

Red South West

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Prepare for return of the Green Goddesses

Firefighters' strike could see ageing emergency fleet come out of mothballs

Manifesto Against Monogamy

Will Brown **Totterdown, Bristol**

**"When I was only 17
My mother said to me,
There's just one girl in the world for
you,
And she probably lives in Tahiti"**
Wreckless Eric

The one thing the Royal Family have in common with their subjects is trouble with marriage. Many of us have been in long-term relationships which have "failed". Is it our fault? Were we "immature" or "emotionally damaged" or just "with the wrong person"? Of course not. But in spite of past failures, we still chase the dream of happy ever after. We search for that perfect partner & the warm, snuggly duvet of a happy, loving relationship to save us from loneliness, in spite of the fact that our attempts at monogamy have failed, often with spectacular misery on both sides. Is God trying to tell us something? Perhaps we should give up the struggle to keep the dream of monogamous relationships alive & try out new ways of living together.

Fuck me sideways

The evidence of the failure of monogamy is on all sides. One-parent families are on the increase, so are the number of single adults. But traditional attitudes take a long time to break down. And they make it very difficult for people to live their lives in alternative ways. You may face more prejudice if you are gay than straight - but once in the gay community there is greater tolerance of different ways of relating sexually - from the entirely monogamous gay marriage to the intensely promiscuous club scene.

But things change. Only 30 years ago sex before marriage was controversial. 20 years ago homosexuality was still widely publicly ridiculed. Perhaps in 10 years time monogamy will be seen as a quaint relic of days past, perhaps even as a peculiar fetish. The recent efforts by Tory & Labour to support the family is evidence of its decline. In late medieval days the Sumptory Laws were enacted to enforce different dress codes for various social classes. Until then the laws had been unnecessary - codes were generally observed. The new laws were evidence of the collapse of feudalism - not of its strength. Blair's pro-family pronouncements sound more & more unreal in a world of single parents, gay parents & marriage breakdown. Even Bill Clinton has managed to speak in favour of family values - perhaps he even explained to Monica how the family was

the bedrock of American society.

Lust is space

It's about relationships as much as about sex. Monogamy elevates one relationship to a status way above all others. But perhaps it's possible for people to have rich sex lives & strong emotional relationships without feeling they have to find Mr/s Right. Perhaps we could organise ourselves in new ways so that the breakdown of monogamy is an opportunity rather than a disaster. Where we could be confident that, if one of our relationships comes unstuck then there would be other people for us. So we could love without fear & without placing unrealistic demands on our lovers.

The currency of lurve

And let's face it folks - lots of us just have pretty unfulfilling sex lives - not enough of it & when we get it, it's not always so exciting. Judging by the recent splurge of erotica for women written by women, it's not just dirty old men who think this. I read Esme Ombreux's "Amanda in the Private House" (Nexus) & it was pretty hot stuff, let me tell you. And there's 50 titles in the series to choose from. Trendo mag. "The Ministry of Sound" reports orgies are the latest hot growth sector of clubbing. A recent Panorama reporting on underage sex featured apparently cheerful & happy 16 year old girls talking enthusiastically about their vey active sex lives. I talked recently to a middle-aged woman who spent 2 hours a night having virtual sex on the Internet. We don't just want more sex - we want something that's autonomous & not commodified - where people do it for lurve rather than money.

Jelly Sea

Of course there are real problems - jealousy, sexual health & intimacy. Relationships would have to be on the basis of not owning each other. It's important that people practise safe sex (is this true?). And people would need to be careful with each others' feelings. Maybe people would miss that ultimate intimacy of a long-term monogamous relationship - but, there again, in reality, many of us aren't in such a relationship & those that are aren't necessarily that happy.

Babbies

And as for babbies - well, lots & lots of them grow up outside of conventional happy families, whatever Tony Blair wants.

Have your cake - AND EAT IT!

So, we could try to be a bit radical & do something about it - a collective lifestyle politics aimed at addressing a really big issue in lots of people's lives.

Here's the plan. We have a group of approximately equal numbers of men & women. Maybe 6, maybe 40. Every now & then we do things together - go to the pictures, have a barbecue, go dancing, have a party. No one in the group is committed to being monogamous. Everybody has to practise safe sex. Everybody has everybody's phone number. Only the women are allowed to initiate sexual relations. The men can ask the women out, but the onus is on the woman to make the running. This reverses the usual way of things & deters predatory male carrying-on, & particularly attractive women getting deluged by men with their tongues hanging out. If people decide to go monogamous they have to withdraw from the group. And couples aren't allowed in the first place. Hahaha. New members are recruited by invitation & agreement of at least one third of the group. And that's about it. I should say so.

Red South West

Red SW has come about through cooperation between socialist and anarchist individuals and groups across the SW including: the Exeter Left group, the former Somerset Socialist/Somerset Clarion, Bristol Marxist Forum and Anti-Fascist Action. The aim of Red SW is to encourage dialogue, debate and active co-operation throughout the region. Our pages are open to all.

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Red South West

We apologise for the long gap since RSW3. Too many overworked activists on the Editorial Committee. We'll do our best from now on!

SUPPORT THE FIREFIGHTERS

Earlier this year, the Annual Conference of the Fire Brigades Union voted by 50,000 to 2,000 to call a national strike ballot, should the Labour Government rip up the "Grey Book" which, since 1977, has retained national conditions of service, public standards and national bargaining with the FBU.

In the West Country, FBU activists have begun the work of preparing for public support, should the expected national strike occur in the autumn/winter. Huw Davies, Secretary of Bridgwater FBU Branch, spoke to a recent meeting of Bridgwater Trades Union Council. Part-time & full-time members of the FBU leafleted Saturday shoppers in Tavistock. FBU officials have been giving interviews - the Plymouth-based Western Morning News has been outstanding in its coverage: no less than 7 major articles supporting the FBU have been carried since June 1999. Below are some of the comments which have been made about the dispute:

Colin Piper: Devon FBU Secretary
"The employers are trying to impose conditions that are totally unacceptable. I imagine that the Green Goddesses would come out if strike action was taken...but then they will have to pay for the troops."

David Bray: Cornwall FBU Secretary
"Everyone is totally fed up with the way in which the employers are using firefighters to cut costs even further there is no way that cuts should be made in things like our annual leave. The Grey Book was negotiated by the FBU as the minimum ground. This is not about money, it is about the service we provide."

Gary Jones: Devon FBU Chair
"Changes have to be within a national framework. Going to local bargaining would be a backward step & would lead to members earning different amounts in different parts of the country."

Mike White: Devon Officers FBU Chair
"Devon Fire & Rescue service is an independent authority & so is being asked to make 2% cuts a year for the next 3 years out of its own tight budget - there are no subsidies from the County Council. Appledore & Budleigh Salterton stations would close altogether; Torquay would be downgraded & an aerial

appliance taken from Plymouth. A strike is a growing possibility."

Paul Young, Chief Fire Officer for Devon:
"The cuts have been put forward by this service extremely reluctantly. I know of no member of Devon Fire Authority who supports cuts to these services. These cuts are being imposed by the Government."

Tom Radford, Rep. for Retained Firefighters Union (a scab union)
"We could work to rule, but strike action would be out of the question. In rural communities the fireman is known to everyone. In Ashburton, Buckfastleigh he is a next-door neighbour."

NB. in Devon, the 2 stations to close are both part-time, rural, retained stations.

Western Morning News editorial
25th August 1999:

"FIREFIGHTERS HAVE PUBLIC'S BACKING"
The public has an inherent bond with people who risk their lives to make ours safe, & when firefighters or paramedics are in dispute that immensely strong relationship invariably leads to huge support. There's a feeling that if dedicated, selfless public servants like these are moved to strike they must have been driven to the end of their tether. If this is not right at the forefront of New Labour MPs' minds, it indisputably ought to be."

Green Goddess or strike ban ?

IF firemen do decide to back an all-out national strike, it will mean Green Goddesses will be called into service for the first time in more than 20 years.

Green Goddesses last saw active service on a large scale in 1977 - the year of the Queen's Silver Jubilee - when the lumbering engines became a familiar sight on the streets of Devon and Cornwall.

The Labour Government, led by Prime Minister James Callaghan, was forced to call on the Army and its ageing fleet of Green Goddesses to cope with the emergency.

Criticised as slow and inadequate back in 1977, 20 years on the Green Goddesses remain the Government's only fall-back solution.

If firefighters do answer a call for strike action, the ageing vehicles will be brought out of mothballs to answer the call of duty once again.

Owned by the Home Office and Dutch transport firm TNT, the vehicles are stored at an aircraft hangar in Staffordshire, from where they would be sent out to locations across the country if required.

The vehicles stand as the oldest working fire engines in the Western world.

First introduced in 1953, the vehicles were designed to provide a simple fire engine which could be used by untrained civilians in the wake of a possible nuclear attack.

Considered outdated in 1977, the vehicles fall well short of state-of-the-art engines used by today's fire brigade.

The Bedford vehicles have a top speed of around 35mph, although firemen claim they are only safe at speeds of around 30mph.

Their sheer size and bulk also make them extremely difficult to manoeuvre, especially on narrow country roads such as those found in many remote parts of the Westcountry.

Although they haven't appeared on the Westcountry's roads since 1977, Green Goddesses have been called into emergency action in other parts of the country, notably when members of Essex Fire Brigade went on strike in protest over cuts to services in the county last year.

Notoriously unreliable, five broke down shortly after going on duty. One blocked a roundabout, bringing traffic chaos to Colchester for several hours.

Green Goddesses have already been earmarked for service later this year. Fire chiefs in London have asked the Government to supply the fire engines as reinforcements as fears grow that the Millennium Bug and New Year celebrations will stretch emergency services to the limit.

If Blair bans strikes in the fire service, all public service trades unionists should try to organise stoppages & demonstrations

Luggage factory to close

A LUGGAGE factory in Exeter is to close with the loss of 40 jobs. Antler Ltd, which makes holiday bags and suitcases, is to close its last remaining outlet in November.

Brian Wreford, a director of Antler, said: "This move comes against a background of shifting resources in the UK and Europe. Over the past 20 years the market has changed beyond recognition."

The factory on Western Way has been scaled down over the past two years with the workforce reduced from under 100 to 40. Some of the buildings have already been sold off.

Mr Wreford said: "We found it increasingly difficult to get materials and labour at competitive prices. We put much of our quality work on to this outlet and kept it going for a little while longer but now we have to face facts."

Cheaper materials and labour costs have drawn many luggage manufacturers away from Europe to Far Eastern and South American countries.

The Legacy of John Maclean

The three separate themes of the past, present and future of John Maclean, the world famous Clydeside socialist, 75 years after his death, should highlight what connects his life, times and legacy in 1998 to a present characterised by retrogression or counter-revolution and the really unpredictable future in the next 21st century. With the exception of some maverick historians, most academic historians in the Scottish Universities insist on separating the past from the present at the same time as they refuse to speculate about the future. I am an 'old-fashioned' radical, not a maverick or conventional academic.

The main outlines of Maclean's biography are now quite well known though the elements of continuity and discontinuity in his life and thought as a socialist before and after 1917 remain much more obscure.

However, before 1914 he contributed weekly articles to Justice, organ of the Social Democratic Federation (SDF) - the first Marxist organisation in Britain. He was a British socialist and internationalist before the so-called 'war to end all war'. When he wrote about the radical uprising of 1820, he was simply not aware of any Scottish dimension. Indeed, he praised Baird, Hardie and Wilson - the 1820 martyrs - for struggling to get working-class Members elected to the House of Commons to represent the interests of the working class.

In the critical year of 1914 all Scottish socialists joined together to rubbish and ridicule the celebration of the 1314 Battle of Bannockburn. Maclean characterised the Battle of Bannockburn as a battle fought by serfs on behalf of a 'few barons'. Unlike John Carstairs Matheson, in some ways the leading Scottish Marxist thinker and writer before 1914, Maclean did support the agitation for Scottish Home Rule. He also objected to the fact that there was not a 'single Scottish representative' on the national committee of the (British) SDF.

The 'Great War' transformed Maclean. In prison in 1917, before his internationally famous 1918 trial in Edinburgh for his anti-militarist and anti-recruitment speeches, he began

James Young looks at the legacy of the Scottish socialist John Maclean(1879-1923): Past, Present and Future.

to think about James Connolly and the Irish question, his ancestors' experiences in and eviction from the Scottish Highlands and the need for Scottish Home Rule. Inspired by the 1917 Bolshevik revolution, he saw the deepening of the struggle for national independence as a way to accelerate the break-up of the British Empire.

Maclean was, of course, influenced by his sense of identity as a Scot as well as his intense Marxism and internationalism. Unknown to most historians, or to Maclean, there was a battle in the SDF between 1894 and 1901 about the Irish and the Scottish national questions. This fight involved the English imperialist socialist H. M. Hyndman on the one hand, and James Connolly, Jim Connell - author of *The Red Flag*, and William Gee, Nairn on the other.

When Connolly went to Dublin in 1896 and formed the Irish Socialist Republican Party, Hyndman raised merry hell because James Connolly did not form an Irish branch of the SDF. But Connolly was guilty of much greater heresy than that. Hyndman explained that "talk of winning complete separation from all connection with the British Empire sounds a bit out of place in a socialist manifesto".

Hyndman and company were also upset by Connell's denunciation of imperialism in the Empire and of the murder of countless Black people. The Independent Labour Party in Glasgow agreed to publish Connell's *Brothers At Last*; and, though he remained a member of the SDF, he asked the ILP to 'place on its programme National Independence for Ireland'. Then in 1901, when Maclean was an apprentice rank-and-file member of the SDF, William Gee told the annual conference of the SDF in London that the Scots would raise *The Red Flag* in Scotland before it was raised in England.

The Scottish socialists were more sympathetic to the Irish question than were their counterparts in the English socialist movement; and, if Maclean had known about the



disputes between Hyndman and Connolly, Connell and Gee, perhaps the history of socialism in Britain might have been very different.

More of an internationalist and anti-racist than ever before, in 1917 Maclean became known as a major international figure: he had been a jailbird, an advocate of socialism from below and a critical supporter of the Bolsheviks. The Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) was formed in 1920; but he refused to join it. And that was the rub: the origin of all the nonsense about his 'insanity'.

One reason for Maclean's refusal to join the CPGB was the Scottish national question; and in passing it should be noted that between 1919 and 1923 there was a heated debate in the early British communist movement about the Scottish question. But there were other reasons - the reasons of a Clydeside man of principle, a man who was anti-racist and anti-imperialist.

The leaders of the early CPGB were, in Maclean's eyes, guilty of a serious sin of omission, that is, of not opposing the First World War. None of them was sympathetic to James Connolly or to the Easter Rising in Dublin. And they were pro-imperialist. Indeed, at the Second Congress of the Third International, Tom Quelch told Lenin that they could not support Black struggles or anti-colonial revolts since the English

Maclean (cont)

workers would regard anything weakening the British Empire as 'treachery'.

The Legacy of John Maclean

One aspect of Maclean's legacy was the support for anti-racism, anti-imperialism and revolutionary socialism in the ILP in Scotland as distinct from its counterpart in England. The Scottish socialists were also more inclined to 'direct action' at the grassroots and to extra-Parliamentary politics. The latter tradition was set by Maclean when, in 1907, he asked unemployed workers to march across the floor of the Stock Exchange in Glasgow to highlight the problems induced by poverty and unemployment.

Moreover, after Maclean's death the CPGB became numerically stronger and ideologically more influential in Scotland than anywhere else in Britain. This pernicious Stalinist influence in the Scottish labour movement remains formidable - a cultural conservative bulwark shored up by New Labour's continuation of the Thatcherite revolution and disgusting talk about the need to return to 'the actually existing socialism'.

Our own times should have convinced socialists of the moral rotteness at the heart of contemporary capitalism. Unemployment; naked poverty; inadequate health care; the growing gap between the well-off and the unemployed and women and men who are paid dirt-cheap wages; racism and the revival of fascism: all these have combined to raise questions about capitalism. The propaganda of the New World Order communicates the 'common-sense' idea that free-market forces - i.e., global capitalism - will work. But for whom do they work, and for how much longer can capitalism survive?

In contrast to Maclean's time, the genuine democratic, class struggle Left is no longer in the ascendancy. Working people everywhere are continually told that we have reached 'the end of history' and that all visions of socialism have been buried beyond any possibility of resurrection. In

contrast to the past the Left is isolated, often defeatist; and socialists do not speak or write as they did in the 1930s about *Why You Should Be A Socialist* or *The Coming Struggle for Power*. And yet the arguments for international socialism have never been more compelling or more difficult to refute.

In the midst of this historians like Kenneth Morgan and Christopher Harvey rubbish Maclean and the real Scottish national question. So does the so-called 'Trotskyist' Bob Pitt. But in asserting that Maclean was 'insane' because he advocated Scottish national independence, refused to join the CPGB and formed the Scottish Workers' Republican Party, Pitt ignores the fact that even some of the Scottish prison doctors refused to certify Maclean as 'insane'. Moreover Pitt ignores the fact that the Scottish prisons were, according to Peter Petroff, the Russian Bolshevik, worse than those in Tsarist Russia.

What is missing from the discussion about Maclean's alleged mental instability is any international context. When the Spanish anarchist Francisco Ferrer, was put on trial in Spain in 1909, he was characterised as 'insane' because he was an anarchist. Despite Ferrer's world prominence as a rationalist, Freemason and educationalist, he was buried in a common ditch after being shot by a military firing squad.

In 1919 Rosa Luxemburg was declared 'insane', and buried in a pauper's grave in Berlin. When the Nazis came to power in 1933 bulldozers were sent in to level the graveyard. Similar things were done in the 1920s in a Russia without soviets or workers' councils. In the early 1920s, too, Sacco and Vanzetti, the American anarchists of Italian origin, were declared 'insane' by the American authorities, and Vanzetti was jailed in a mental hospital. Unfortunately, by not sketching in such an international dimension, Pitt and his friends are contributing to the existing mood of pessimism and defeatism in socialist ranks. This is the most serious question facing the Left in 1998; and it can only be solved in struggles in which a radical vision will be developed and sharpened.

What, then, is left of the Maclean legacy? In my pamphlet *John Maclean: A Reply to Bob Pitt*, there is a detailed account of Maclean's enduring influence on popular culture, including novels. Besides, without entering into the debate about 'heroes' and icons, we should ask ourselves why ruling classes treated Ferrer, Luxemburg, Maclean and Sacco and Vanzetti as they did and why the hacks today continue to rubbish their memory.

The real importance of Maclean for today is that he offered people a radical vision of the better world to come. By fostering a radicalism of the mouth, an undue emphasis on the importance of Parliamentary politics instead of extra-Parliamentary 'direct action' and the myth of progress, the Stalinists and their 'actually existing socialism' have helped to destroy Maclean's vision of authentic socialism from the bottom up.

There have been other times in world labour history when the socialist vision has departed from socialists' consciousness. Maclean admired and was close to the Wobblies or members of the Industrial Workers of the World. In his novel *From Here to Eternity* (1952), James Jones wrote "There has never been anything like them before or since. They called themselves materialist-economists but what they really were was a religion. They were workstiffs and bindlebums like you and me, but they were welded together by a vision we don't possess". Struggles for social justice and democratic control will develop during the next few years. The genuine Left's critical and crucial role is to expand solidarity and, above all, popularise its uncompromising vision of a radical egalitarian Scotland within a wider socialist world.

The Following books by James Young are available from Clydeside Press;

The Very Bastards of Creation - Scottish International radicalism 1707-1995

John Maclean

The World of CLR James

Published by Mainstream:

Women & Popular Struggles

SOLIDARITY THROUGH FOOTBALL

- learning to run with the Zapatistas

We're in the jungle", said Jock of the Easton Cowboys. And we were - 27 of us piled high with football gear, hammocks, insect repellent, & 2 weeks' provisions - latrine-hungry & fighting sober. We'd tumbled sleepily from our hired bus, at the edge of a moonlit path through the Lacandon Jungle in Chiapas, south-west Mexico. This was to be our home for the next couple of weeks: playing football & sharing some of the experiences of the heroic women, children & men who are building, through Zapatismo, a better world for indigenous people in this corner of the New World.

The Easton Cowboys, from the Bristol jungle, specialise in rustic locations, apart from The Plough in Easton. They organised the Alternative World Cup in Dorset in 1998: "a Festival of cider, nudity, cross-dressing & football" (it says in the programme). They aim to bring people together through sport & socialising (that's Bristol for drinking), to go beyond national boundaries, without isolating people by colour, sex or culture. That means it doesn't matter if you can't play football. So you can see why I had no qualms about tagging along with a bunch of perfect strangers - well, not quite perfect, as I discovered. Rob, Nigel & Ian were also there, from teams in Bradford & Leeds, representing hard northerners, & there were several brave fools who took on the job of organising the whole lot of us.

This was serious stuff. The Zapatistas are under constant threat from paramilitaries, the Mexican army & security forces. They have asked supporters to visit them through the army blockade which has been placed around their communities - two thirds of the Mexican army are stationed in Chiapas. Communities are under constant surveillance from air & land. Army & police raids take place regularly, aimed at provoking the Zapatistas to break their ceasefire & displacing supporters into the jungle & mountains. The presence of outsiders provides some check on the military, & helps break down the isolation the communities have been forced into. For our part, it was inspiring, to say the least, to be with people who are organising & winning.

Organising a series of football tournaments was a brilliant idea. Apart

from everyone having a great time, which makes a nice change if you're living in a war zone, we had a good reason for being there if picked up by the military, since everyone knows that politics & sport don't mix & that the English are bonkers anyway. The army would probably challenge us to a game, instead of beating us up (we hoped) & they'd never dream we were there for political reasons. Gulp!

The Mexican government has banned foreign tourists from entering the regions controlled by the Zapatistas. Their racist propaganda is that the indigenous people are too stupid to have thought of revolution themselves, so it must have been the influence of foreigners. Mind you, they've also expelled the International Red Cross, so they've got a strange idea of how revolutions are made. We had to do some ducking & diving to keep out of the way of the numerous army & immigration checkpoints. And we had to pretend to be loud, drunken tourists if we were stopped. The idea! This wouldn't have been hard, except the Zapatistas have banned alcohol & drugs. There we were, urban pissheads who hadn't spent more than half an hour of our adult lives without a drink in our fists. Still, I'm inclined to think some of us went a bit overboard with the tropical shirts & silly hats - yes, Wayne, I'm talking about you. We'd have probably got arrested anyway, for being in possession of offensive clothing, if they'd caught up with us. Which they didn't. Ha!

We were there, as I said, to show solidarity with the Zapatistas. On January 1st 1994, the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) peacefully occupied 7 municipal capitals in Chiapas. Mexico was flummoxed. Very few even knew of the EZLN's existence. The uprising set into motion a powerful & challenging political movement in Mexico which has inspired support throughout the world. It is a movement which turns many of the ideas of the traditional left upside down. It eschews the authority of the "party" & "leadership", in favour of participatory decision-making through discourse. It rejects dogma in favour of "improvisation" & learning as they go along. They don't want to take power by overthrowing the state. Blimey - must be reformists or something - I hear you

Leninists mutter.

The Zapatistas today control 1111 armed communities - we visited 4 of them - where warfare & politics are decided by the people in those communities - the EZLN is under their direction. Not bad for improvising reformists. Each community elects representatives to the Revolutionary Clandestine Committees - instantly recallable if they fail to carry out the community's mandate. The following extract from a letter from EZLN spokesperson Marcos in 1994 shows how one decision was made: *"Antonio, son of Antonio returned with the minutes of the agreement that said: 'Men, women & children met in the community school to look into their hearts to see whether or not it was time to initiate the war for liberty & they divided into three groups - of women, of children & of men - to discuss this, & then we came back together again in the school & the thinking of the majority was that war should begin. This agreement was confirmed by 12 men, 23 women & 8 children who have clear thinking, & those who could sign did so & those who could not, stamped their fingerprints.'"*

The uprising was timed to greet Mexico's signing of the North America Free Trade Agreement - the final stage in opening Mexico up to the global market, & the end of the line for the indigenous people of Chiapas - who reside in an area of potential wealth, through oils, minerals & bio-diversity - who will never own any of this wealth - & who have nowhere else to go. After 500 years the indigenous people of Chiapas were staking their claim - "Ya Basta!" - "It's enough". The peaceful occupation was met with 10 days of violent reprisals from army & air force. A cease-fire was declared on 10th January & the Zapatistas moved back into the jungle, where they occupied land, drove out the landowners & their private armies, set up collective farms, & said they would pay no more taxes, nor receive any government aid.

The government agreed to negotiate over indigenous rights, culture & freedom, but has so far failed to carry out even the minimum agreements that have been made, causing the Zapatistas to withdraw from negotiations in protest.

contd...

although they have held the cease-fire. The situation is currently stalemated: the Zapatistas continue their work of building new lives, new communities, new laws, based on collectivism & autonomy; the government carries out low-intensity warfare against them & provides covert support to various paramilitary groups which have sprung up. In 1997, right-wing paramilitaries murdered 45 people in the town of Acteal. After the funeral service, locals encountered lorries under army escort, leaving the village, piled high with the possessions of their murdered friends & relatives. The government has done nothing to bring the murderers to justice

The Mexican government pretends it wants to resolve the conflict & tells the outside world there is no real problem in Chiapas. Since our visit in May there have been military attacks on 6 Zapatista towns, with consequent displacement of inhabitants. Soon, the Zapatistas will be forced to fight back to defend their people.

The struggle continues.

Women have played & continue to play a leading role. These are the words of Major Ana Maria, opening one of the Zapatistas' Intercontinental Meetings:

"Behind us are the we that are you. Behind our balaclavas is the face of all the excluded women. Of all the forgotten indigenous peoples. Of all the persecuted homosexuals. Of all the despised youth. Of all the beaten migrants. Of all those imprisoned for their word & thought. Of all the humiliated workers. Of all those who have died from being forgotten. Of all the simple & ordinary men & women who do not count, who are not seen, who are not named, who have no tomorrows."

"We are all Zapatistas now."

**GLEN BURROWS,
BRIDGWATER**

BRIDGWATER OUT

90 Bridgwater postal workers, members of the Communication Workers' Union, including temporary workers, walked out for five & a half hours on 1st September, in protest over their manager's attempt to break an agreement. A successful return was negotiated. Members remain angry & morale is high. Dave Chapple & Eric Payne, local reps, are threatened with disciplinary action

WORKS COUNCIL CON

In May, westcountry shoemaking firm Clarks International trumpeted the establishment of a "ground-breaking workers' council" (Wells Journal 27th May - interesting slip by the sub-editor) as being the first in the area, with 19 delegates, including some from Portugal & Ireland, participating. Discussions with union representatives had been going on for some time to enable this agreement, said PR manager John Keery. Chief Executive Tim Parker added that Clarks were looking for a 50% increase in overseas sales. Presumably the two are connected.

A good thing, you might think, workers having some input into decision-making. Not before time, industrial democracy at last. Not quite.

The Clarks agreement is a local indicator of the ongoing implementation of the Social Chapter of the Maastricht Treaty that Labour signed up to in order to offer a show of democracy in the workplace, & to defuse any actions in that area by workers that might hinder the continuation of the exploitation process. So, by a simple rule of thumb, if management is happy with this agreement, it cannot be in the interests of the workforce. As a Europe-wide body the Works Council will be representing workers in Spain, Germany & Copenhagen. How often it will meet has not been said. Its irrelevance is already indisputable.

Works Councils (as opposed to workers' councils/assemblies) are not meant to usher in an era of industrial democracy. They are passive, consultative bodies that meet to debate issues arising from management proposals. Management prerogatives are not affected, so the bosses remain firmly in control. Workers' control or self-management it ain't. It's not even a step on the road. Labour, management, union bureaucrats & the press hope they can put it over as progressive. It is also hoped that Works Councils will eventually replace orthodox trades unions which can, on occasion, be bothersome to management, if not a real threat.

Trades unions are getting into the Works Council system because it offers bureaucrats a role in a system where their influence & membership continues to wane & they are reduced to being adjuncts to finance houses, offering credit cards & other capitalist goodies. There is no alternative for them, because a "trades" union is not a revolutionary union actively working towards an alternative system.

OUT OF ORDER

"Out of Order" is a collection of poems by Bristol people, covering 10 years of political activity in & around the city.

Robert Dyer, age 11, wrote the following poem about the closure of his school, Merrywood:

THE POLITICIANS

*The say stop the bombing,
They say give us peace,
They say no more wars,
They say no more dying,
They say they'll do this & they say they'll do that,
But they don't: for example
They say it's the law to go to school,
but how?
There's only one school left in Knowle & they're
Threatening to close it down.
They say there will be more jobs
But the dole queue gets longer,
They say they'll lower taxes
but they always get higher,
They say there is a minimum wage
But is £3.60 enough?
They say they'll do this & they say they'll do that,
They ask us not to vote them out
Is this what politics is all about?*

Skateboarders to Poll-Tax Scumbusters, they're all in there: anger, tears & a lotta laughs - a little history of protest by the likes of you & me. For a copy of *Out of Order* send £2 to GFF, 17 Belmont Road, Bristol BS56 5AW

Trades unions aim to win concessions by negotiation between two types of boss & not to threaten the political status quo. Genuine industrial democracy, integrated into a wider libertarian social movement, demands that workers control all aspects of the workplace. For industrial democracy to operate effectively, management hierarchy, by definition anti-democratic, needs to be removed from the workplace, with workers' assemblies making all policy decisions & delegates mandated from the assembly to perform specific, time-limited tasks. It has been done, it can be done.

"Out of the Frying Pan" is a pamphlet produced by Solidarity Federation, about the longer experience of French workers with Works Councils. Send £1.50 to: PO Box 29, SWPDO, Manchester M15 5HW

**SOUTH WEST SOLIDARITY
PO Box 741, Swindon SN1 3UG**

NATIONALISM - LIBERATION OR FASCISM ?

An area of debate which has the Left most confused is around questions of nationalism v. internationalism, ethnicity v. humanity, communalism v. civil society. Formerly, a consensus could be reached on the basis of support for oppressed peoples and/or those fighting Western imperialism. This response evolved during the period of anti-colonial liberation struggles post-WW2 &, initially at least, was made simpler by USSR sponsorship of "freedom fighters", if not the active involvement of a local Communist Party.

This strategy has not been an unmitigated success. For a start, Communist-backed regimes, including those for whom the Left in Europe & North America campaigned, either did not survive for long (Algeria, the former Belgian Congo,...) or turned out to be disastrous (Sukarno in Indonesia, Menghistu in Ethiopia,...). Others just got bogged down in the whole sorry tangle of Cold War politics & underdevelopment, failing to deliver what their populations demanded (Cuba, Angola, Viet Nam).

Unfortunately the process is not finished. Civil wars rage, not only within & across the nice straight lines of post-colonial Africa, but increasingly in once apparently stable 1st World "nation states".

Ireland is our most obvious example. However, the mix of religion & politics & the aim of nationalists in the North for union with the reactionary church-dominated state in the South, made Irish republicanism a poisoned chalice for English revolutionaries. The socialist credentials of Sinn Fein made very little difference. It appears that conservatives in Eire saw the dangers of absorbing this population more clearly. While adhering firmly to their claim on the six counties, Dublin's politicians were never in a hurry for the consummation of this dream.

The rest of the UK looks shaky, but the accommodation of Scottish & Welsh aspirations may have averted the kind of violent collapse we have seen elsewhere. Despite decades of guerilla warfare, much the same seems to be happening in Spain. France is under similar pressures, though concessions made to the cultural demands of Bretons

& Corsicans seem to be holding. Other regional stresses are not serious, so long as they don't coincide with economic problems. Yet some divisions in Europe are more critical. The linguistic split in Belgium rumbles on from crisis to crisis, with only fascists & criminals benefitting. The peaceful separation of the two biggest sections of Czechoslovakia may have averted a more serious conflict, but tensions remain. Then there's Yugoslavia.

The silence on the British Left, with a few honorable & dishonorable exceptions, following the break-up of Tito's semi-socialist paradise was, as they say, deafening. It didn't fit the pattern at all. The secession of the rich was a new concept. But the withdrawal of Slovenia from the federation (& the attempt of the Liga Norda in Italy to copy) was only a larger-scale phenomenon of something which has been happening within cities & regions in America & the UK. In the US this has been typified by "white flight" from the inner cities, taking their tax revenues with them, to well-guarded suburbs, "zoned" to keep out the blacks, Hispanics & poor. Thatcherites, of both the Tory & New Business parties, are still pursuing this course, despite the bullshit about tackling social exclusion.

This may appear a scenario that's easy to analyse, but examples keep arising which defy simple categories. The Quebecois, pressing for secession from the rest of Canada, use the rhetoric of national liberation & hoist their righteous indignation at the suppression of their language & culture by the dominant Anglophile society. But this is a right-wing movement with no regard for other minorities, which already threatens the struggle of Native Americans for land rights & freedom of national expression.

In the Los Angeles riots of 1992, black youth systematically destroyed Korean businesses in revenge for the shooting dead of a young black woman by a Korean shopkeeper. These Asian entrepreneurs might fall into the category of exploiters - they were seen as so by their attackers - but in their own eyes this was just racial jealousy. This situation had the hallmarks of anti-semitic pogroms in Europe. Relations between black & Jewish communities have been equally fraught, exacerbated by the fascist propaganda of Louis

Farrakhan's zombie jamboree, the Nation of Islam. Similar histories lie behind the genocide of ethnic Chinese in Indonesia, of Tutsis in Rwanda, Azeris by Armenians & Armenians by all their neighbours, of ethnic Asians in Guyana, of indigenous peoples by poor blacks & mestizos throughout the Amazon region, & so on.

Not long ago I read an essay by a German writer who had been a well-known revolutionary in the 1960s, describing the general descent of humanity into a state of civil war at every level of society. If this kind of pessimism prevails, we can all pack up & go home - if we can find one. It is certainly widespread. Try holding a rational discussion about Ireland with English working people or about Algeria with French proletarians. But it is simply not enough to dismiss all national & communal struggles as reactionary. National liberation parties contain a whole spectrum of political tendencies from conservative to revolutionary socialist. These groupings fragment rapidly when independence is achieved. But where the dominant & subject peoples live cheek by jowl, such separation is not practicable. Nor is any assignment of degrees of oppression always possible.

Under Stalin, national groups were deported to Siberia & Russians sent to live in the depopulated areas. With the fall of the USSR, resultant ethnic tensions are becoming intolerable. Baltic republics, whose national identities were deliberately undermined by this dilution through immigration, stand accused of oppressing now-impoorished migrants in their turn (although a recent BBC Radio feature show-cased one small scheme for helping Russian youths learn Estonian & integrating them into the national culture).

The same process is underway in Tibet, in Kalimantan/Borneo & fuck-knows where else. Getting such translocated communities to respect & live in peace with their involuntary neighbours is not promising, as Palestine/Israel shows. Nor is mass relocation a good solution. The flight of a million "colons" from Algeria after independence is why fascism is now so strong in south-eastern France. Ethnic cleansing won't stop with Kosovo - there are plenty



contd....

of other parts of Europe & the rest of the world where such a course would be enthusiastically pursued if seen as acceptable & successful.

Clearly we can no longer afford to have no opinion, nor to employ simplistic class analyses. These situations are so burdened with layers of confusion that even raising the subject of solidarity between workers is the signal for a punch-up.

I know that the theory of "stages" may be heretical, or unfashionable, but some problems of "uneven development" (of class consciousness) are ignored at our peril. Injustice, oppression & atrocities - however remote in the past - have a habit of being remembered & souring relations in the present. Witness the bewilderment of scientists at being prevented from studying the remains & artefacts of peoples who claim these were stolen from them. Western technocrats are not easily persuaded that theirs is the reactionary position. Nor will those whose histories have been looted & erased, listen to arguments that they should wait until after the Revolution.

We should not forget the role of agents provocateurs, whether committed bigots & fascists or hired instruments of power elites, & continue to fight them. But these arsonists can only operate where there is combustible material. As long as any large group of people have unresolved grievances it will never be possible to secure peace - conflict cannot be suppressed for ever. So, if we are to try & prevent these cycles of hate which tear the human race apart & cause so much suffering, we need a programme which does not depend on nationalists becoming internationalists with no intervening steps.

The following principles might be useful:

- 1 : **the right to use one's native language & to cultural self-determination.**
- 2 : **the right to secession.**
- 3 : **the rights of minorities & dissenters within these resurgent societies.**
- 4 : **the rights of all to living space & to occupation where they choose, so long as these don't infringe on those of the local inhabitants or,**

where this is not possible, to fair redistribution.

5 : **the allocation & control of essential needs - eg. water, land & other natural resources.**

6 : **the right of free movement.**

7...? **I'm sure others could be thought of.**

None of the aforementioned should give anyone the right to over-exploit, monopolise or pollute the environment we all depend on.

None of these will be easy to establish. Many on the Left will see them as selling out to a liberal agenda. But, if the last 80 years has taught us anything, it's that trying to impose a social revolution on those who don't feel ready for it is a recipe for mayhem & fascism on all sides.

Enough already. We have only one planet to live on & we're doing a good job of turning it into a toxic waste dump as it is, without cutting each others' throats to be the first to trash it.

R.A. Exeter

Presenting Pilger - publicist of horrors

**"War is my subject,
the pity of war.."
Wilfred Owen**

"Blair is committed to the largest military budget in Europe and to an aggressive, expanded world role for NATO as the military wing of an essentially Anglo-American alliance, which has a proven record of violently intervening in other people's affairs. NATO's expansion into Eastern Europe has generated an arms race that will benefit the American and British weapons industries, which between them dominate the world market."

So wrote John Pilger in the *New Statesman* on October 16th 1998, describing this development as "Atlanticism". This example of Pilger's penetrating and disturbing analysis is typical. Naturally he has been attacked, mainly from the Right, because he demolishes with incisive prose such sacred cows as a free market that spawns the potentially ruthless multinationals, the press barons that degrade the professional journalist, and (anyway by implication) the British class system with its inherited nobility headed by the monarchy and including dubious dukedoms deriving from the extramarital activities of the unimpeached Charles II.

Pilger's subject matter ranges over the atrocities of Indonesia's Suharto, the Cambodian Pol Pot massacres, distressing developments in Mandela's South Africa, contradictory elements in Robin Cook's "ethical" foreign policy, and so on.

In the Spring of 1998 "while Cook was delivering his first 'audit on human rights'", writes Pilger (NS 15 May 98) "a clutch of his foreign office officials were throwing their full support behind the Indonesian dictator at the UN Commission on Human Rights in Geneva. As in the past, the British Government manoeuvred to prevent a strong resolution on illegally-invaded East Timor from being adopted... This went against all the commitments Cook had given the East Timorese leader, Jose Ramos-Morta, the Nobel Peace Prize winner."

Meanwhile, as Pilger points out, Britain tops the world in the supply of weapons to Indonesia. Suharto may have gone, but the existing regime

Stan Hayward , NUJ life member from Nailsea nr. Bristol, writes on the remarkable work of John Pilger.

looks like another nightmare. The regime is unlikely to redeem the vast credits Britain has provided, making them, in effect, a huge subsidy to our arms industry.

Pilger was highly critical of his native Australia's inaction when Suharto invaded East Timor in 1975, contrary to UN Resolutions. Richard Woolcott, Jakarta's Australian Ambassador advised his government to take no counter-action. Why? Not on idealistic pacifist grounds; rather: Australia could exploit East Timor's considerable oil and gas resources. Pilger's comment (NS 29 May 98): "The bitter irony for the people of illegally-occupied East Timor was that 60,000 of them died defending Australia from the Japanese in 1942 - after which the Australian air force dropped leaflets which said: "We will never Forget you"! Subsequently, the Labour Government of Bob Hawke and later Keating's administration did not substantially depart from the heartless policies instigated by the infamous Woolcott.

Pilger is incensed by the manner whereby the "civilised" West so often betrays oppressed people worldwide. In the *Observer* of 19th April 1998 he reports that, since April 1975, under the Cambodian Khmer Rouge led by Pol Pot, "more than 1.5 million died - although recent discoveries of mass graves suggest that this figure may be a gross under-estimate."

Almost 20 years later the journalist "watched Khmer Rouge officials welcomed back to Phnom Penh by UN officials, who went to astonishing lengths not to offend them and Pol Pot's personal henchman, Khieu Samphan." Alongside this genocidal criminal was Australian UN Commander Lt General John Sanderson. "I asked the General how it felt to be in such company. He replied he was 'neutral'."

In 1970 Pilger was banned from South Africa for "embarrassing the state" as he puts it in a lengthy *Guardian* article (11 April 98). This was during the rabid apartheid era, and happened in the context of the publication of *The Discarded People* by Cosmos Desmond which "disclosed

that more than 100,000 'removed' children starved to death in 1967 alone". Even now, since Mandela, murders abound in South Africa; hundreds of thousands are without work, homes and nearby water. Yet, potentially, the country is rich.

Today, reportedly, this Commonwealth country wants to spend up to £4 billion on armaments. Who do they perceive as their enemy? Almost certainly Mandela is the most respected politician in the world. He is now an old man, due for retirement. Yet he cannot escape this question - is his African National Congress Government failing the people? Pilger concludes his *Guardian* article with this extract from a Mandela speech of 5 years ago: "How many times has the liberation movement worked together with the people and then at the moment of victory betrayed them? There are many examples of that in the world. If people relax their vigilance, they will find their sacrifices have been in vain. If the ANC does not deliver the goods the people must do what they have done to the apartheid regime.."

An *Observer* report of 27.12.98 says that Khieu Samphan and other Khmer Rouge leaders have now been officially welcomed by Cambodian Prime Minister, Hun Sen, to whom they have now surrendered - wishing, as they say, to "become ordinary citizens" and to take part in "consolidating peace and stability". Hun Sen has evidently no intention of bringing these criminals to trial. "We should talk of reconciliation", said the Prime Minister. Thus, atrocity and murder on a huge scale have been glossed over - a not uncommon practice, as history shows.

Footnote: John Pilger, who claims to have no political affiliation, was born in Sydney, New South Wales, in 1939. He has twice won the British Journalist of the Year Award and is a winner of the UNESCO Peace Prize. His film *Year Zero* (1979) exposed the atrocities of Pol Pot to the world. His later films include one on Vietnam and *Inside Burma: Land of Fear* (1996). His book *The Secret Country* (1989) exposes the desperate plight of the Aboriginal people in Australia.

March on Buckingham Palace

It may be a very English thing to do - to talk about the weather, but on this particular day last year it was an unavoidable topic. It was tipping it down. And as every good demonstrator knows, weather is an important factor on any demonstration. Nonetheless 800 anti-royalists gathered in Hyde Park to set off on the first ever march on Buckingham Palace. A healthy contingent from Bristol linked up with others from London and various other parts of the country. Drenched, but up for it. Many in "royal" costumes; many more in anarcho regulation black. Masked up, bearing flags and placards: "Fuck the Monarchy", "Elizabeast 666", "Class War" etc. Pride of place being a full-scale, solid wood guillotine ready to be test driven on Charles or any other available royal parasite.

After a lively rally the demo set off. Punchy, noisy, proud and inspiring. A sight to behold. Marching through the streets of London, making the message and intention clear to the many onlookers.

By the time the procession reached Whitehall the police were out in force, blocking the way to the Palace. One bunch of leering officers greeting individual protestors with the words "Any time" - making it clearly understood that they were more than ready and willing to fight.

Obviously, to the vast amount of police, the issue of the monarchy is personal. They wear the Queen's badge on their helmets. Their loyalty to royalty goes unquestioned and any demonstration against the monarchy is an affront to the police and all they stand for. Their position was extremely simple - they hated what the demonstration was about and everyone on it. So - in Whitehall the police blocked the way, preventing the protestors getting any closer to the Palace. Then from behind, the police blocked the way back out, effectively trapping the demo at both ends. The

John Holmes, Bristol, writes about the Movement Against the Monarchy march on Buckingham Palace

demonstration wasn't being allowed to go any further but wasn't being allowed to turn back either - causing the tension to escalate dramatically.

Furious speeches were made from the steps of a Whitehall building whilst police continued to bolster their blockade. Tension rose. A flare was lit, causing a large pall of smoke

skirmishes with the police began.

From there the demonstration stumbled to an end, with some crowds heading up to Piccadilly Circus and others to Charring Cross, leaving the police to run around like headless chickens in a wake of smashed McDonalds and National Lottery office windows and startled

tourists. Still pouring down with rain and still with the monarchy in place.

All in all the demo was an extremely positive one. A section of the anarcho-left had been mobilised to deliver a simple message. That message had been put forward and a good laugh had into the bargain. People had been inspired to get themselves out onto the streets to voice their objection to the royal farce and voice it loudly.

"Irrelevant" sneered the cynics, the burn-outs, the passive observers and the old guard of the "official" left. An echo of that same response to many of the other campaigns of recent years. From the CJA, to ecology and the Reclaim the Streets programme.

All of them to be later hijacked (or attempted hi-jack) and applauded by those same cynics and aspiring politicians once the issues had been pushed onto the agenda.

Judging by the large amount of young people on the demo and the passion generated, the "irrelevancy" of the monarchy isn't quite the view held by everyone. This struggle will continue, the guillotine has dried off and its blade sharpened ...

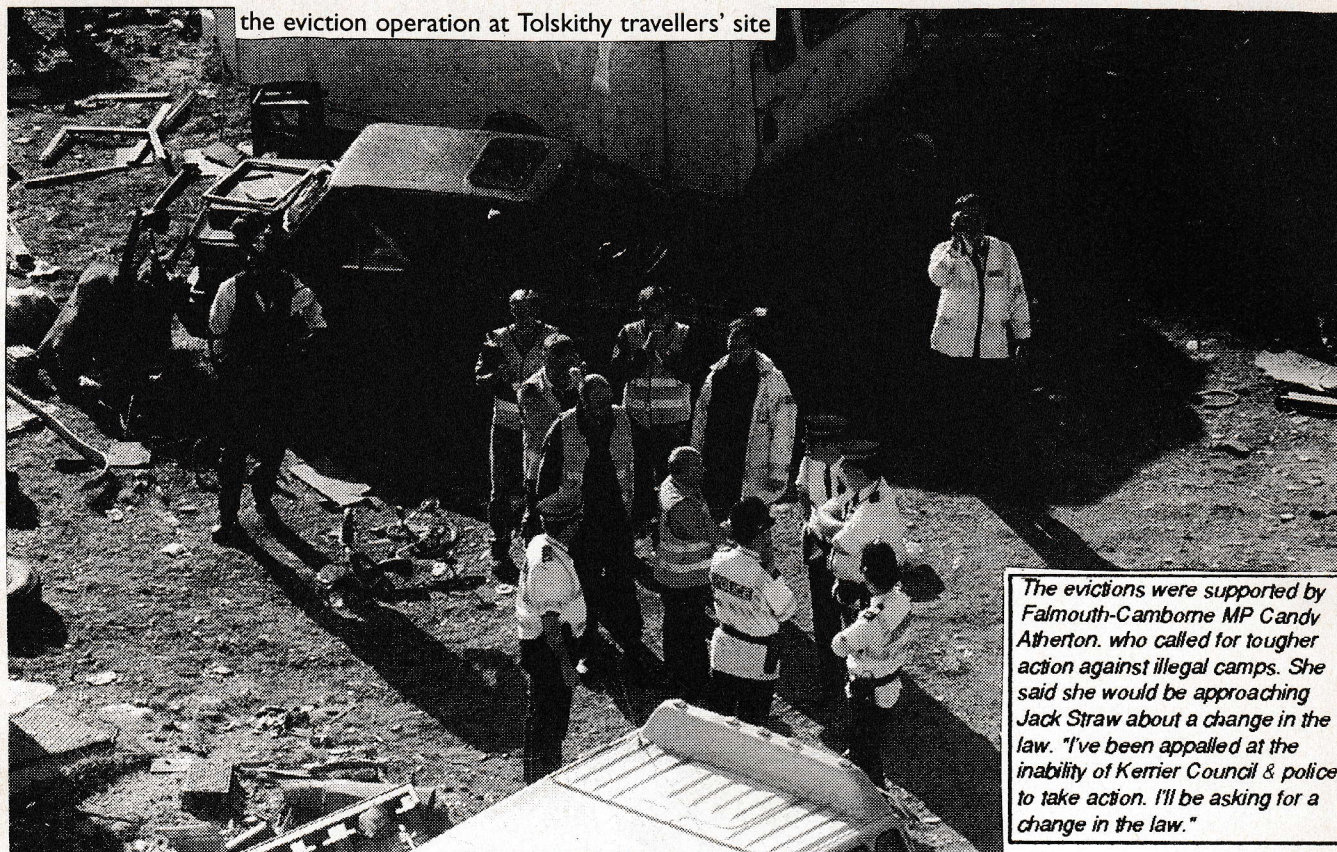
For details of other demos and information contact:
Movement Against the Monarchy,
PO Box 14672, London E9 5UQ
Email: moveagainstmon@hotmail.com



Showing how it should be done - the storming of the winter palace

to hang over the area. A missile was thrown at a window. A loudspeaker, broken due to being soaked by rain was ceremoniously lobbed at the police line. Another window smashed. Seeing that the tactic of trapping the demonstration was causing anger to grow in the crowd, the police opened up a space at the back for people to exit. Everyone started slowly to disperse, taking the opportunity to get out of the trap. By then resentment was high and as everyone started making their way back to Trafalgar Square windows were smashed and running

JACK STRAW EVICTS CORNISH TRAVELLERS



The evictions were supported by Falmouth-Camborne MP Candy Atherton, who called for tougher action against illegal camps. She said she would be approaching Jack Straw about a change in the law. "I've been appalled at the inability of Kerrier Council & police to take action. I'll be asking for a change in the law."

Cheltenham Hunt Ball

EXCUSE ME - IS THIS ANYTHING TO DO WITH THE CLASS WAR?

Hunt Ball - Cheltenham's annual opportunity for a confrontation with the land-owning class

December 18th 1998 - four police vans at the back of the Town Hall already! Round at the front the inevitable metal barriers & tied between the stone pillars of the entrance three canvas sheets flapping in the wind - protection for Hunt Ball guests in the event of egg-hurling.... paupers' tennis is traditional.

Twelve police officers in yellow jackets & luminous strips are loitering. We cross over to the pavement facing the hall. Four step our way: "Under Section 16 of the Criminal Justice Act we are going to search you to be sure you are not carrying anything which could cause a disturbance."

"Feel free", says Matt. "Feel free", I agree as a female cop runs her hands over me. "Empty your pockets please." I show my keys. She's disappointed.

Elaine, a work-mate of Matt's, & leading activist of the Cotswold Hunt

Cheltenham's annual opportunity for a confrontation with the land-owning class. Janet Thomas writes...

Saboteurs arrives wearing a full-length furry fox get up, with scarlet hunting jacket no less. Stunning! Her taller more slender companion is foxed out too. "Embarrassing attendance" she says. Police call them over: "Off with your heads." Foxes bark back. "Or we'll take you away in the vans."

"There's no law against wearing a fox head," snarls Elaine. "You're wearing clothing likely to cause offence", shouts one of the policemen. His round specs make him look intellectual (You don't often see a policeman with bad eyes) The foxes resist again. Bespectacled cop means business. "Take them off or I'll arrest you." As they unmask, police photographers come over. Click-flash-click-flash.

Farther along the pavement a dozen protestors arrive. There's a commotion - immediately. We canter over. "They searched my mentally handicapped daughter. There was no need for that, they could see she's

handicapped," a woman screeches.

Five police surround one man. He's bent over double, two fingers pressed into the back of his neck. "They're hurting me," he bellows. "Leave him alone," everyone yells.

More people arrive. A woman begins chanting through a megaphone: "Scum, scum, your time has come." A short & much louder woman is goading the police. No need for a megaphone in her case, she's got a bell on every tooth. "Hell", says Elaine, eyes remarkably shiny after minor confrontation with the cops, "it's that psycho-bitch sister of mine."

"Aren't you going to say hello then?" says Matt.

"I hate her", says Elaine. "That psycho-maniac stole £10,000 of hunt sab funds."

"You could be friendly, just for the protest."

"NO! I'm telling you, she's a bloody psycho." Matt & I are instantly fascinated by demonic

Cheltenham Hunt Ball

(Continued from page 10)

sister's reputation & edge her way. She's kitted out as a Breughel-style peasant. "You filthy dog-torturing scum", she growls. (She's got a talent for invective, even if she is a bit dodgy). Two younger men escort her, their faces glowing handsomely from under their Breughel-sque hoods. Psycho-sister, not so glowing & handsome herself, nevertheless has their full attention. They trail her like keen admirers as she side steps along the barriers in what could easily be described as a Gloucestershire folk dance.

Reporters from our local paper pull out their note pads. Boring chat up line or what: "Have you been here before?" "How many do you think will be coming?" "Are you expecting any trouble?" They seek out a tall, slim, pretty-faced fox. "What's your name?" "Renato Smythe." They write this down. "How do you spell Renato?" She poses for their photo - headdress down. "I could get arrested for this," says Renato.

A low-slung executive coach pulls up before the hall. Each seat furnished with table & fringed (rosily glowing) lampshade. Tatler-type pairs alight. But their coach is instantly upstaged by a stretch limousine parking behind it. (Now that's what I call luxury travel). The sight of a white limo with darkened windows is more than Psycho Sister can tolerate. Blood boiling at the ostentation: "SCUM SCUM SCUM - You bloodthirsty murdering inbreds, you dirty, filthy bollockses..."

Senior policeman blows whistle long & hard. Crosses over, pulls out megaphone, addresses us in authoritarian tones. "If anyone uses the word scum again, they will be arrested." (We all know who he means). Elaine retorts with hunting horn: "TO TOO TOO TOO TO TOOO!" Maybe blood's thicker than water after all. The mellow notes trail through the night incongruously.

Ashley arrives & scouts about for a smoker. "Can I have a roll up?" He has a black dustbin bag scrunched in his fist. He plucks a piece of mistletoe from it & dangles it over my head. "This is fresh", he says. "I climbed the tree today." Ashley's 22 & has a job getting a job. Christmas

money-making scheme - mistletoe gathering.

45 protestors present by now. Numbers well down on last year at this, Cheltenham's only regular protest since the final union ban demonstration.

Dull interlude. Interrogate senior couple standing quietly at the back. "Excuse me, would you say this has anything to do with the class war?" "Not at all, it's just about animal welfare." They point proudly at the animal protection badges on their lapels. "Were you searched as well?" Find myself eyeing their top quality weather proofs. "Everyone was. They're only doing their job", says husband. "Are you involved in any other actions - tree protests or anything?" "We live environmentally", says his wife. "Well, we grow all our own vegetables." I'm not certain where to take this conversation. "You can only do so much", she adds piously. "And do you go out sabbing?" "No, we're too old. It can be dangerous. We campaign." I ask him about the war in Iraq. "Maiming & killing", he says, "it's all the same thing. We're against that too." "Barry Horne's hunger strike?" "He's a courageous man."

"ARM activists who are threatening to kill people?"

"That was only a threat, in my view. 3 animal rights activists have been killed so far, but no deaths on the other side. The papers never mention that."

Our talk's interrupted by another scuffle. We all stare as a woman is dragged by her tiptoes, a cop on each arm, face almost grazing the pavement. She's pushed against a van. "They'll have the toes out of her shoes," says Matt.

More tuxedos & ball gowns arrive. More screeching: "Inbreds! Your father's your uncle...your mother's your aunt." "This isn't just about the fox, it's class conflict, isn't it?" I say to the 30-something bloke on my right. "No, no. We're the upper class. THAT lot are the real lower class. Just look what they're doing to animals." (Another dead end - I'm talking economics - he's talking moral hierarchies). "See." He points in the direction of a female ball goer wearing a glitzy mini-dress & silver

sandals. I miss his meaning.

Female megaphone ranter goes ballistic: "You slut, you'll sleep with anyone after a few drinks you dirty whore, you murdering tart." "Sexism, Matt." "There's no politics. It's just that they haven't got a politics."

Meanwhile Psycho Sister's hollering is getting entertaining. Bad treasurer she may be, but she's got a gift for stand-up comedy. Mingling policeman thinks so too. He stifles a snigger with a pretend cough. The atmosphere's warming. It's beginning to feel like a proper party even if it's not a political one & even if it is on the pavement. Last year a woman was hawking organic flapjacks. No free market anarchy this time I notice. Shame! Some refreshments would make it go with a swing. There's the entrance to a bar at the far end of the barricaded pavement. Pubbers are stopped & searched too. Their eyes meet ours in solidarity. Censorship gives rise to another "s" word. "You bunch of murdering SNOTS you - you scavenging verminous cretins." (Ban the SCUM word, & it's replaced by the more class-conscious SNOT. Hopeful!)

We hover for another half an hour. It's freezing. Too damp to be hanging about. I want to get home. But.

Elaine's got her back to us. Fox head, in accordance with the law, now poised at the back of her head - nose right up in the air. I tap her shoulder. (One more try)... "Excuse me Elaine."

She turns. "Do you think this is just about the fox or is it about class as well?" "This is just about the fox" she snaps. "About cruelty to animals. Anyway, it's not only upper class people who go hunting."

"You'd need a fine stash of spare cash for a horse & stabling though - & the riding gear could set you back a wad. Sure, a posh accent's optional but it'd help to be stinking rich..." I could have said. But on. She's yelling at another sumptuously dressed twosome trotting into view. "You stuck-up, toffee-nosed murdering savages. You..."

stinking...blood...spilling...inbreds...I NBREDS.....INBREDSSSS...etc.

'I Know How, but I Don't Know Why': George Orwell's Conception of Totalitarianism - Paul Flowers (1999, Coventry, New Interventions), reviewed by Geoff Barr

We all know about Orwell. He had a crystal ball. Anybody called Blair who changes his name has to be worth reviewing.

We know that after his heroic struggles in the Spanish Civil War he receded into British patriotism and then lost the plot completely. He turned to anti-communism and became a cold warrior. Thus the rebel of the inter-war years was drawn into the establishment. At the end he even betrayed socialists to the secret services. Admire his literary style if you like, but mourn the lost socialist. His shift to becoming a cold warrior went along with his most commercially successful time as a writer.

This pamphlet is aimed against the ideas stated above. Paul Flowers opens up with a bold statement, 'George Orwell was a radical socialist until he died.'

Orwell came close to the left in Spain. *Homage to Catalonia* came out of his experiences. Here he vividly exposed the way that Stalinism throttled the revolution.

Flowers argues that there were problems with Orwell's socialism. He suggests that Orwell had constructed a web of ideas, which meant that he could not really conceive of a successful socialist movement. Socialism was, for him, essentially ethical. That is to say it was based on moral principles and not some theory. Who will advance the socialist ethics? The working class would not. Mostly they are interested in step by step improvements in their standard of life. As soon as workers began to educate themselves they were corrupted by their rise through the Labour Party or trade union bureaucracies. Maybe the middle classes are more use. No chance. They looked down their noses at the great unwashed, even though many of them claimed to be the workers' friends.

Totalitarianism

The Soviet Union shared with Nazi Germany a totalitarian regime. Orwell was not alone in fearing that totalitarianism and not socialism was

totalitarianism could provide a kind of collectivism, in a society not run on the basis of profit. It would, however, give power to a small group of rulers and those around them.

Note that totalitarianism is not simply dictatorship. It attempts to control every corner of life, leaving no area of freedom. This is a peculiarly twentieth century phenomenon. The means of knowledge and the instruments of control were not available before our century. Nor was there a need. You only need to control the masses when the masses are a serious social force. Only in this century have rulers needed techniques of mass deception and control.

1984 was a general attack on totalitarianism. Orwell used experiences and knowledge gained from a variety of sources. He learnt a lot about the absurd competition to always excel from his prep school. He knew censorship from the inside from his work in the BBC during the war.

However, Russia clearly played its part. The figure of hate in Oceania was Emanuel Goldstein. Central was Goldstein's *Book*. Was *'The Book'* based on Trotsky's *Revolution Betrayed*? Well, the obviously Jewish name of the author and his appearance suggest it was. So does the way that Goldstein was treated by Big Brother - the way that Stalin treated Trotsky. He was an almost mythical figure of dread and anger. The ultimate figure of evil. In 1984 Big Brother, himself, is described as '...black-haired, black moustachioed, full of power and mysterious calm...' (p. 18) This is close enough to the general image of Stalin that readers would not have trouble thinking who was being satirised. TV endlessly churned out meaningless figures about pig-iron, production, etc. showing the country as a land of wealth. The contrast between the figures and the dire poverty of real life was something that everybody knew of the Soviet Union. However, Flowers argues that *The Book* was not Trotsky's book at all. A reading of the section of 1984 in which *The Book* is quoted shows that Flowers is right. It bears no relation to



George Orwell a radical socialist until he died
The Revolution Betrayed.

Orwell's Real Ideas

1984 reads as a darkly pessimistic work. However, alongside 1984 Orwell was writing non-fiction. Flowers quotes much of it to show that Orwell was more optimistic in fact than in fiction.

But why did Orwell support the British state and its American senior partner?

First, he seems to have turned to support for the Allies in the war as he felt that Britain could only defeat Hitler if Britain itself underwent a social revolution. Thus Flowers describes his position as one of revolutionary defencism (p.10)

On page 30 Flowers points out that after the war, Orwell was concerned that Attlee's post-war Labour government was refusing to take on the power of capital. He also notes that Orwell echoed Trotsky's call for a Socialist United States of Europe (maybe this demand needs some dusting down).

But why then has Orwell been seen as a raging anti-Communist, an advocate of capitalism across the globe? Partly, it was his own fault. He willingly backed the lesser evil, ending up supporting the USA against the USSR. He was happy to hand over names of 'Communists' to the state. His political evolution seemed to be shifting rightwards.

Most readers of *Red South West* would find the action of handing over such a list unimaginable. We clearly differ from Orwell on the role of the

imagined that working against Stalinism with the British government was just fine. Flowers gives him the benefit of the doubt. He argues that sickness and inadequate understanding explain although they do not excuse Orwell.

Should I buy this work?

This is an interesting pamphlet. It shows the difficulties and dilemmas of socialists after World War 2. New problems gave rise to new patterns of thinking and new allegiances. That was the rise of the cold war. At the end of it socialists are in a crisis which is at least as deep and probably deeper.

The world today, 15 years after 1984 (that is 50 years since the book was written) leaves us wondering about Orwell. He was a man of his times. Many of his concerns are not our worries. Fortunately, the predictions of 1984 have not come about. The horrors of newspeak have not happened. Indeed, we enjoy a world that has opened up rather than closed down language. We live in a society of mass foreign travel where Orwell thought that we would become more insular. Not only can we express a range of opinions; the internet is making it more difficult than ever for Big Brother to control us. The two-way TV, reporting us to the government is not all pervading.

And yet for most visitors to foreign parts, the experience is pretty limited. Genuine knowledge of life abroad continues to elude the British. While language widens, The Sun still thrives using its moronic minimal language. Our free expression is more monitored than ever. Governments are battling daily to control the internet. Town centres, shops, etc. are full of cameras keeping an eye on us.

Winning the Cold War may yet prove to be a disaster for the West. But was the state of perpetual but limited warfare necessary to control us at home? What are wars in Iraq and the Balkans about? Are they based on the need to demonise an external enemy to maintain solidarity at home? Are they opportunities to sell arms around the world?

We must thank Paul Flowers for opening up some interesting issues.

Cost £2 from: *New Interventions*, PO Box 485, Coventry, CV5 6ZP

Bus drivers vote to take strike action

NORTH Devon bus drivers voted overwhelmingly in favour of strike action over a pay claim.

A total of 84 employees of First Red Bus voted for action, and 25 were against.

The result will now be placed before the Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers union national executive committee, which will decide on what days the 24-hour stoppages will be called.

But before then leaders meet management again on September 1, when undisclosed proposals discussed before being put to members at a mass meeting the same day.

The bus drivers, engineers and some office staff are mostly based in Barnstaple, with others working in Exeter and Tiverton.

Officials have been trying to negotiate a pay deal since February, but drivers of 30-seat buses and double deckers have found their demands for a 16% increase to £5 an hour have not been met.

The RMT union said drivers now earned £4.30 an hour for driving 30-seat vehicles and £4.69 for driving a double decker bus. Parent company First Western National – part of First Group – bought Red Bus, along with a number of other bus and coach firms in the Westcountry, for £10.6 million in April.

It has already offered a 3% rise, equivalent to £4.43 or £4.83 a hour, which was turned down. As a result ballot papers were

put out to RMT members on July 21 and closed on August 4.

RMT division organiser Phil Bialyk said that if an agreement was still not reached on September 1, the strike would probably take place over the following week. That meeting was the last chance to avert strike action.

“A number of proposals have been put by both sides,” he said. “Nothing firm has been detailed, but we are obviously hopeful that we can come to an agreement and that is what we will work towards.”

A spokeswoman for First Red Bus said yesterday the company was still in negotiations.

“We are hoping we will come to an agreement before it actually comes to strike action,” she said.

Top Westcountry firm transfers work to Eastern Europe

80 engineering jobs are to go

ONE of the Westcountry's leading manufacturers announced plans to axe 80 jobs and refused to rule out the possibility of further redundancies in the future.

Engineering company Invensys Climate Control, formerly known as the Siebe Group, confirmed it would make redundancies at its factories in Plymouth and Bodmin.

The company, which employs more than 2,000 employees at sites throughout Devon and Cornwall, said the redundancies were the result of a downturn in global markets and its decision to transfer work to its operation in Eastern Europe.

News of the redundancies comes after months of rumour and speculation surrounding the company, which announced in April it was carrying out a strategic review of its business portfolio.

More than 800 staff are employed at the two plants, which make temperature control units for refrigerators.

Invensys managers confirmed around 70 jobs will go at the Plymouth factory, with a further 10 going at Bodmin.

Discussions have been held with employee representatives at both sites and the redundancies will be made with almost immediate effect.

The job losses come as Invensys, which employs 120,000 staff worldwide, carries out a series of major cost-cutting measures after recording a sharp downturn in global profits.

The group, created in February by the merger of BTR and Siebe, announced pre-tax profits of £295 million for the year to March, a massive fall on the £1.35 billion reported for the previous year.

Norman Holmes, human resource manager at Invensys, said the redundancies were a regrettable but necessary course of action.

Sales of dishwashers and fridges,

for which the company make components, were globally depressed, he said.

“The reality of the situation is that sales in those markets are down and the company has had to cut costs,” said Mr Holmes, who admitted that yesterday's job cuts may not be the last.

“We cannot state categorically that these losses are the end of the matter,” he said.

“The company will be looking to consolidate and stabilise its markets for the rest of the year, but it will continue to monitor the situation.”

Operations would be transferred to a plant in the Czech Republic.

However, Invensys had no plans to shut either the Plymouth or Bodmin sites, said Mr Holmes.

“The company has a long association with the Westcountry,” he said. “The Plymouth factory has been open since 1961 and has an excellent workforce and facilities.”

Henry Fair

FIFTY YEARS after the end of the Second World War, a retired education officer was surprised, and in retrospect rather flattered, to learn that he had been featured in a Gestapo hit-list. A Vasser professor researching in Potsdam had unearthed a file headed "Emigranten in der CSR" in which he found the name of Henry Fair. The reason for Fair's inclusion was probably the part he played in organising the escape of 1,000 Czechoslovak children from the German occupation.

Fair was for 72 years a member of the Woodcraft Folk, a progressive educational movement for children and young people founded in south London in 1925, and was its first National Organiser. He joined the original group in 1926, aged 19, attracted by a philosophy based on democracy, co-operation and human rights, combined with a programme of outdoor activities, particularly camping and hiking. He adopted the folk name of "Koodoo" (after a South African antelope).

The emerging movement sought to avoid the military-style framework of organisations such as the Boy Scouts and Girl Guides, and was from inception for both sexes. Within a couple of years new groups were springing up in London, Bournemouth, Bristol, Bath and Leicester, as far as Sheffield and into Scotland.

When Fair gave up his job as a colour matcher in a paint factory to take on the post of National Organiser in 1936, his financial prospects appeared somewhat precarious. For the first seven years, his salary was dependent on a successful Christmas draw.

In 1937, the unsettled time of the Spanish Civil War and the Jarrow March, Fair organised the Woodcraft Folk's first major international camp in Brighton. The Fascist Blackshirts were then at their strongest point and the Woodcraft Folk had paraded their opposition to them at every available opportunity. Guards and lookout posts were set up at the camp to protect it from Blackshirt raids and journalists wanting to interview Henry Fair poured into the area. Questions were even

asked in Parliament requesting that the government look into the activities of the person who called himself Koodoo.

Two thousand children attended the camp, including 800 Czechs, some of whom became orphans a year later when the Germans invaded their country. It was to the Woodcraft Folk that the Czechs wrote, pleading for a lifeline. As a direct result, 1,000 children were transported to England, and 40 of them were taken in by Henry Fair and other Folk members.

He said later that the greatest reward of his life was when a large number of those children, by then in their sixties and seventies, gathered at a reunion in Prague in 1991 to visit the extermination camp where their parents had perished. A woman put her arm around his neck and said: "If it wasn't for you, I'd have been in there."

For a movement dedicated to peace – and also to opposing Fascism – the

Fair joined the Woodcraft Folk in 1926, taking the folk name 'Koodoo', after a South African antelope

Second World War presented an enormous moral dilemma. Three weeks before the outbreak of hostilities, Woodcraft Folk had been at an international camp in Belgium, British children forming friendships with German and Austrian youngsters.

Many Woodcraft Folk members, including Fair, chose to be conscientious objectors. The organisation became associated with the Central Board of Conscientious Objectors and Fair supported members at the tribunals held to decide whether objections were based



Fair and typewriter at camp, circa 1937

on genuine principles. Disruptions resulting from the war could have broken the Folk but much of the credit for rebuilding the movement is given to Fair.

Another international camp was organised in Brighton in 1946, a fortnight after the introduction of bread rationing. Fair apologised to the Dutch leader for the meagre allowance of four slices per day, but was assured that in Holland they had learned to cook tulip bulbs.

He left paid work with the Woodcraft Folk in 1954 to be the Education Secretary of the London Co-operative Society

and, on retirement, moved to Bruton Somerset.

JANET KAY

Henry Fair's work in the Somerset Labour movement will be the subject of a future article

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REMEMBER MICKEY FENN

A well-attended meeting of family, friends & colleagues of Mickey Fenn, who died on July 28th 1996, took place in East London on July 22nd 1999.

Mickey was one of the most committed & respected socialists of his generation. He was an active participant in all of the major trade union & anti-fascist struggles of the last 30 years. His political work was carried out with a passion that few could match. Mickey positively enjoyed the class struggle, learning from it & passing on his experiences to those around him. Sadly, he died at the age of 58, but his spirit & ideas should live on for future generations.

At the meeting it was agreed that a commemoration committee would be formed whose aims would be to achieve the following:

- get Tower Hamlets Council to give permission to erect a plaque on a relevant building in the Borough
- raise money to have a book written & published about Mickey's life
- organise a commemoration event which would take place on or near the 63rd anniversary of the Battle of Cable Street

This is an attempt to remember Mickey & the struggles he took part in & to help continue the fights that he fought. The Committee has

the support of Mickey's family, the ex-Tilbury shop stewards & the National Dock Group Committee.

The Commemoration Committee would like you and/or your organisation to add to the list of supporters & to make a financial donation to ensure that our aims are achieved

Cheques should be made payable to "Mickey Fenn Commemoration Committee" & sent to: Jim Kelly*, Chair, TGWU Region 1 Cab Section, c/o Headland House, 308-12 Grays Inn Road, London WC1. (*personal capacity)

Further information can be obtained from: John Lang, Tel. 0181 594 5939 or Mark Metcalf 0181 806 8295