kings are selling thousands of records around the world, a Gypsy woman can still be denied the right of parking a caravan on her own land.

To cite only one of thousands of examples, this is what happened to Ms. Jane Buckley, who, last September, appealed to the European Court of Human Rights regarding the local authorities' decision to refuse planning permission that would enable Ms. Buckley to live in caravans on land which she owned.



The case goes back to 1988, when Jane Buckley acquired some land in Willingham, South Cambridgeshire. She applied for planning permission in respect of three caravans that were occupied by herself, her mother and her children, an application that the local council refused the following year. An

appeal against this enforcement notice was refused by the Secretary of State for the Environment in April 1991, and she was informed that an official site for Gypsies was to be opened nearby. Ms. Buckley refused to apply for a place in the site, pointing out that it wouldn't be a fit place for a single mother with young children. After this, subsequent applications to station her caravans on her land were consistently refused by the district council, so she decided to bring the case to the European Court of Human Rights.

The Times Law section ran an account of the case (Ms. Buckley vs. United Kingdom, October 9th, 1996). Eventually, it was ruled that the general interest of the community weighted more than the applicants right to live on her own land. What strikes me

about this case is that there does not appear in the whole report any reference to Ms. Buckley not complying with health and safety conditions that could threaten the life of the community. The question is, what does "the general interest of the community" consist of? According to the report, the district council had refused planning permission on the grounds of the "number of gypsy caravans already in the area and the provision of facilities for gypsies nearby. It was also considered that the use made of the land was visually intrusive and would detract from the rural and open quality of the area (sic)". Which means that is all right if you are a Gypsy, as long as you don't try to cross ethnic boundaries, because your traditional lifestyle is too "visually intrusive" for us. In fact, one of the inspectors sent by the European Court suggested the case could be settled by planting some hedges around the caravans to screen them from public view!

And this is just one among many cases of discrimination against Gypsies in Europe. Most of them are appalling. Attacks, bombs, burning of properties, shootings, murders... An account of these atrocities has been recently published by the Jewish Policy

Research (JPR). Many of these cases have occurred in Eastern European countries like Slovakia and Hungary, where the situation is really bad, but hostility against Gypsies is also found in Spain, Britain, France ...everywhere.

The case of Ms. Buckley is not uncommon in Britain. In this century, motorisation and the shortage of land has made life increasingly difficult for the Gypsies. The war of attrition waged by the authorities is causing serious suffering. In the 50s, some gypsies who could afford it began to buy land of their own, but this was opposed by the 1960 Caravan Sites Act. In the 1960s the pressure for the continual eviction of Gypsies with bulldozers and private security firms reached crisis point. In 1964, the leader of the Labour group for Birmingham Council called for "the extermination of the impossibles"! In 1968 a new Act was passed, ordering counties to provide sites for all Gypsies, but in exchange of giving these counties new powers to move on "surplus" Gypsies once they were "designated" as not satisfying the requirements of the Act. The current situation, post-Criminal Justice Act is that Gypsies can barely move around at all. Councils have no obligation any more to provide sites for Gypsies, forcing many of them onto private land and into trouble.

But, as mentioned before, it's not only legislation the Romanys have to fight

against, its social attitudes. Ignorance breeds racism and prejudice without any basis; lies like Gypsies are forced into early marriage/crime, and are or uncaring about health standards.

Albert Vogel did a study on the needs of Romany children in American schools. There, in the cafeterias, trays are washed and piled up for all to touch, a practice that, like food being ladled out by strangers, is unclean to Gypsy children. When, in one of these schools, some of these children were made sick from eating in the cafeteria, the school staff attributed it to their unfamiliarity with "nutritious food"!

Europe without borders? This is still, and looks like remaining, a hostile land to Gypsies. The law is blatantly rigged and racist and the neighbours can't be trusted. The gypsy fight against ignorance and prejudice is pretty silent and is being lost. It's shameful and obscene that, at this time and age, gypsies are considered less and less like human beings by bigots and authorities alike.

Europe without borders? This is still, and looks like remaining, a hostile land to Gypsies. The law is blatantly rigged and racist and the neighbours can't be trusted.

Homeworking

...cont'd from page 11

why does every child have to practice book work? Is this the only skill that humans need? Are they really all going to leave school and become academics?

Are they going to have a chance to do anything? And when they've spent all day doing it, is it good to spend another few hours in the evening doing some more of it?

'I drive a bus for a living and when I get home in the evenings, after a quick bite of tea, I get the car out and take it for a really long drive down the motorway and back. Never did me any harm.'

I can't wait to see what ideas they come up with for the health service.

word bites

Cynicism - a dangerous knee-jerk reaction to everything
TV Comic Humour - well-rehearsed cruelty
TV Comic Laughter - sudden feeling of glory of one's superiority over others

The Grammar Police: Breaking the Laws of Language

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cambodia

Nearly 3,000 garment workers walked out on Dec 17th in the first labour strike in Cambodia's modern history. The mostly women workers were protesting poor pay and bad working conditions at the Cambodia Garment Co. and at attempts by authorities to break up their newly formed union.

Three union leaders were detained, suspended and told they would be fired after the union presented its demands. Security guards opened fire on workers holding a demonstration outside the factory

ireland

The last three years in Dublin have seen a major community based struggle against a flat rate local tax known as the 'Water Charge'. This had been introduced as an added burden on a working class that already pays some of the highest amounts of tax in Europe. Meanwhile multinationals, the self-employed and farmers pay incredibly low levels of tax.

The state was defeated by a campaign of mass non-payment of this tax in Dublin co-ordinated by the Federation of Dublin Anti-Water Charge Campaigns, in which anarchists in the Workers Solidarity Movement played an important role. The campaign also raised money to pay legal fees of those summoned to court.

Faced with the failure to cut off any of the non-payers (there was a non-payment rate of

news they

Roundup of just a few of the recent and

over 50% and the courts clogged with cases), the State was forced to bow to the inevitable and abolish the charges. By this time (December 1996) the campaign had grown to 17,000 households who were paid up members and had seen street patrols to prevent disconnection's, occupations, court pickets, marches and demonstrations outside the clinics of politicians and party conferences. It's strength was in the dozens of local groups and a mass membership committed to methods of direct action. Campaign secretary Gregor Kerr (from he WSM) said "The essential message to be taken from the campaign against water charges must be that the sight of tens of thousands of working-class people organising to defend our own interests led to the surrender of a government."

Hopefully, many of the thousands of individuals involved at some level in this fight will have gained confidence and experience which they can put into use in many other struggles. Thus, while defeating the state on this short term issue, the campaign will also have a positive long term effect.

nigeria

The phenomenal growth of the anarchosyndicalist Awareness League in Nigeria over the past few years has continued recently despite constant oppression from the State and they have become a new section of the IWA (see



Mass anti-government action in Belgrade

snippet about IWA Congress below), which is both a boost for the Awareness League and for anarcho-syndicalism world-wide.

Despite the efforts by the Nigerian military dictatorship to silence all opposition, the AL is still working towards the creation of a mass movement capable of fighting for workers, peasant self-management and libertarian socialism. This organisation must not only endure the hardships of the effects of governmental repression, they must also have to deal with the effects of unemployment and poverty caused by the policies of austerity imposed by the military dictatorship and the World Bank.

The WSA-IWA has initiated an international campaign to raise a minimum of \$2,000 USD to help the AL purchase a computer and other equipment. For periodic reports and donations, contact:

**Workers Solidarity Alliance-IWA,
339 Lafayette Street, Rm. 202,
New York NY10012, USA.**

wouldn't cover

ongoing direct actions around the world



Korean striker sets alight to himself during a strikers' demonstration

korea

When was the last time a western trade union blatantly ignored threats on its savings and legality, and mobilised tens of thousands in the streets? The new laws in Korea designed blatantly to undermine employment rights have been justified on the basis that without them, there is the threat of business and jobs moving to South Wales, where labour costs are cheaper and there is more 'flexibility' in the workforce (sound familiar?). The resistance to the austere Korean regime is remarkable. And it isn't over yet; the 'final wave' promises yet more street presence and direct action.

nicaragua

The expected signing in Nicaragua of the first union contract in the Free Trade Zone, where over 10,000 workers make clothing and other products for the export market, was derailed at the last minute in late February. The owners of the clothing company 'Fortex Industrial' refused to recognise the union as such despite legal requirements and the fact that it has already been recognised by the Labor Ministry. The latter has tried to avoid enforcing the law by

advising the company and the 'union' to sort it out themselves. Send a fax outlining the above and demanding the ministry ensures the union gets full union recognition as the law requires: 011-505-228-2103. (Send SAE for more info. from DA).



france

Lyon's anarchist bookshop, La Plume Noire, was burnt down in February, on the day before the French anarchist newspaper Le Monde Libertaire was to go on trial against the leader of the national front (FN), Jean-Marie Le Pen. The fascist youth wing of Le Pen's party, which is closely modelled on the Hitler Youth, had attacked the shop the night before, but this time apparently attempted to murder the occupants by setting alight to the escape doorways in the process of burning the shop. The current centre-right government as well as their predecessors the socialists have been particularly complicit in the recent rise of fascism in France. By saying the FN has 'bad solutions to good questions' they have allowed the fascists to set the tone of the debate; in introducing ever more xenophobic laws they both hoped to steal the FN's thunder.

The anarchists in Lyon are in the front line; send messages and money to:
La Plume Noire, 19, rue Pierre Blanc,
69001 LYON, FRANCE.

france again

Jubilant truckers lifted the barricades on Nov. 29th to end the 12-day siege of France after forcing the government to accept a settlement giving them most of what they wanted. The 12-day conflict caused chaos

on both sides of the English Channel as the strikers blocked roads, ports, oil refineries and fuel depots, forcing factories to close and disrupting commerce. As a result, truckers will be allowed to retire at the age of 55, will receive an extra five day per year in sick pay, cannot be required to work Sundays and will be paid for time spent waiting and resting.

French employers fear the successful strike will embolden other workers to fight for better conditions and undercut the government's austerity program, especially since this was the third time in four years that determined strikers forced a French conservative government to retreat. Such fear is a pretty good sign that the action hit the right spot.

20th Congress

The 20th Congress of the International Workers' Association since it was formed in 1922 was held in December 1996 in Madrid, Spain. Debates covered a wide range of topics, and there is no space here to do it justice, except to say that the IWA is growing rapidly, and several new sections joined.

So...welcome:

CRAS (CIS)
BKT (Bulgaria)
ASAUL (Portugal)
ORGANISE! (Ireland:
PO Box 505, Belfast BT12 6BQ)
AWARENESS LEAGUE
(Nigeria)
ASF (Czech Republic)
SOLIDAD OBRERA (Chile)
ALAS DE XUE (Columbia)
PRO-IWA (Canada)

200million child slaves:

Child labour becomes an institution throughout the world as the global population of children under 14 who work full-time surpasses the astronomic figure of 200 million.

The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), a non-governmental organisation, estimated the number of Pakistani working children in 1995 to be in the region of 11-12 million, half of them under the age of 10. The child labour pool in this country is inexhaustible, due in part to a very high birth rate and to an education system that can accommodate only about a third of the country's school-age children.

In many regions, cheap child labour has depressed the already inadequate adult wage to the point where a parent and a child together now earn less than a parent alone earned a year ago. Certain industries, notably carpet-making and brick-making, cannot survive without the work of children. Sports goods factories also serve as a perfect example of vicious child exploitation. In them, children 5 to 10 produce soccer balls by hand for 40 rupees (80p) a day. They may work over 80 hours a week in near total darkness and total silence. The former is used both as an economic measure and as a precaution, since child-rights activists have difficulty taking decent

Forget Victorian Britain; 'modern' rampant free market practices mean we live with slavery like we have never seen before

- and it is getting worse, not better



Use children for rubbish collectors: "cheaper to run than tractors, and smarter than oxen"

photographs if the lighting is poor. The latter is to ensure product quality: If the children speak, they don't give their complete attention to the product and are liable to make errors. The children are permitted one 30-minute meal break a day and are punished if they take longer. They are also punished if they fall asleep, if their workbenches are sloppy, if they waste material or miscut a pattern, if they complain to their parents or speak to strangers. A list of infractions tacked to a wall is of dubious utility: the children are illiterate, and no self or state education is available to them.

But it is the carpet-making industry that employs over 500,000 children in

"Bonded" (bought) children like this are used for rickshaw repairing

Pakistan. Invariably, the boys come from poor areas and their parents are given a cash advance by loom-owners, a sum around 5,000 rupees (£96) for five years of one of their sons' labour (two months' earning for an adult weaver). Parents are later told that the money was in fact a loan and that the cost of keeping the child has increased the debt. In this way, the children become 'debt bonded', tied to the loom indefinitely. This is not a new phenomenon, simply more common than ever.

They usually work from 6am to 8pm, except when the master is behind his quotas and forces them to work around the clock. Without exception, the

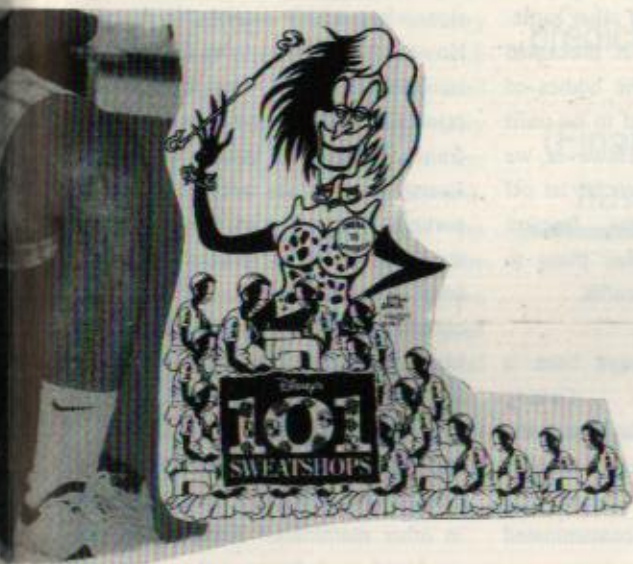
South East Asia Working Group

monitors events and developments relating to self-organisation for direct action in the region. To find out more or send/receive information, contact:

**SEAWG Box 29 SW PDO
Manchester M15 5HW.**

welcome to 1997

children are small, thin, malnourished and their spines are curved from lack of exercise and squatting before the loom. Their hands are covered with callouses and scars, their fingers gnarled. Their breathing is laboured, suggestive of tuberculosis (windows are closed against fabric-eating insects). Collectively, these ailments, which



Nike wearers are wankers
pathologists call 'captive child syndrome', kill half Pakistan's working children by the age of 12.

101 miseries

However, hope still remains: In 1992, Pakistani exports fell for the first time in two decades. The fall was no more than three or four percentage points, but it indicated that Western consumers were shying away from luxury goods made by Third World children. Carpet-makers' fears were confirmed when in 1993 and 1994 sales fell sharply in several of the largest markets for Pakistani exports.

No doubt the factory owners will be the last to suffer from the loss of trade.

NIKE SHITE

Saigon

Workers in Nike's factory are paid an average of 20 cents per hour and subjected to physical assaults and other abuse. Conditions are no better in Nike plants in China and Indonesia..

Indonesia

Indeed, in Indonesia, Nike have been singled out as a particularly vicious employer compared to others operating there. To even contemplate participating in a regime like Indonesia's shows blatant disregard for human rights. The record speaks for itself; members of the democratic party and independent unions are still in jail for 'undermining the ideology of the state, making political speeches criticising the government and conducting demonstrations demanding improvements to the political system'. This can carry the death penalty..

Barbie bollocks

Thailand

Barbie dolls are made to order by the US toy giant Mattel, which boasted sales of \$2.3 billion last year. A Baywatch Barbie doll in London costs £19. The WDM (World Development Movement) calculates that Mattel earns as much from British sales of Barbie in one hour as it pays 5,000 workers in Thailand..

101 damnations (sic)

Haiti

Women sewing Disney's 101 Dalmatians children's clothing are paid starvation wages of six cents for every \$19.99 garment they sew..

Burma

Disney's children's clothing is produced in a factory largely owned by military dictators. The average wage is six cents an hour and the average week is 60 hours..

Eat this!!!

BSE, no meat for thee?

If "we are what we eat", why are we eating rubbish?

Food production has been a solidly capitalist enterprise now for decades, however, during the 1980s, farming businesses came under intense pressure from 'market forces'. While the food industry pays lip-service to quality nutrition and hygiene, in fact now profits matter above all else. Food poisoning is steadily on the increase. Substances which are known to make people ill are still sold and marketed in order to maximise profits (saturated fats, added salt gluten and chemical additives etc.. *ad infinitum*).

One of the major products of the industry is fat. It was one of the most important by-products of the beef trade. Carcasses were treated to collect fat. Most is trimmed off and the rest is extracted by heat and solvents. Hydrocarbon liquids like dry-cleaning fluid were used to remove all trace of fat from the carcasses.

During the 1970s, the price of fat fell dramatically. The application of heat to sterilise animal waste is expensive. The meat and by-products industries sought to have the regulations relaxed. Margaret Thatcher's high sounding, almost moral tone provided a useful cover for rampant greed.

The BSE saga can be traced back to this greed. Cattle that would normally

eat grass or cereals were given a feed made from the carcasses of other cattle. Basically this consisted of processed meat waste, offals and the bodies of cattle that were considered to be unfit for human consumption. However, we were not going to be let off lightly, and the farming business had other plans to maximise their profits.



I've had enough too

Eating has always been a risky business. Getting enough to eat dominates the days of millions. Currently, at least 3,000 people die every day due to eating contaminated food.

However, this has to be seen in the wider context of some 40,000 people dying each day because they were not able to get enough food. It has been estimated that by the year 2025 there will be an extra 3 billion people on the planet. This means there has to be an increase of 55% in total food production. If this is achieved, it will lead to a further 3,000 people dying each day because of polluted food, if contamination levels stay the same.

enter prions

The drive for profit has had many terrible consequences. Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) is one. Scientists sought the agent of

infection for BSE thinking it was a slow virus which caused the disease. However, the theory now is that it is caused by a kind of rogue molecule - a prion. The name prion is said to come from proteinaceous infectious particle. Every germ is an infectious protein particle, but the point about prion is that it resists the normal enzyme which breaks down protein. Prions are extremely difficult to destroy, since heat, disinfectant etc. appears to have little or no effect.

We all however, produce prions in normal brain cells and they are found in other mammals. These prions are produced in 2 forms, either as spiral molecules or as pleated sheets. The theory suggests that some forms of prion protein fails to fold properly and therefore, grow at the wrong angle, which results in damage to the brain cells. The disease seems to come about when an altered prion protein gains access to the cells and starts producing the misshapen protein molecules.

no cure yet

There is no known cure for BSE or other prion diseases, Scrapie (in sheep), CJD (Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease), Kuru. Also, the debate among scientists about cause and transmission is still going on. The only remedy as yet is to remove these rogue molecules from the human food chain. This

involves the slaughter of the infected animals or, on the other hand, the adoption of a vegan diet.

the european dimension

The announcement in the house of commons, that 10 young people had died of BSE on the afternoon of 20th March 1996 had the effect of the announcement of a terrorist attack. Everyone, MPs included, had been lulled into a false sense of security by the continuous stream of reassurances and lies. Now everything was smashed to smithereens. The meat industry closed down almost immediately, with slaughterhouses remaining shut until April. Everywhere there was anxiety and the 'about face' of government announcements caused bewilderment. Agriculture and the meat trade was facing a calamity. The effects on the British economy looked very severe (over £3bn in the last year). The meat industry supports 41,000 dairy farmers and some 95,000 farmers raising beef. In total, it's worth £4bn per year. In 1995, Britain exported 242,000 tonnes of beef worth £520m.

tory eurosceptics

The Tories concern, of course, was to find a scapegoat for all the mayhem caused. Internationally, the first to move against British beef were the French. France was by far the largest importer, with 90,000 tonnes a year being sent across the channel, the trade being worth £220m per year.

The European Commission imposed a world ban on British beef on 27th March 1996. Many in Britain questioned whether a ban outside the European Union was lawful. The EU did not just ban beef, but all beef products. The use of gelatine and other beef products in the production of chocolate, biscuits, sweets, lipstick, soap, etc. was also banned.

The Tory eurosceptics

had a field day. Everything was the fault of the foreigners and the EU. It was all a plot against Britain. They turned the focus from the contamination of beef by BSE into an anti-European moral panic with

What we need is health and safety checks at every stage of food production; its a major and crucial industry and it must be made to behave more responsibly. What we also need is better information, inspections, and

It is too soon to rule out an epidemic of CJD, linked to BSE. It could still kill many thousands of people in the UK. So far, 14 cases of variant CJD (probably) caused by eating BSE-contaminated beef in the late 1980's, have been confirmed. But researchers say it would be premature to conclude that any subsequent epidemic will be necessarily small. Applying mathematical models to predict a range of possible outcomes shows a variation in the range 80-80,000 CJD cases.

(Financial Times, 16/1/97 and drawn from Nature: there have since been more deaths from suspected CJD)

Europeans being portrayed as showing prejudice and hatred for Britain and British products. This must have been especially galling to the Tory mentality, which equates 'foreign' with 'contamination'.

what to do?

The spread of BSE was the result of the capitalist drive for maximum profits, and Thatcherite deregulation of the

clear labelling of products. Research must be put sensibly into new diseases; no relaxation of food hygiene regulations. People are hungry for information and action. The media have played a significant role in suppressing the facts about BSE. When the public became aware of the threat of BSE, millions of us gave up beef overnight. Interest in vegetarianism exploded in April 1996. The vegetarian society was sending out 200 membership packs a day.



preview:

Want seconds of this?

The EU has now given the go-ahead for Ciba-Geigy's genetically engineered maize. Meanwhile, ordinary people are literally being forced to eat food which will poison us to death; food poisoning from contaminated food is at record levels and rising rapidly.

..two articles in the next issue of DA

(to subscribe see page 15)

animal feed industry in the 1980's. Cost-cutting and laissez-faire thatcherism have harmed public health and animal welfare immeasurably. Epidemics are what await us when profits take precedence over safety.

People will act if they are aware of what is going on. Through the use of the boycott we can turn the market upside-down and trash laissez-faire economics. If people act en masse when the beef crisis broke.

summer turns to winter

Update:

Leni and Mel love the inner city area of Pitsmoor where they live, with Leni's son, Cam. There are deeprooted problems of unemployment and poverty, but the only problems that get any attention are the easy-to-condemn and sweep-under-the-carpet ones of drugs and petty crime. The big plus is the mix of people who live there- there is always plenty of action, a sense of 'Making the times good', rather than 'Having a good time'. But, to outsiders, this people-mix is seen as the big minus- and the cause of drugs, petty crime etc. Oh dear, the problem of poverty has been conveniently overlooked again...

The long, hot summer seemed a world away. No more long warm nights for the kids to hang out, drifting in and out of each others' houses, roaming the parks in search of secret places. Cam had come back from Flysheet camp full of plans. All he needed was his own tent and bus fare, then he and his mates could head for the woods at Burbage. 'And smoke and drink and who knows what else,' Leni thought. It had all been much easier when Cam was just a kid - constant hard work, yes, but at least he was constantly in her sight. Now he was pushing her all the time to be off doing his own thing and Mel was no help.

'Let him go, Leni. When I was his age, I was up to all sorts in Camden. It taught me to look after myself.'

'Yeah but I'm his mother. What will people think?'

'What will people think?' Mel echoed.

'They'll think you're a feckless single mother and Cam is the spawn of the devil. They'll think that all the ills of society would be cured if we brought back conscription for young men and, failing that, they need a short, sharp shock. Bring back the cane in school, bring back the death penalty...'

'OK, OK.' Leni didn't want to listen to another of Mel's tirades. It twisted her up inside.

"Do the Right Thing."

That was what she wanted, but it wasn't so easy as Mel made out. Mel hadn't got children of her own, though she was prepared to get stuck in. It was Mel who set up the Home School group at the local Red and Black Centre. It had been up and running since September. Just one day a week at the moment, but it was hard enough to convince the local schools to agree to that. Cam had been all for it at first. Leni suspected that it was more the pleasure of

skipping school, than anything else. There were four other women who brought their children in- Inés and Concha were used to running the Saturday school for Chilean families, so Cam got to keep up his Spanish. Mel did a self-defence session and Leni worked on writing skills- they were producing their own magazine on the computer they'd been donated. For science, they had a Permaculture session and took it in turns to work on each other's gardens. It was idyllic in theory; the trouble was the older boys, who soon lost interest. Perhaps it was spending all day with women that seemed too tame, too much like a mother and toddler group. And that brought Leni crashing back to the same old guilt feelings.

'Dear Mrs Rosario...'

Leni sighed. She always felt a surge- well, a little tremor- of excitement when letters plopped through the box onto the doormat, but her excitement had to be some long-lost memory of a time when letters were messages from person to person. Nowadays it was only ever the arrival of a slim, brown envelope with cold words from some power out there- the silent equivalent of the heavy hand of the law on the door knocker. This brown-envelope-world was a place where no people existed. The letters were signed with a squiggle from a faceless authority. What was worse, they were addressed to someone who didn't exist- except in society's fictional world of Happy Nuclear Families.

Was there any point in trying to explain to them that there was no such person as Mrs Rosario, Leni thought? 'Yes, I have a son. Yes, his surname is Rosario. Yes, he has a father. Yes, that man's surname is Rosario. But MY name is Leni and if we must use second names that trace our identity back to a father, my surname is Marcus. Oh, and another thing, I use the title Ms. It's the equivalent of Mr and allows women to name themselves without trumpeting either: "Hullo, I'm married. Don't even think of it." Or: "Hullo, I'm not married. Just in case you fancy your chances." No point. So many dickheads, so little time.

'Dear Mrs Rosario

This is to inform you that your son/daughter has been placed in school detention for the following reason....'

Leni didn't often feel proud of her son/daughter Cam these days- it seemed to be a sizeist thing for a lot of parents. Bigger than me = threat to my authority = try belittling them with scorn. Well, he hasn't

set fire to anything or hit anyone, still. That's a relief, Leni thought, at the same time as feeling an urge to set fire to something or hit someone.

Reason for detention: failing to bring PE kit again.

It was good to see that schools were still the guardians of society's moral values.

If you have any queries about this, you can contact the Head of Upper School.

And if you have a complaint or a comment, keep quiet and watch some more telly. If Leni couldn't have her first choices of arson or violence, she liked to write letters - they started cold and sarcastic and finished off in hysterical abuse, and then she binned them. And then watched telly.

Mel came in from her shift at the brewery while Leni and Cam were watching East Enders.

'What are you doing, Mum!'

Leni was grabbing the remote and desperately trying to switch to Channel 4 News or a documentary, Tomorrow's World, anything rather than the escapist, trivial fiction that she knew was sapping her mind.

'We shouldn't be wasting our time on this stuff. What about the world out there, Europe, BSE?'

'OK, Mum, you're getting closer- the world, Europe, beef... just one more small step and we're back in the East End and Mark's vegetable stall in the market.'

'There are more important things in life, love.' Mel came into the room.

'So you admit it, East Enders is 'important'. And I admit that there are other important things, but this is the important thing I am interested in at the moment. You two can go out into the 'world' right now and leave me to find out what happens to Tiffany and her baby.'

'What do you do when you're skiving PE? Study philosophy?' Hitting below the belt was fine, Leni thought, if your opponent was bigger and looked like winning.

'Just give it a rest for ten minutes, Mum, and then I'll tell you all about our 'Kids Against MacDonalds' group.'

'That's my boy!'

But Mel had a horrible feeling he was taking the piss. Cynicism was the flavour of the times; very witty, very cool, but where would it end up? Dying on our knees still, but with a flourish and a wink?



anarchism:

the

FAQs

this issue: Chomsky's answers to questions put by Tom Lane in December 1996

The renowned linguist and academic, Noam Chomsky has stated that he sees the current ideas and practice of anarcho-syndicalism as the most appropriate way forward towards a future libertarian society. His analytical critiques of modern capitalism are numerous, focused and command great respect among a wide audience. However, statements presenting a single 'master plan' for social change or a detailed blueprint for a future society are absent. He cautions that it is difficult to predict what particular forms a more just social organisation will take, or even to know for sure what alternatives to the current system are ideal. Only experience can show us the best answers to these questions, he says. What should guide us along the way are a general set of principles which will underlie whatever specific forms our future society will take.

What are the intellectual roots of anarchist thought, and what movements have developed and animated it throughout history?

The currents of anarchist thought that interest me (there are many) have their roots, I think, in the Enlightenment and classical liberalism, and even trace back in interesting ways to the scientific revolution of the 17th century, including aspects that are often considered reactionary, like Cartesian rationalism. There's literature on the topic (historian of ideas Harry Bracken, for one; I've written about it too). Won't try to recapitulate here, except to say that I tend to agree with the important anarcho-syndicalist writer and activist Rudolf Rocker that classical liberal ideas were wrecked on the shoals of industrial capitalism, never to recover (I'm referring to Rocker in the 1930s; decades later, he thought differently). The ideas have been reinvented continually; in my opinion, because they reflect real human needs and perceptions. The Spanish Civil War is perhaps the most important case, though we should recall that the anarchist revolution that swept over a good part of Spain in 1936, taking various forms, was not a spontaneous upsurge, but had been prepared in many decades of

education, organisation, struggle, defeat, and sometimes victories. It was very significant. Sufficiently so as to call down the wrath of every major power system: Stalinism, fascism, western liberalism, most intellectual currents and their doctrinal institutions -- all combined to condemn and destroy the anarchist revolution, as they did; a sign of its significance, in my opinion.

What sort of conception of human nature is anarchism predicated on? Would people have less incentive to work in an egalitarian society? Would an absence of government allow the strong to dominate the weak? Would democratic decision-making result in excessive conflict, indecision and "mob rule"?

As I understand the term "anarchism," it is based on the hope (in our state of ignorance, we cannot go beyond that) that core elements of human nature include sentiments of solidarity, mutual support, sympathy, concern for others, and so on. Would people work less in an egalitarian society? Yes, insofar as they are driven to work by the need for survival; or by material reward, a kind of pathology, I believe, like the kind of pathology that leads some to take pleasure from torturing others. Those who find reasonable the classical liberal doctrine that the impulse to engage in creative work is at the core of human nature -- something we see constantly, I think, from children to the elderly, when circumstances allow -- will be very suspicious of these doctrines, which are highly serviceable to power and authority, but seem to have no other merits.

Would an absence of government allow the strong to dominate the weak? We don't

know. If so, then forms of social organisation would have to be constructed -- there are many possibilities -- to overcome this crime. What would be the consequences of democratic decision-making? The answers are unknown. We would have to learn by trial. Let's try it and find out.

Anarchism is sometimes called libertarian socialism -- How does it differ from other ideologies that are often associated with socialism, such as Leninism?

Leninist doctrine holds that a vanguard Party should assume state power and drive the population to economic development, and, by some miracle that is unexplained, to freedom and justice. It is an ideology that naturally appeals greatly to the radical intelligentsia, to whom it affords a justification for their role as state managers. I can't see any reason -- either in logic or history -- to take it seriously. Libertarian socialism (including a substantial mainstream of Marxism) dismissed all of this with contempt, quite rightly.

How do anarchist principles apply to education? Are grades, requirements and exams good things? What sort of environment is most conducive to free thought and intellectual development?

My feeling, based in part on personal experience in this case, is that a decent education should seek to provide a thread along which a person will travel in his or her own way; good teaching is more a matter of providing water for a plant, to enable it to grow under its own powers, than of filling a

cont'd on page 29.



Social Democracy hits the rails

In this issue, closer look gets an in-depth insider insight into works councils and their use in British Rail.

In the last issue of *Direct Action* we discussed the origins of the works council system tracing the development in Germany of a dual system of works councils. One of these is based on the original social catholic idea, which seeks to use works councils to absorb workers into capitalism by ending class division and worker alienation. The other is based on the corporatist idea, under which works councils are used to create the illusion of workers and management sitting down together to run capitalism as partners. In this article we would like to extend the debate around works councils and the threat they pose by drawing directly on the experience of railway workers here in Britain. By looking at the corporatist style industrial relations system employed on the railways, which contained many elements of the works council idea, we hope to expose not only the failing of works councils but, more importantly, the reformist thinking which underpins them.

The industrial relations procedure on the railways, the "Machinery of Negotiation", was introduced at the height of the golden age of social democracy, 1956. It brought in local, regional and national joint union-management committees. Problems in the workplace could be discussed by

the local joint worker-management committee. If agreement could not be reached, a formal "failed to agree" could be registered and the item of contention passed upwards to regional level and, if necessary, on up to national level. The "machinery of negotiation" was based on a form of works councils, used to resolve industrial relation problem. The "Machinery" did differ significantly from the works council system used in most of Europe, in that it was based on collective or union representation,

**Labour have plans to put
their own nails in the coffin
of the trade union
movement - and the nails
will come out of your wages**

rather than individual representation, and negotiation backed by collective agreements, consultation. Management could not simply come along with changes to working practices, explain them to union representatives and then impose them on the workforce. Any changes, in theory anyway, were subject to negotiation and agreement.

The industrial relations procedures on the railways were rooted like European



works councils, in reformism and class collaboration. The rail unions, in effect, turned their backs on class conflict and promotion of struggle, instead embracing capitalism in return for guaranteed union recognition. They deluded themselves into believing that under the machinery they were now partners sharing a common interest with management in ensuring an efficient and well run railway with conflict and strikes seen as damaging to both sides and to be avoided at all cost.

The union took to this new role with gusto and industrial peace reigned. The first post-war national strike, organised by the NUR, did not occur until 1982. Even then it turned out to be a two day fiasco. The unofficial strike action that dominated so much of British industry did not feature on the railways. Instead, rank & file anger was channelled by the union into the machinery, a process which could take up to five years to get through the various levels. During this industrial calm the rail unions happily negotiated away some half a million jobs. The word "happy" is no exaggeration. It was the role of the regional joint union-management body, Sectional Council, to ensure that depot closures were carried out smoothly according to laid-down procedures. The union side's role was to explain to workers that they

were about to be made redundant and to sell them the alternative jobs on offer and the generous resettlement allowances.

The corporatist ideas embodied in the machinery of the unions being partners is in reality nonsense. All planning and strategy on the railways was carried out by management and government. Once decisions were made they were then handed to the joint councils for implementation with the union side providing the link to the workforce and ensuring workers' acceptance through negotiation. Despite the pretence of partnership the real value of the machinery to the unions lay in the holy grail of recognition. The machinery guaranteed their right to exist by detailing the mechanisms by which the union could approach management on behalf of their members. The unions became the honest brokers between management and the shop floor, helping to refine and implement management policy on one hand while channelling and confining workers grievances on the other.

For management having a compliant union was nothing short of a godsend. In the post-war economy, heavily dependent on railways, they faced a powerful group of workers made more powerful by full employment. In these economic circumstances the last thing management wanted was workers organised in a class-conscious union. Much effort went into ensuring that union officialdom was absorbed into the wider social democratic society. As well as the courting of union leadership by politicians, there were numerous sweeteners provided by the state for those lower down the pecking order. Your local rep could find himself sitting as a JP, a member of some tribunal or even the proud owner of a British Empire medal, the aim being to continually reinforce the idea that the union had a stake in ever-expanding capitalism.

The Machinery of Negotiation was part of this absorption. It was far more

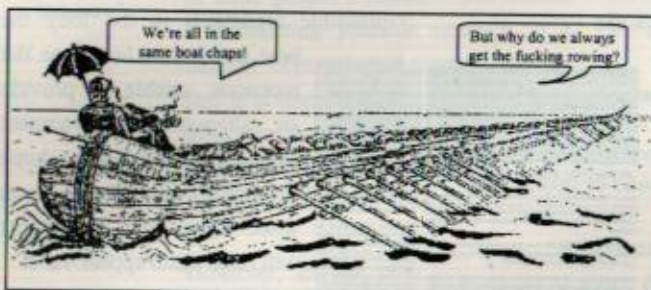
as well as the courting of union leadership by politicians there were numerous sweeteners provided by the state for those lower down the pecking order

than just an agreement but part of a complex set of social structures by which management infused social democratic consensus into the unions. Through it, they were able to build up relationships with union officials at all levels of the union, often extending outside the workplace into social activities. This constant interaction both inside and outside of the workplace gave union officials, and their families, a sense of elevated social standing. Visits to union officials' homes were revealing, to say the least, with pride of place being given to awards and gifts presented by management or the state for services rendered. This all reflected the self-satisfaction in being part of a corporatist team delivering a rail service for the benefit of all, a position of trust carrying responsibilities that elevated them above the hum drum lives of ordinary rail workers.

The rail unions mistook their new elevated status for power and quite properly were keen to demonstrate that they would not abuse the trust management had placed in them. Not surprisingly then, the union felt honour-bound not only to represent the workers' side of things but also the

out" union officials betraying the more militant rank and file members. The solution put forward is to democratise the unions by making officials accountable to the rank and file. This is far too simplistic, and doesn't take into account the true realities of the workplace. For instance how does this theory explain the existence of a sizeable minority of local reps, directly elected and based in the workplace but totally corrupted by the same social democratic values as their superiors further up the union hierarchy. Surely a militant rank and file, as perceived by the left, would simply get rid of them. The truth, certainly on the railways for much of the post-war period, is that workers on a day to day level remained passive. Indeed, it was often the case that local union officials, with full management support, ruled over the general membership like medieval barons treated with deference by workers.

That is not to say that incidents did not occur which shook the rank and file out of their passive role, thus igniting their latent class consciousness. Then we certainly did have cases of workers demanding action and being betrayed by union officials. But it is much more



views of the management they had dined with the night before. It wasn't unheard of for union officials on Sectional Council to walk out of meetings because local reps were behaving intransigently and making improper demands on management.

This sort of behaviour will be seen by many on the left as just another case of well-paid union bureaucrats, cut off and out of touch with the rank and file, selling out the membership. This reduces the problem to one of "sell

than just a case of an out of touch leadership selling out the rank file as the left would have it. What we have is a group of militant workers using the tools of class struggle coming directly into conflict with the social democratic consensus politics of reformist trade unionism. The unions step into such disputes to try and ensure an agreement acceptable to both workers and management with a return to work as soon as possible to restore the "good relations" so vital for the efficient running of the rail network.

Such disputes may reveal the true nature of reformism, with ordinary members suddenly finding "their" union more interested in meeting with management to get a quick return to

works councils

work instead of fighting for their demands. The problem was that once the immediate dispute was over workers, having no alternative, return to their passive role with the union stepping in to fill the vacuum. It must not be forgotten that on the railways the post war period brought "jobs for life" and rising living standards backed by state provision of better housing, education and health. The message put forward by the union that co-operation with capitalism could deliver was a strong one. What was needed was a challenge to that message, a challenge that would constantly highlight the conflict between managers and workers, the realities of low pay, killer levels of overtime and atrocious working conditions to demonstrate that capitalism in truth was not delivering and had to be replaced.

Here we reach the failure of the left. For though there were various attempts to organise "rank and file" groups over the years. None sought to challenge the social democratic ideas of the unions or of the capitalist system that underpinned it. Rank and file organisations fell broadly into two types. Firstly, let's look at the "Broad Left" type of organisation. It is not the intention here to repeat many of the criticisms of the way this type of group organised. These are well documented, ranging from the fact that they organised in the union structures instead of the workplace, to the fact that their aim of getting left candidates elected to union positions reduced them to little more than electoral machines.

This debate is secondary to the main disagreement with the broad left organisations - their political direction. As the name implies, the broad left sought to group together workers from different political persuasion and bring them together as railworkers to fight for better pay and conditions.

politics for the broad left involve not the linking of day to day struggles to the failure of capitalism, but arguing in branch meetings for the union to change its position on Labour party policies

The theory behind this thinking was that day to day demands or economic demands of workers are separate from the broader political demands which are best pursued away from the workplace through the political party. In reality, the "Broad Left" hoped to gain control of union structure in order to set a more militant agenda. Broader political gains were to be achieved through the election of a more "socialist" Labour Party whose members dominated the broad left. Politics for the broad left involve not the linking of day to day struggles to the failure of capitalism, but arguing in branch meetings for the union to change its position on Labour party policies. The aims of the broad left were limited to building a more militant trade union in partnership with a more left wing Labour Party. They never sought a class conscious organisation built on a revolutionary perspective seeking to challenge capitalism but a more militant form of the Labour Party-TUC set up arguing for greater gains to be squeezed out of capitalism but ultimately not seeking to challenge its existence. As such the broad left was simply a more left wing form of social democracy. Like the unions, they were able to offer quite plausible arguments in the long the

post war boom, but come the recession, unable to provide an alternative to rampant capitalism other than to hope for a return to capitalist boom when again their arguments will once again appear valid.

The second form of organisation, of which there was a number of attempts to set up over the years, was the more workplace based rank and file organisation. These tended to be launched by political grouping, though in recent years, a number of organisations sprung up based

around militant depots sickened by the unions failure to respond to management attacks. The most recent one being "the Campaign for a

Fighting and democratic Union." At first sight these did appear to seeking an alternative to the unions. Rejecting the "Broad Left" approach arguing for militant action based in the workplace. They also rejected the idea of being linked to any political party, totally rejecting the Labour party, arguing for an independent organisation. The trouble however was behind these more positive aspects, there was much confusion as to short and long term aims. For though they were quite prepared to act independently of the existing unions, all of the various groups rejected the idea of attempting to build alternative unions. They instead committed themselves to reforming the existing unions but with no clear strategy of how this was to be achieved. Again, though they rejected links with political parties, in reality this was translated into rejecting a political perspective of any kind, so having no real long term aim. The workplace rank and file limited themselves to arguing for militant action under democratic control. But militancy linked to no strategy or broader ideas.

The lack of a clear political direction of the various rank and file was partly due to the reluctance of workers to break with social democracy but was also due to the influence of the various marxist groups. Who, despite their own revolutionary ideas, actively sought to limit the rank and file groups to reformist aims. Their fear of the growth of an independent organisation with its own revolutionary perspective, challenging the "leadership" role of the party was so great, they constantly sought to limit rank and file to economic demands. Giving forth the strange sight of the "political leadership" of the working class attempting to stifle political debate for fears that workers may be politicised and start to build their own revolutionary organisation.

...continued in next issue, with conclusions and what they mean for workplace organisation in today's post-Thatcherite, Blairite reality.

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SOLIDARITY
FEDERATION
POWERLESS? FRUSTRATED? ANGRY?

...continued in next issue, with conclusions and what they mean for workplace organisation in today's post-Thatcherite, Blairite reality.

"School bullies could grow into captains of industry"

It would appear that school bullies aren't necessarily as socially inept as the popular stereotype. They have, in fact, considerable insight into how the minds of their victims work, although they have little recognition of the mental and emotional hurt they cause. Apparently, they are very effective at manipulating people, principally by development and use of powers to inflict fear and pain.

"Bullies may turn into very effective managers at the highest levels", a meeting of the British Psychological Society was told recently in London, by Jon Sutton, Goldsmith College, London University.

These bullies can be observed at ages as young as seven years and their disturbed manipulative skills may help them become the recognised leaders of modern society. Mr. Sutton, with colleagues, has evaluated the psychological skills of 72 children at three schools in the South London area. It would appear that bullies are skilled in understanding other people's thoughts, but failed to grasp their feelings. Mr. Sutton reported that school bullies were better able to understand complex stories about relationships than 'hangers on' or than

"bullies could make very good managers (sic) at most levels of industry"

the victims of bullying.

Mr. Sutton said that bullies were more likely to emerge in their adult lives with criminal records than the rest of their classmates but if these qualities were properly channelled, society would benefit. The researcher is of the opinion that "bullies could make very good managers (sic) at most levels of industry. They have an understanding of other people's minds". Mr. Sutton is conducting valuable research in a number of overlapping areas, and we feel it is important that this type of work is continued and extended.

However, anyone who has worked in industry, or anywhere else, will be able to confirm that management structures like all hierarchies are shot through with bullies, and the practice of bullying. We must recognise that bullying, wherever it may arise, cannot be socialised and used for human benefit. This view may be tempting to some,

In this follow-up to last issue's feature article on bullying, we take a look at recent 'discovery' research that bullies make good bosses...

but it is too dangerously corrosive of co-operative relationships generally to be used in the production of goods and services. That is, if we are talking about production for the satisfaction of human need and the construction of humane society.

We must have further research into bullying, but how it should be resisted and stopped rather than with the rather naive belief that it can be socialised for the good of all.

"He winked at the stunned faces around his table, puffed up with the kind of pride that suggested he was about to score a subtle debating point with

Oscar Wilde:

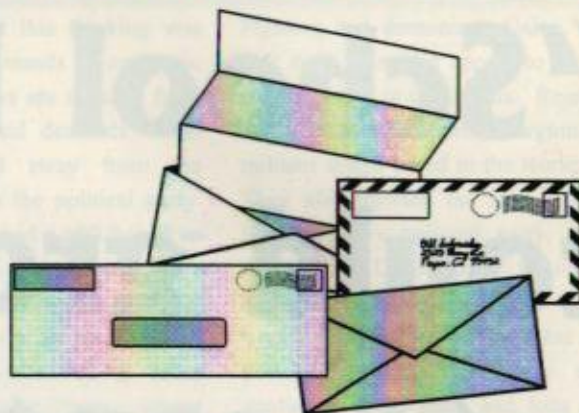
'Where are you going to find it?'

'I don't know yet, Mr Maxwell.'

'Come in again, Kim.' His voice had an edge of menace. By now, us four embarrassed executives, not having said a word to each other, were silently trying to come up with an idea to divert from this pathetic exhibition."... "Maxwell turned to us: 'What do you think of her?' he asked. Now he was in his element. Having intimidated this slip of a girl he could parade his potency still more by playing his ritual humiliation game with experienced highly paid executives. Who would crack first?" ("Maxwell's Fall: The Appalling Legacy of a Corrupt Man", by Roy Greenslade (former editor of The Daily Mirror), pages 104-105).

letters

A question of violence



Dear DA Collective

I feel inclined to add a bit to your headpiece on Violence in the bright and shiny DA#1. Perhaps as that came from RAC this should be signed The New Zealand Motor Club, or The Jules Bonnot Formula One Fanatics, maybe?

It's unfortunate, but it does seem there are more people prepared to die for the revolution than to scrub floors for it. I suppose people are still sold on the myth of drama - that one big event is worth more than the thousands of small acts which are necessary for it to happen at all. Some seem to see being active as an alternative to being organised, and you can end up doing things out of the desperation of isolation, rather than need. I would like people to remember Jimmy Heather-Hayes who committed suicide on remand after attacking a police station. His final poem spoke of the need for people to be prepared if you are going to take on the state. (sorry not enough space for the poem -ed.)

So, we need more floor scrubbers, bell-ringers, shit-shovelers and pen-pushers to audition for the revolution. And once we know why we're fighting we'll be over half-way to working out HOW.

John, Norfolk

Dear Comrades

I read with great interest your article "By any means appropriate". The issue of violence in order to bring about a more just and humane society is probably the most fundamental question with which anarcho-syndicalists must deal. It is vital that we realise that the means determine the end and that in our attempt to free the working class from the bondage of capitalism that we do not plunge them into a blood bath and destroy the very ideas that we proclaim.

Many anarchists, anarcho-syndicalists and Wobblies do not oppose violence because of the nature of violence, but because in the light of the modern technology of the state such a method of confrontation would be futile and disastrous. The very *raison d'être* of the state is violence and therefore to attempt to fight it on its own terms, using its methods would be disastrous, it would be to deny the very essence of what the revolution is about, for the revolution is nothing if it is not a battle for humanity against all that is inhuman, unjust and unworthy.

The state is prepared and conceives of revolution being conducted in an insurrectionist form, and has therefore made every conceivable contingency plan to deal with it. It has taken into account every revolutionary experience and tactic which has hitherto been used throughout the world and has planned its counter insurgency measures accordingly. This includes not only highly sophisticated surveillance and murder techniques, but, in the event of overt action, the use of the most sophisticated and technologically advance weaponry operated by highly skilled personnel.

The state cannot be fought on its own terms, so what effective means and strength can the working class bring to bear to effect change? This can best be answered by asking ourselves "How is it that capitalism exists?" The answer must surely be because the working class enable it to exist. Daily we function the system, the capitalist class do not and cannot, we alone as a working class are the motivating force that makes it possible.

The aim of the revolution is to win, therefore we must fight in ways which give the working class the advantage, ways that will ensure the success of the revolution,

therefore in our struggle to bring about a radical social change we must organise to fight in ways which prevents the state from being able to bring to bear its vast strength in confrontations.

Domela Nieuwenhuis once said "A people in uniform is its own tyrant". Furthermore, by the very nature of military planning it would bring into being a new hierarchy amongst the revolutionary ranks. Or an armed struggle requires hierarchical chains of command to co-ordinate, structures of obedience, military discipline, a toughness and brutality alien to anarchist humanitarianism. The true strength of a worker lies in the fact of being a worker, and if he withdraws that from functioning capitalism all the might of the state could not enable it to survive.

So what does this tell us? Firstly, that the revolution cannot come before the people understand and want it. We must reject vanguardism and setting ourselves up as an elite who know what's best for the people. Such action would be 'Bolshevik' not anarchist.

Secondly, the revolution to succeed must be built, which means both education and organisation. By education it does not just mean an understanding of capitalism and its evils, but the requirements of running a workers controlled society, the organisation of production, distribution and transportation etc. To achieve this there must be organised networks of communication built up between all sections of society. A people so organised and set upon bringing about social change would ultimately bring about such change in spite of the violence of the state, not today, not next year, but inevitably, for although the state can shoot people to death, it cannot shoot a whole population to work and a people determined to be free.

We must never set ourselves up as omniscient claiming to know what is best for people, we can only point out the dangers involved by analysing what they have experienced and clarify the intrinsic principles involved, as we collectively see it.

But we aim at a successful complete and absolute social revolution which means we must not be emotively motivated in our actions if we are to win and bring about a complete transformation of society. Our policy must be not only be logical, it must be both mature and realist.

With fraternal greetings to fellow anarcho-syndicalists.

Aberystwyth IWW

Act-back

DA,

From the late 19th century to the 1970s, leading capitalist nations felt the need to provide large-scale welfare services for the working class. This was not an epidemic of humanitarianism striking ruling classes but was necessary to provide the healthy, skilled workforce then essential for capitalism's economic expansion and to fight its wars as well as appease this workforce, which often became militant. Since the 1970s new technology has made it possible to reduce the economic need for skilled as well as unskilled labour with the result that more and more of the population of the rich 'developed' countries along with the 'developing' world is surplus to requirements.

The bosses are not (yet) able to dispose of us like a farmer slaughtering surplus livestock, but, by cutting back on unprofitable and undesirable welfare services, they encourage us to turn on ourselves and each other. Replacing the community and family is a frightened, fractured and isolated society, distracted by the capitalist media's consumer

culture. The result is rising crime and a demand for increased 'law and order' which the capitalists, whose activities deliberately produced this result, are ready to cynically exploit with more police, prisons and laws, providing a profitable growth industry and an excuse to strengthen their apparatus of repression now that the old excuse of the 'red menace' has disappeared.

Talk of the working class is a delusion. The majority of the population of the developed world is middle class. They enjoy a materially privileged lifestyle compared to the world's impoverished majority and so have a vested interest in preserving the system that supplies these privileges (at least so long as they last). There is a large and growing underclass - long term unemployed, low paid, pensioners, single parents etc. - who have no material stake in the system. Our interest is extracting as much as possible from the rest of society, used as scapegoats and a threat to keep the majority in line, we are the key to the system's destruction.

We cannot be mobilised by any party or organisation or the preaching of obsolete ideals like solidarity, humanity and similar sentimental drivel. What is needed is a mass-campaign. If successful this would greatly reduce the effect of capitalism's strongest industrial weapon (the threat of the dole) and restore the possibility of industrial militancy. It could also have a healthy political effect by greatly reducing the privileges of the middle class, pro-capitalist majority.

ED: I don't usually comment but couldn't resist. I like the initial analysis, but got lost between the anti-organisation and the mass campaign. Won't this require organisation - i.e. revolutionary anarchist organisations strong enough to repel reformist opportunists - or surely it will fade away like anti-poll tax groups did? For certain, the 'underclass' is essential in the struggle, but with workers or else it will be further marginalised, no? As for the 'middle class', what is it? Aren't these just bosses lackeys and workers duped into capitalism, whether in the office or factory? A revolution needs massive support amongst both wage-earners and other working class people; a bigger and more united movement than ever before. Surely we need to be building links, and breaking barriers, not making them.

about letters

Readers' letters are welcome, feel free to write in. However, we get a lot of correspondence; if you want your views aired here, mark your correspondence 'letters'. Try to keep them brief and to the point. We can only print within space permitting, and reserve the right to chop bits on longer or less coherent material. All letters are kept and so full versions are available from us at DA.

Send your letters to:

DA-SF (letters), PO Box 1095, Sheffield S2 4YR

FAQs

...cont'd from page 23

vessel with water (highly unoriginal thoughts I should add, paraphrased from writings of the Enlightenment and classical liberalism). These are general principles, which I think are generally valid. How they apply in particular circumstances has to be evaluated case by case, with due humility, and recognition of how little we really understand.

Chomsky's thoughts regarding a future society (as expressed by letter to Tom Lane):

About a future society, I...may be repeating, but it's something I've been concerned with every since I was a kid. I recall, about 1940, reading Diego Abad de Santillan's interesting book *After the Revolution*, criticizing his anarchist comrades and sketching in some detail how an anarcho-syndicalist Spain would work (these are >50 year old memories, so don't take it too literally). My feeling then was that it looked good, but do we understand enough to answer questions about a society in such detail? Over the years, naturally I've learned more, but it has only deepened my skepticism about whether we understand enough. In recent years, I've discussed this a good deal with Mike Albert, who has been encouraging me to spell out in detail how I think society should work, or at least react to his "participatory democracy" conception. I've backed off, in both cases, for the same reasons. It seems to me that answers to most such questions have to be learned by experiment. Take markets (to the extent that they could function in any viable society -- limited, if the historical record is any guide, not to speak of logic). I understand well enough what's wrong with them, but that's not sufficient to demonstrate that a system that eliminates market operations is preferable; simply a point of logic, and I don't think we know the answer. Same with everything else.

review



Virtually Normal. An argument about homosexuality

Andrew Sullivan
Picador, 1995
ISBN 0 330 34453 6

Andrew Sullivan's *Virtually Normal* is a courageous book which intertwines a political message and a very personal story of growing up gay in Britain. The book is divided into four principal sections which cover what Sullivan views as the politics of the prohibitionists, the liberationists, the conservatives and the liberals with regard to homosexuality. The moralistic and often Christian 'prohibitionist' stance is attacked and dismissed. However, so is the 'liberationist' stance and even the political project envisaged in this. Sullivan makes it clear that as part of the 'homosexual condition', whatever such a child finds him/herself in, no child..

"will feel at home in his sexual and emotional world, even in the most tolerant of cultures. And every homosexual child will learn the rituals of deceit, impersonation, and appearance. Anyone who believes that political, social, or even cultural revolution will change this fundamentally is denying reality" (p.13)

Sullivan goes on to dismiss the activism around HIV and AIDS, 'outing' and other aspects of the "anarchy of random resistance" (p. 92) for a more traditionally liberal institutionalised approach to the problems of homophobia and the discrimination lesbians and gays suffer. He rejects the conservative approach as untenable and unjust and places a great

deal of importance on the changing of attitudes. All this is supposed to take place in Western democracies (he only talks of the West) and the main emphasis of change revolves around two centres: same sex marriage and access to the military - both current and strong debates, especially in the United States.

Anarcho-syndicalists will clearly disagree with the conclusions of this book: gay marriage in itself will not solve our problems. Marriage institutionalises homosexuality and limits its radical, subversive edge which questions heterosexuality, monogamy and gender roles. While we should not oppose same sex marriage, we should be able to point out its limitations and the possible consequences of it for the lesbian and gay movement and 'wider' society. Integration of anyone into the military machine is anathema to anarcho-syndicalists who have pointed out for decades the destructiveness of the army. We do not want the democratisation of militarisation, what we call for is the dissolution of the armed forces.

Another major problem I had while reading this book is that Sullivan seems to think that gays are a small minority in society and that our numbers are pretty much fixed. This does not take into account the very real widespread, but unacknowledged, diverse sexuality that people experience. Nor does it open up the possibility for more people to experiment with their sexuality in a radical, as free as possible libertarian society which we seek to create. Sullivan also ignores bisexuality and is silent on the subject. Homosexuals, for him, are a neatly defined, almost genetically-endowed (small) group of people who will always suffer some kind of discrimination.

Despite a sensitive and personal account, the scope for things getting better in Sullivan's plan is limited. We should be promoting sexual freedom

and the choice to decide our own loves, and not with the idea that lesbians and gay men are a small fixed minority but with the hope that non-exclusive forced heterosexuality can be a more widespread phenomenon than in today's society.

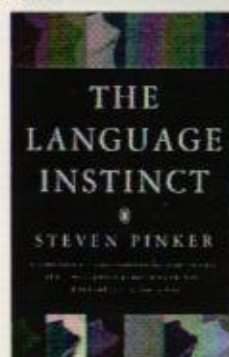
RMC



The Language Instinct

Steven Pinker
Penguin, 1994
ISBN 0 14 017529 6

When I read '100 years of Solitude' by Gabriel García Márquez, a review on the back cover said 'This book will change your life.' I thought, 'How pretentious,' but luckily I read it anyway. And it did.



So did 'The Language Instinct' by Steven Pinker, recently out in paperback. Of

course, it didn't change anything out there; it changed - in the sense of freshening, sharpening and jolting - my ability to perceive things out there. Unfortunately, unlike Steven Pinker, I can still only use words like 'things' to point you vaguely in the direction I'm looking.

He uses words with a childlike creativity to illuminate the phenomenon of human language. He does not use language as a big stick to beat us with (as Gillian Shephard orders teachers to do). He celebrates language as a shared ability:

'Simply by making noises with our mouths, we can reliably cause precise new combinations of ideas to arise in

Sullivan seems to think that gays are a small minority in society and that our numbers are pretty much fixed

each other's minds. The ability comes so naturally we are apt to forget what a miracle it is.'

He takes apart all the fuzzy, inhibiting 'misconceptions' about language so swiftly and elegantly, it should silence the language fascists for ever- but his ideas may stay locked up in a small paperback, while their words will continue to be broadcast, drip by insidious drip, through the popular media.

His notion of 'instinct' pushes 'rules' and 'education' onto the sidelines, while the players struggle on regardless of cheers and abuse:

'people know how to talk in more or less the sense that spiders know how to spin webs. Web-spinning was not invented by some unsung spider genius and does not depend on having had the right education. Spiders spin spider webs because they have spider brains, which give them the urge to spin and the competence to succeed.'

Some chapters are mind-bogglingly difficult, but these can be skipped. For the most invigorating mind-shower, I would recommend 'Babies Born Talking- Describes Heaven' where he reminds us not to see children as inferior versions of adult supremacy. Why do we call their creative application of grammatical logic: 'Don't giggle me.' a mistake, but reward the advertising copywriter's innovations: 'Sparkle your table with Cape Cod classic glass-ware.'

His chapter 'The Language Mavens' demolishes most of the current complaints about 'incorrect' or 'sloppy' language. I love his characterisation of their arguments as 'hairballs of loosely associated factoids' and I'll hope to remember the phrase next time I'm confronted by the unpleasant mess they regurgitate onto Kilroy or the pages of the Daily Mail.

The precise examples he gives are fascinating, but his opening paragraph is enough to jolt the way we have been

taught to think about language:

'Imagine you are watching a nature documentary. The video shows the usual gorgeous footage of animals in their natural habitats. But the voiceover reports some troubling facts.

Dolphins do not execute their swimming strokes properly, pandas hold bamboo in the wrong paw, the song of the humpback whale contains several well-known errors... Your reaction would probably be, What on earth could it mean for the song of the humpback whale to contain an "error"? Isn't the song of the humpback whale whatever the humpback whale decides to sing?

Who is this announcer anyway?'

It's time to tell these announcers to shut up and let people get on with using language. The book is powerful stuff. Look no further for a place to start (or continue) claiming back our language from the grammar police.

AR

for the most invigorating mind-shower, I would recommend 'Babies Born Talking- Describes Heaven' where he reminds us not to see children as inferior versions of adult supremacy



Better read than dead

AK Press Audio and Epitaph benefit for AK Press
AK, 1996

This, as you may have guessed, is a compilation for AK Press by AK Press. It contains twenty tracks of audio music and a special enhanced CD ROM of the AK press catalogue, apparently. Not having access to a CD ROM compatible computer I'll take their word for it. (If anyone wants to send me a computer with CD Rom and multimedia to review I'd be happy to, you know the busy anarchist needs a really fast machine!!! - are you listening Bill Gates?).

As with any compilation, you are probably not going to like all the tracks unless you compiled it. The album contains the names you'd expect to see - the Levellers playing 'exodus' live (lots of people like them, no really they do) and Chumbawamba doing a gentle piano and soft keyboard with vocals "safety pin stuck in my heart", I still love them when they do this sort of thing. Napalm Death are a mellow Napalm Death (relatively speaking).

Snuff do a very good Snuff on a cover of 'I can see clearly now' where their punk pop Robson and Jerome act provides another bit of fun. A number of other bands also seem to be off doing the Snuff thing, but unfortunately not covering classic pop songs. The best Cain and Zinks bounce along with energy and zest, the not so best Larry Byrns and Chocolate seem to forget that pop means tunes, songs whatever, and this is doubly so for loud shouty pop. It's not new and cutting edge, it needs to be quality stuff. Just look at the Gary Floyd Band whose 'too much alcohol' is just bog standard pub blues boogie, but so much better than that. They've got the right dirty sound and a vocalist with just the right voice. This should be played to all those highlighted blokey bands playing standards in pubs up and down the country as a gentle hint to get a decent singer or give up. J Church are only saved in their sub-Snuffism by repeating "he's a fucked up piece of shit" a few times (it is big and it is clever). Spazz on 'mighty morphin power violence' are that old style britcore, as was, of old Napalm Death, Extreme Noise Terror etc. NOFX and Hooton 3 Car head off for the new wave end of punk and are nothing new, interesting or offensive.

The only really bad track on the album is Tribes of Nuerot's 'cathartidae'. It is the only track on the whole thing that tries to be different, unfortunately the rather interesting minimalish noisescapes are made completely unlistenable by some woman making

wooo wwooo noises over the top at what seems random moments. This is what happens when you let Goths near a recording studio after several too many cider and blacks. Pitchshifter and Pap Brittle go for a spot of industrial metal which falls just the right side of the line to funk metal (i.e. the side away from it). Sort of like the Twenty Fifth of May or early Beggars ITA, but not enough like RevCo. Talking of the Beggars ITA here they are with 'there's gonna be a lynchin'. What's happened, no horns, no samples no mixing no fun, just, yet, another guitar, bass, drums shouty vocals band.

Of the rest Bjorn Baby Bjorn do a fax copy of one of Abba's greatest moments 'Waterloo' (it's a bit fuzzy round the edges), the Wild Bouquet are one for the older listeners, dull Eric Clapton-ish without the guitar histrionics and with top cheesy organ riffs. Let me hear you say YEAH! for top cheesy organ riffs! Big Ray are probably the band most likely in that they sound a bit B***pop. To be more precise, like Blur without the irritating Mockney chirpings. Wayne Kramer is Blue Oyster Cult and I claim my cuddly Buck Dharma.

The last track is by Propagandi, which I thought was a split from Fun-da-mental, but it's not them, shame. It is some Canadians doing that happy guitar punk that Canadians do so well (the 'phone message at the beginning and end mentions Hannah, no relations to the ex- Subhumans bloke??). Well being a Canadian punk band and being at the end, they made me think of Nomeansno, and so I put on some Nomeansno and reflected that if all bands sounded like them I'd be very much further in debt than I already am.

Positive points: only one really bad track, and that fails through trying too hard; a few rather fine tracks and lots of okay ones; if you have a CD-ROM wotsit you can peruse the AK Press catalogue. I like compilations; excellent cover art with lots of ardent Chinese communists clutching AK

Press to their hearts; and, it prints the quote "If I can't dance, it's not my revolution" (Emma Goldman) on the sleeve, my very favourite quote.



Luddgang

Gig at the Devonshire
November, 1996

**excellent
cover art with
lots of ardent
Chinese
communists
clutching
AK Press to
their hearts**

Oi Polloi didn't turn up so the support had to do the whole show. Being as it was their first gig not many people had much idea of what the support were going to do. They were here to see good old Oi Polloi. So what happened next came as a bit of a surprise.

The music? Test Department meets Crass is miles away but I can't seem to get any nearer. The part of the 'gang who are on stage do tribal drumming to astonishingly intense backing tracks and video/slide screen images, presumably operated by the part of the 'gang stageside.

As you might expect, 5 drummers is loud. Also as you might expect, Luddgang use less orthodox 'instruments' and metal-ish implements to hit in addition to the obligatory bass, big toms and snare. Beer barrels, tin cans and a range of assorted acoustic metal-ware is as precise as I can get.

Luddgang present a serious, class struggle anarchist image. No fooling about dancing gaily 'till the revolution happens. The video and audio clips cover everything from American Presidents to Bosnia to Poll Tax, the list is endless. None of it leaves you in any doubt who the enemy is.

But there's more. The call to action is clear as a stick splitting a plastic skin. You get a free magazine. The message cuts through the rough edges, noise, attitude and anger. If this doesn't make you angry you aren't human. If it doesn't make you at least think about doing something about the state we are all in, you are hopeless. Luddgang, not surprisingly, consists of active anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists, and this is a call to the barricades.

There are plans for a no-profit pack of audio-visual and printed matter with T-shirt no less. Enquire about it if you cannot get to one of their gigs (Luddgang, PO Box 446, Sheffield S1 1NY, UK). Otherwise, do yourself a favour and see them live.



I Shot Andy Warhol

Dir. Mary Harron
1996

I only read the SCUM Manifesto earlier in the year and was somewhat confused about it. It's a well-written piece, mainly, which contains some unpalatable ideas and, in places, some seemingly wild inaccuracies. Maybe it is because I am more used to such vitriolic hatred of one gender for another coming from men? Whatever it was, I was interested to know more about the woman who wrote it. So when this film came out about Valerie Solanas I was quite keen. A chance to find out something about the woman who wrote SCUM, why she wrote it and how she herself interpreted it. Anyway, I wanted to know more than just that she shot Andy Warhol.

The film in itself is fine, by no means brilliant, and the acting gets a bit wobbly in places, but no worse than your average soap or many other low

budget movies. The film portrays Solanas (played by a chain smoking Lili Taylor, if she gets cancer she should sue Mary Harron) as a radical lesbian who came from a background of abuse. As an outstanding student, she funded her way through college by prostitution, then going on to live rough on the streets of New York. Apparently determined not to get any of the usual jobs, she survived by getting money on the street. Through her friendship with drag queen Candy Darling, she meets Andy Warhol's crowd and begins hanging around on the edge of it trying to persuade Warhol to produce her play. When he doesn't and she gets ripped off by her publisher, she becomes convinced that the pair of them are out to publish the play without her. It is perhaps her descent into insanity which is the weakest part of the film. It seems far too rushed. The titles at the end of the film tell us that Solanas died of pneumonia out on the streets years after being released from the institutions to which she was sent when she was convicted and declared to be mentally ill.

as an outstanding student, she funded her way through college by prostitution, then going on to live rough on the streets of New York

Solanas is shown at one point watching a news report of a feminist demonstration and it's implied that she was almost unaware of a wider movement. She did appear to work in almost total political isolation which makes the quality of her Manifesto more remarkable, but it explains some of her frustrations. To work in isolation means you not only have no one to work and share your ideas with, you are isolated from the currents of thought that are around you and the existing channels to get your ideas out and about. You receive no feedback, sympathetic or otherwise, you have to develop all your ideas on your own. That seems to me the hardest way of doing things.

The thing about the film that erked me was that it concentrated far too much on Warhol and the Factory, from the title onwards. Acknowledging the limitations of the scope of a shortish

film and that Solanas is most well known for her shooting of Warhol and that it was at least in part her frustration at his indifference to her play that contributed to her tipping over the edge, I was still interested in a film about Solanas and what her ideas were, how she came to write the manifesto.

The manifesto had little to do with her time with the Factory. How did she come to write it? Was it a satire of male writings, was it also supposed to be taken literally, or both? It just goes to show that you won't get a film made by

Hollywood, or even BBC's Arena programme, based on the pitch "it's about this really intelligent women who wrote this manifesto about eradicating men and who was a really interesting character". But you may get a small budget film about "the mad woman who shot Andy Warhol".

The problem is film is not the way to make a documentary, which is I guess what I wanted. It has to survive on its merits as a piece of celluloid drama and I suppose it does that, just.



passenger Carla, who turns out to be a disturbed escapee from Nicaragua's Contra 'rebellion'. As George discovers more about Carla's past the two are inevitably drawn back into the Contra/Sandinista conflict. Once there, the FBI rears its ugly head - the portrayal of its part in creating and promoting barbarism is plausible but shocking to the uninitiated. Then it all starts getting pretty intense.

Apart from the time and place, the parallels with *Land and Freedom* are so clear it is virtually a sequel by type. *Carla's Song* is similarly (or more) realistic in terms of sets and general attention to detail, and again, top Hollywood actors are ditched in favour of local talent, giving performances with less polish and more rough edges - but all the more gritty for it.

The comparisons with *L&F* go on. Loach is no anarcho-syndicalist, and, having hugely underplayed the role of the anarcho-syndicalist CNT in the Spanish Civil War (while simultaneously drawing heavily on anarcho-syndicalist action and imagery), it is not surprising that this time the anarchist content is approximately zero.

Don't expect to find sturdy seedlings of anarchist activity - but do expect a vivid portrayal of the elements of social revolution typical of this national liberation style struggle. And, judging by my own experience elsewhere of modern low intensity wars involving grass roots struggle for national liberation - its realistic. It gives you a buzz. If you identified with *L&F* like this, you'll like it.

Oh, and watch out for the inevitable love story bits, which get a bit overbearing.



Carla's Song

Dir. Ken Loach
1996

For once I agree with Barry - it's a good film. *Carla's Song* is on a similar grand scale as Loach's *Land and Freedom*; instead of an epic of the Spanish Civil War, it 'does' Nicaragua. Robert Carlyle stars as George, the bus driver who falls for mysterious

Class matters

A personal viewpoint of class coming to the fore in trade union mergers

When Nalگو, NUPE and COHSE merged, it was expected that there would be mergers of branches under the same employer - local authorities and health authorities and trusts, for example. However, very few of these went through easily, and many are still in the pipeline; particularly where unions involved had very different cultures and often had years of mutual antagonism in the workplace to overcome.

For example, my branch of Nalگو never had real problems with either of the two manual NUPE branches, but the NUPE Officers were a scab crew totally in management's pocket. Now that Unison Head Office is forcing through mergers, the Branch Secretary for life of NUPE officers is scared he might be redeployed and have to do some real work (unless there's a job in some brown-nose department going, of course..).

On a more serious note, there is real opposition to these mergers from some manual workers' branches. And this opposition is expressed in class terms.

my branch of Nalگو never had problems with the manual NUPE branches, but the NUPE Officers were a scab crew totally in management's pocket

Some manual workers argue that Nalگو members are their managers and they don't want to be in the same union as them. Often this is true, but it obscures a lot more than that.

There is a problem with both the numbers and levels of managers and chief officers that my union goes out of its way to recruit. That said, there is no simple way to draw a line - some managers in local government get paid at Senior Officer level, yet specialists such as computer professionals will be paid the higher principal officer grades, often quite high up the scale (and in some authorities specialists such as this get paid more than their managers).

So though pay might be a good indicator it is not a reliable one, rather a better one is position in the hierarchy. A bottom rung manager, apart from slightly better pay, is not in a very different position from those they manage. They have little control over their work, often have to work longer hours without extra pay, and are equally subject to the whims of the bureaucrats.

Class is at issue here but it defies those who want to simplify it to a manual versus white collar basis. Many white collar workers are paid less than manual workers, are often women and, in inner city areas, have a high concentration of black workers - hardly recognisable as a privileged group.

So what should our attitude to management in the unions be? Clearly, certain levels of management are part of the bureaucracy (as are some full time union officials) and therefore on the other side of the class war. These are generally people with the direct power to hire and fire, as opposed to having to do everything through personnel.

But our attitude to most managers, and local government and the NHS are chock-a-block with different tiers of management, is based on class and solidarity. If they identify with the union's demands AND abide by them, then they are on the same side and if they don't, or are half-hearted about it, they are not. But we must remember that if the workers are half-hearted too, we won't be getting very far.

► ANARCHIST ECONOMICS ★

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Solidarity Federation

The Solidarity Federation was formed in March 1994 by the joining together of industrial networks in the Transport, Education and public Service sectors, the Direct Action Movement and other groups and individuals. This was a considerable step forward for anarchosyndicalism in Britain.

The SolFed (SF) provides what has been lacking for many years - a concrete base in the working class for uniting struggles in the workplace with the wider political struggle in the community. In other words, SolFed is a revolutionary social and economic organisation. The ideas and practices of anarchosyndicalism are not new, although they are constantly changing in response to the rapidly changing world. Whilst not a fully fledged revolutionary union federation, SolFed is a significant step towards this aim.

As industrial networks grow in members and influence, so does the scope for action. The industrial networks have established a reputation in their industries and are showing real results in membership and effectiveness.

Locals

SolFed is not just organised through industrial networks. It also organises locally through "locals".

A local is made up of all SolFed members in an area regardless of network membership. The work of locals is varied: general solidarity with the networks and other workers; local political campaigns like anti-fascism and environmental issues; holding public meetings; producing and distributing anarchosyndicalist material. Many of the already established locals have or are working towards getting a local, an actual building as a permanent base.

International Workers Association

The Solidarity Federation is the British section of the IWA, giving it the strength of international solidarity and experience from the larger sections such as the CNT in Spain and the USI in Italy.

Founded in 1922, the International Workers Association (IWA) has sections all over Europe, in South America, Australia and the USA.

Why organise internationally? As capitalism has become increasingly international, always looking for new markets to 'exploit',

so it is essential to stress the need for internationalism among all workers.

Capitalism relies on divide-and-rule tactics. It therefore preaches rabid nationalism and patriotism. The Labour Party and the TUC go along with this and continue to use similar slogans whenever the opportunity arises.

A genuine workers movement must completely reject this. Our movement is based on the principle of solidarity. Workers are exploited everywhere - that is our common link. We have far more in common with French railway workers, Polish miners or South African street cleaners than with any boss or politician, British or otherwise.

So where has the IWA been these past 74 years? Until the Second World War, it had over 5 million people world-wide affiliated to revolutionary unions. A combination of war, fascism, state capitalism and communism all but destroyed it. Following the re-emerge of the Spanish CNT in the late 70's, the IWA had a new lease of life. Today there are sections in over a dozen countries, ranging from propaganda groups to functioning unions. The Solidarity



Aims of the Solidarity Federation

The Solidarity Federation is an organisation of people who seek to destroy capitalism and the state. Capitalism because it exploits, oppresses and kills working people and wrecks the environment for profit world-wide. The state because it can only maintain hierarchy and privilege for the classes who control it and their servants; it cannot be used to fight the oppression and exploitation that are the consequences of hierarchy and the source of privilege.

In their place, we want a society based on workers' self-management, solidarity, mutual aid and libertarian communism.

That society can only be achieved by working class organisations based on similar principles - revolutionary unions. These are not Trade Unions only concerned with "bread and butter" issues like pay and conditions. Revolutionary unions are means for working people to organise and fight all the issues - both in the workplace and outside - which arise from our oppression.

We recognise that not all oppression is economic, but can be based on gender, race, sexuality, or anything our rulers find useful. Unless we organise in this way, politicians - some claiming to be revolutionary - will be able to exploit us for their own ends.

The Solidarity Federation consists of **Industrial Networks** and **Locals** which are the nuclei of future revolutionary unions and centres for working class struggle on a local level. Our activities are based on **Direct Action** - action by workers ourselves, not through intermediaries like politicians and union officials; our decisions are made through direct participation of the membership.

We welcome all who agree with our aims and principles and want to work to achieve social revolution. We recognise that the class struggle is world-wide, and are affiliated to the **International Workers' Association (IWA)**, with whom we share the same **Principles of Revolutionary Unionism**.

breaking barriers

Solidarity
federation