

Anarchism

The revolution is the creation of new living institutions, new groupings, new social relationships; it is the destruction of privileges and monopolies; it is the new spirit of justice, of brotherhood, of freedom which must renew the whole of social life, raise the moral level and the material conditions of the masses by calling on them to provide, through their direct and conscientious action, for their own futures. [...]

Revolution is the destruction of all coercive ties; it is the autonomy of groups, of communes, of regions; Revolution is the free federation brought about by desire for brotherhood, by individual and collective interests, by the needs of production and defense; Revolution is the constitution of innumerable free groupings based on ideas, wishes, and tastes of all kinds that exist among the people; [...] Revolution is freedom proved in the crucible of facts...

— Errico Malatesta, *The Anarchist Revolution*



imminent rebellion

ELEVEN

hand bound with a **hatred** of the
State infused into every page

Editor

Ali, Val

Design

Torrance, Hannah

Cover Image

Laura Drew

Publisher

Rebel Press > PO Box 9263
Marian Square > Wellington
Aotearoa
www.rebelpress.org.nz
info@rebelpress.org.nz

Contributions

Contributions for issue 12 can be
sent to our email address. We
prefer articles to be kept below
5,000 words. Deadline sometime
early 2012 – check our website for
updates.

Colophon

Futura, Caslon
80GSM fully recycled paper

ISSN

1178-7740 (print)
1178-7759 (pdf)

@nti-copyright 2011

This journal and the contents within
may not be reproduced for purposes
of profit.

Unmaking Identity	4
Out of Control: Misogynst violence and its apologists	10
Neil Roberts and the 'Maintenance of Silence'	15
Instead of Education	26
Crucifying Easter Island	32
Thoughts on Non-Oppressive Masculinity	39
Going Rural	46
Anarchists and the 2006 Progressives Lockout	52
An Educational Brush with the Law	58
Whose Revolution? White supremacy and the anarchist movement	63
A Strategy for (a) Change	72

An irregular anarchist journal from deep

A politics that refuses to reduce the complexity of life to the singular logic of the State cannot be simple, it cannot be the domain of easy slogans. Nor can an *anarchist politics* ever make the risk of believing it has achieved a finality, even if only theoretical. This journal is therefore not propaganda, but a genuine attempt to articulate an anarchist practice and theory, one whose articulation must be without end.

in the South Pacific.

UNMAKING DENTITY

— VAL



IMAGE: CHRISTOPHER J

WHEN I ARRIVED back in New Zealand in 1997, I was surprised and refreshed that the military was held in relatively low esteem. I can remember friends commenting about a passing soldier on the street, that only the desperate and stupid joined up with the New Zealand Army. While the military wasn't quite a 'laughing stock,' I was certainly led to believe that it was utterly on the periphery of New Zealand life. In those days, before 9/11, there was no 'threat' for the military to combat.

I grew up in Tucson, Arizona, home of Davis Monthan Air Force Base and just a stone's throw from Fort Huachuca Army Base. Davis Monthan is an Air Combat Command installation with about 8,000 soldiers and personnel; Fort Huachuca was originally installed to drive Geronimo and the Chiricahua Apache people from their homelands. Now, just fifteen miles from the US border, it is home to US military intelligence training. Throughout the United States, the military is, quite simply, revered.

While not yet in the same league as US forces, the New Zealand military has undergone a significant image change over the past fifteen years that has elevated it in the consciousness of the New Zealand public. It has benefited, along with the wider military-security-intelligence complex, from the boom brought about by the war on terrorism: the war, in former US Vice-President Dick Cheney's words, 'without end.' It has also benefited from the culture wars being waged in the nation's institutions of memory: the Ministry of Culture and Heritage, archives, museums and libraries, where historians and curators interpret the past.

The re-engineered public perception of the New Zealand soldier and military is neither accidental nor unintentional. Rather it is a concerted re-imagining of what the military means in this country, and it has been carefully melded with patriotism in the creation of a state-defined 'national identity.' This national identity project is an exercise in imposed unity, of forced mythologies, for the benefit of those who hold power. Fervent nationalist support is required in order to wage war; in order for nationalism to flourish, a national identity must be created and maintained. In order to wage a war without end, a ceaseless campaign of indoctrination must be waged on the people.

We should not underestimate the State's desire to enhance the image of the military, nor should we be surprised by the methods used in doing so. As Emma Goldman wrote during the horrible depths of World War One in *Patriotism: A menace to liberty*:

The awful waste that patriotism necessitates ought to be sufficient to cure the man of even average intelligence from this disease. Yet patriotism demands still more. The people are urged to be patriotic and for that luxury they pay, not only by supporting their 'defenders,' but even by sacrificing their own children. Patriotism requires allegiance to the flag, which means obedience and readiness to kill father, mother, brother, sister.

TWO MYTHS

IN THE LAST PART of the 20th century and the first eight years of this one, the relatively high levels of employment meant that the military needed to sell itself to potential recruits. Moreover, it needed to find new ways to promote itself as a viable institution in a post-Cold War era. On one hand, it



needed to appeal to potential soldiers; on the other hand, it needed to appeal to a public that saw little need for an aggressive military combat force.

In response, the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) propaganda machine has employed two coordinated communications strategies. One can be characterized as the 'Willie Apiata technique,' the other as the 'good citizen' model.

The 'Willie Apiata technique' is propaganda that casts the military as an institution of honour, bravery, mystery, danger and above-average skill. Without fail, we are reminded by mainstream media that the Special Air Service (SAS) is a 'crack-squad,' an 'elite unit' that goes about its 'business' without fanfare and with maximum impact.

The NZDF has contributed to the mystification of the SAS and Apiata in particular in well-constructed pieces of propaganda film including a six-part series, *NZSAS: First Among Equals* and *The Reluctant Hero*, a homecoming film focusing on Apiata's award of the Victoria Cross. Apiata received \$35 000 worth of media training in preparation for becoming a national hero.

The myth making was intensified by the previous Labour government's unwillingness to discuss SAS deployments, coupled with dramatic film footage of brave SAS soldiers receiving a US presidential award with their faces totally cloaked in darkness lest national security be compromised.

At the same time, the NZDF has been relentlessly seeking new recruits through career fairs, open days aboard navy vessels, and extensive newspaper, billboard, ad shell and magazine advertising, even devising 'reality' war games available through their website. This is the recruiting game without end.

The second prong of propaganda is the 'good citizen' model. In this initiative, the New Zealand military is constructed as an agent of altruistic goals, including conservation, embodying what Noam Chomsky describes as the 'new military humanism.' We are, in essence, being sold a military that is not



a military at all; rather it is 'peacekeeping' or doing 'fisheries patrol' or undertaking 'reconstruction.' It is a military that seeks to provide 'security' in order that 'democracy' can flourish.

For nearly a decade, New Zealand has been involved in its longest ever war. The government has had various manifestations of the military in Afghanistan since October 2001. First it was the sAs and then the Navy, then operating as a 'provincial reconstruction team,' all with little public scrutiny or even interest in what they are doing. They exemplify the 'good citizen' model — the name *International Security and Assistance Force* actually says it all. With reliance on embedded New Zealand journalists to regurgitate NZDF press releases about their achievements, the military has prevailed in selling its highly crafted messages.

Unquestionably, the deployment of a team of NZDF engineers to Iraq in June 2003 proved a greater propaganda coup. Helen Clark labelled them as a 'reconstruction team' and pictures of soldiers wielding hammers were paraded in the newspapers. The distasteful reality as revealed in the 2010 Wikileaks disclosures was a quintessential quid pro quo of troops for dairy access in the oil-for-food programme. To this day, few people would know that New Zealand sent any troops to Iraq at all, and if they did, they would probably be

likely to invoke as its rationale some mission of mercy to rebuild a shattered nation.

This 'good citizen' model picks up and enhances other mythology created for the benefit of the powerful, in particular that New Zealand operates a 'principled and independent' foreign policy, that New Zealand is a 'good international citizen,' and that the military is a neutral institution that seeks only to establish 'security.' All of these myths obscure the agendas being serviced by foreign wars and occupations.

CULTURE WARS

They had been promised freedom and peace, an end to evil ideologies, both visible and invisible; they felt betrayed as if they had travelled a great distance to extinguish a fire, then returned to find the same fire burning in their own backyard, flourishing everywhere.

—Janet Frame, *The Carpathians*

THE RE-BRANDING OF THE MILITARY is not a solo undertaking. The NZDF has been capably assisted in this task by a compliant media and other institutions of the state: cultural institutions, universities and veterans' organisations who assist in distilling histories into a national identity. Through mainstream channels, New Zealand history is a

packaged, populist New Zealand foreign military history, overshadowing desperately needed public education and debate on current wars and military missions. In effect, the intellectual class's consent has been secured to wage war as the lines between war and peace are blurred. As Noam Chomsky notes, '[The intellectual class] just react spontaneously in ways that serve external power interests, without awareness, thinking that they're doing honest, dedicated work,' and thereby obscure the very real power interests that lie behind both a state-driven identity-building project and militarism.

ANZAC day must be viewed as the key plank of the propaganda campaign to instill militaristic nationalism. The government's own ANZAC website spews forth:

Today, at a time when it seems New Zealanders are increasingly keen to assert and celebrate a unique identity, we recognise ANZAC day as a central marker of our nationhood.

Both parts of this statement are creative manipulation: first, the state endeavours to create a desire for a 'unique identity' by manufacturing ANZAC day as marker of nationhood. Then it endeavours to consecrate ANZAC day and elevate current military operations into the realm of historical sanctity by equating them with the totally unnecessary and horrific deaths of thousands of young people in far away wars.

Centrally, the manufactured identity that is being celebrated, what it means to be a 'New Zealander' — brave, resourceful, selfless — is an embodiment of everything we are meant to find good about ourselves; it is distinctly Pākehā and most certainly male.

Historian Keith Sinclair notes in his chapter on New Zealand in *The Rise of Colonial Nationalism* that, 'In the mid-nineteenth century, a New Zealander was a Māori. Probably no European would have called himself that.' Indeed, there are no stone monuments to the first soldiers of this nation, those Māori who fought to defend their land, their families and their freedom from an invading colonial army.¹ There are no national days of commemoration to those

As with any State, the ruling elite must be able to rely on the loyalty of the largest organised force of violence. Thus, consistent propaganda must be pumped out to combat the reality of persistent injustice and racism.

1. Since writing this piece, I have discovered that is not strictly speaking true. The first memorial erected by the Crown in honor of Maori who fought against it in the New Zealand wars was unveiled at Oakura, Taranaki in 2002. The rather ugly concrete slab honored twenty Maori killed at Fort St George in an assault by 873 colonial troops backed up by artillery from HMS Eclipse. This slaughter was enacted in revenge for the death of one white soldier who had been ambushed by Maori some days earlier. At the unveiling, one Maori kaumatua (elder) Te Ru Wharehoka said the fact that it had taken 139 years for the Crown to acknowledge the wrong it had done was a sign that there was no genuine partnership between Crown and Maori. 'Why did it take so long? It's not historical, it's hysterical', Wharehoka was reported as saying. See Daily News, 17 June 2002, p. 3. (From *the dementia wing of history* Rachel Buchanan. Cultural Studies Review. Carleton:Mar 2007. Vol. 13, Iss. 1, p. 173-186 (14 pp.)

fallen at the Battle of Orakau or celebration of the resistance at Gate Pā.

The state proudly promotes a military history and identity, while boasting of harmonious race relations. When doing so has benefited its interests it has incorporated Māori stories into its military history, but when historical reality contradicts the mythology, they are conveniently excluded. For example, Māori were not invited to participate in New Zealand's first expeditionary force to the Boer War, despite the willingness of some to do so.

The military assimilates and appropriates Māori and Māori culture when the promotion of that identity is useful. First and foremost, it has appropriated images of the very staunch and furious resistance of the invaded to the imperial and colonial armies that confiscated land, imprisoned ancestors and dispossessed peoples. More recent acquisitions include the haka, the Māori Battalion, and Willie Apiata: they become symbolic of everything that's great about New Zealand — our Kiwi identity — not Māori things but New Zealand things. The military strategists have manipulated these acquisitions to define 'our national identity' with appropriated Māori symbols.

As with any State, the ruling elite must be able to rely on the loyalty of the largest organised force of violence. Thus, consistent propaganda must be pumped out to combat the reality of persistent injustice and racism.

The mythological soldier is both the idealised caricature of what it means to be a 'New Zealander' — sold as an embodiment of something in all of us, and also a normalising force for patriarchy and racism. In this way, nationalism becomes internalised: who 'we' are, what 'we' are about.

WAR IS THE HEALTH OF THE STATE

ON THE 25TH OF APRIL 2007, a group of people set out for the ANZAC Day dawn ceremony in Wellington to challenge New Zealand's involvement in foreign wars, Afghanistan in particular.

It was still dark when we put a match to two New Zealand flags accompanied by the blast of a horn. Immediately I was tackled and restrained, my face ground into the dirt by a local constable. My comrade continued to burn the flag he held while I was bundled off into a police car. Subsequently, I was charged with offensive behaviour 'being burning the New Zealand flag.' Eventually, I was convicted of the charge.

For a time, I was the target of expressions of virulent hatred. Indeed, many who supported the work of Peace Action Wellington withdrew that support following the 2007 ANZAC Day action.

The media portrayed the action as an attack on the nation-state, an attack on sacred memory. My American accent exacerbated the negative reaction. At times, I was juxtaposed alongside war veterans and asked to justify my opposition to long-ago wars.

I make no apologies for that action; my anti-war feelings are as strong today as in 2007 if not stronger.

Nevertheless, I acknowledge criticism from a comrade who felt that the action had been far more effective at reinforcing nationalism and militarism than in challenging it. If that is true, it is a regrettable and ironic outcome.

It is my passionate belief that our freedom is contingent upon the destruction of the nation-state. Any action on my part that reinforced a positive view of militarism and nationalism horrifies me.

Perhaps the most dangerous, pervasive myth is that New Zealand is not a nationalistic country. Only a superficial examination is necessary to deconstruct that lie. The intertwining of war with national identity makes the undoing of the State all the more difficult; attacks on either may serve to entrench rather than undermine ideas about the other. Nevertheless, in our struggle for freedom, we must not shy away from the task of unmaking the myths. ■

OUT OF CONTROL

MISOGYNIST VIOLENCE AND ITS APOLOGISTS

— BAMBOO & ALI

WE LIVE IN A CULTURE where men's violence against women is rampant and thus far the Aotearoa anarchist movement has failed to be a safe space from this violence.

There have been countless incidents of anarchist men perpetrating violence against women. Women have been beaten so badly by their partners that they've had to be hospitalised. Women have been raped by anarchist comrades they knew and trusted. Women have been subjected to ongoing psychological manipulation and abuse within romantic relationships.

It makes you wonder: how many women have to be beaten or sexually assaulted for the whole anarchist and leftist community to give a fuck about gender violence? To take feminist practices seriously? To hold perpetrators accountable for abuse? To wholeheartedly support the survivors of abuse instead of blaming them?

Sometimes it seems like sexism is so ingrained in Western culture that people intuitively condone sexualised violence or partner abuse. It's not even that people don't know about it, or that it's a particularly taboo topic. There is a wilful silence by most men in the anarchist and left movement. It's hard to identify exactly why there is such an unwillingness to take a strong stand against gender violence and partner abuse. Is it because it's seen

TRIGGER WARNING: Some content may be triggering if you have experienced gender violence or abuse.

IMAGES: ROSIE



as a secondary issue to more important 'public' political issues? Is it because relationship abuse is still considered part of the 'private sphere,' and it's none of our business what goes on in somebody's personal relationships or in their homes?

Intimate Partner Abuse is a political issue, rape is a political issue. Both are about power and control within a wider context of (hetero)sexist gender expectations and male privilege. Abuse is not just physical assault, it's not just sexual assault; it's a matrix of emotional abuse and manipulation, verbal abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, intimidation, isolation and control. Intimate Partner

This is a cyclical pattern of behaviour. This is the product of a society that privileges White heterosexual cis-men. This is political.

Yet so many anarchist men do not make fighting against abuse a core priority. It becomes secondary to class exploitation or state political violence (if it is even on the agenda at all).

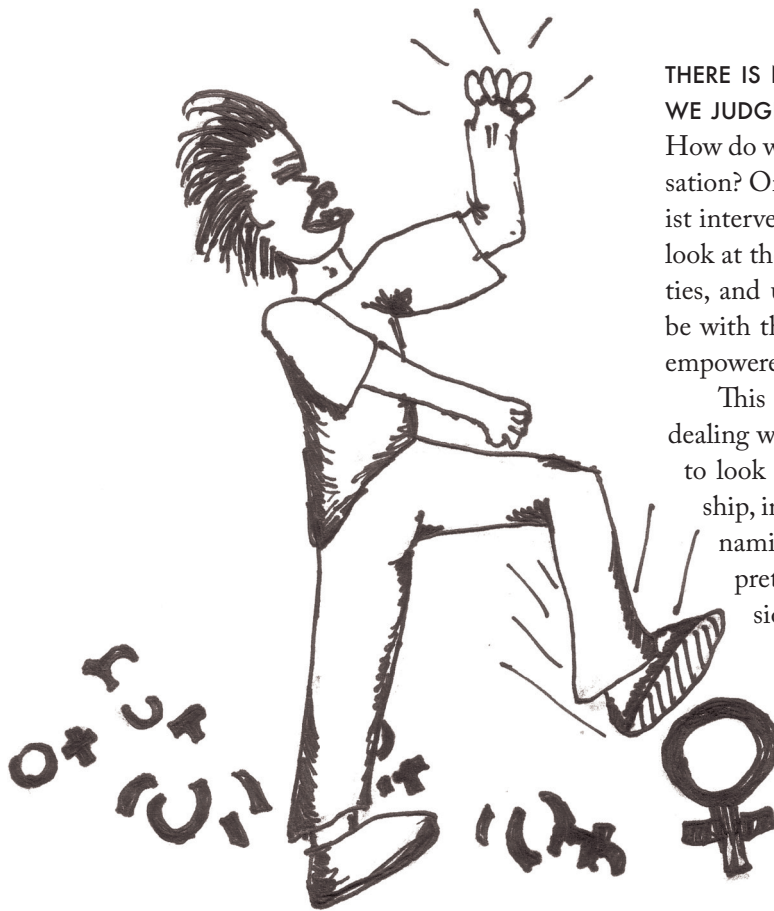
These attitudes set the feminist and womanist movements back decades. That this culture of violence is not taken seriously amongst people we thought were comrades, just goes to show the continued disrespect so many male anarchists have for womyn's liberation.

Abuse is not just physical assault, it's not just sexual assault; it's a matrix of emotional abuse and manipulation, verbal abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, intimidation, isolation and control. [...] there is a **recurring pattern** of men abusing women within the *anarchist and broad left movement*, and there's also a recurring pattern of anarchists and leftists ignoring the **relationship between gendered power dynamics and abuse.**



Abuse doesn't only occur in heterosexual relationships, and it is not only perpetrated by men against women. But there is a recurring pattern of men abusing women within the anarchist and broad left movement, and there's also a recurring pattern of anarchists and leftists ignoring the relationship between gendered power dynamics and abuse. These are components of an unequal power relationship of domination and subordination.

We'd like to address some of the arguments that anarchist men have used to minimize horrific abuse that women have been through, or to shift the blame away from the perpetrator of violence and onto the woman against whom that violence was perpetrated.



IT'S 'HE SAID, SHE SAID'

Most instances of abuse and oppression are a case of '(s)he said, (s)he said,' whether that's a police officer claiming he didn't assault a protestor, the US military claiming they don't torture prisoners in Iraq, or a company claiming they don't pay their workers poverty wages. In all of these instances the person (or group) that has more power, privilege and status is better equipped to get their side of the story heard, and more likely to be believed. But those of us who oppose abuse and oppression can't stand aside because we're not sure whose side of the story to believe. We need to have an analysis of power and how it is gendered when we decide how to respond to allegations of abuse.

THERE IS NO 'OBJECTIVE TRUTH' SO HOW CAN WE JUDGE IF AN ACT CONSTITUTES ABUSE?

How do we judge if something constitutes colonisation? Or capitalist exploitation? Or an imperialist intervention? We have to look at the situation, look at the power dynamics between the two parties, and understand that our solidarity needs to be with those who have been oppressed and disempowered.

This is just as true when the situation we're dealing with is sexual or intimate abuse. We need to look at the power dynamics of the relationship, in the context of the gendered power dynamics of our culture. If we stand aside and pretend to be neutral we're allowing oppression to continue.

IT WAS A MUTUALLY ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP

This argument is often used to minimise abuse perpetrated within a relationship. Often when a woman who is being abused by her partner tries to defend herself, or assert her autonomy within the relationship, she is accused of being just as abusive as he is. Relationship abuse needs to be understood in the context of the ongoing power dynamics of the relationship, not as isolated incidents. Women who are being abused are often criticised for responding in ways that don't seem rational or constructive. It's important to remember that when a person is being controlled, manipulated and intimidated it's difficult for them to work out the most constructive, rational way to respond. It's not okay to blame abuse on the person being abused because she did not respond the way you think she should've.

I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO BELIEVE, HE'S MY FRIEND

We all want to be loyal to our friends. But if your friend is perpetuating oppression, will you really look away for the sake of friendship? Would you take the same stance if your friend was a police officer? a soldier? a union busting employer? a member of an organised hate group? Is it easier to disregard a friend's abuse of women because you don't see it as a political issue in the same way?

If someone is really your friend then you should be able to challenge him on behaviour that perpetuates oppression. It's important that people are challenged on abusive and sexist behaviour by people they respect. It's also important to support people to change their oppressive behaviour. But if your friendship with someone is stopping you from challenging his abuse of others, then you need to re-evaluate your friendship and your principles.

BUT SHE'S CRAZY

First of all, it's hardly surprising that being abused would affect someone's mental health. Secondly, having a mental illness doesn't mean that a woman deserves to be beaten, or that it is her fault she was assaulted. This argument isn't only misogynist, it also stigmatises people with mental health problems. The subtext here is that women are hysterical and irrational and therefore their words can't be trusted.

IF HE COMMITTED A CRIMINAL OFFENCE THEN IT'S A MATTER FOR THE POLICE

From an anarchist perspective, it's not relevant whether something is 'a criminal offense.' We don't recognise the authority of the State over any other part of our lives, why would we let it decide whether or not a survivor of abuse deserves support?

It's important that if a woman chooses to use the state criminal justice system to deal with abuse

her choice is respected. There are so few resources available for stopping abuse. The state criminal justice system is far from an ideal way to address abuse, but in some situations it might be the best option available, and it's up to the person who was abused to make that choice.

There's a number of reasons that survivors of abuse choose not to involve the police. For one thing, the state criminal justice system is based on an ethic of punishment; it is not equipped to support abusers to stop abusing, or to support survivors to heal from abuse. Going through the criminal justice system, which treats survivors as if they are the guilty party, is incredibly painful and traumatic for a lot of women. Especially if they are anarchists or radical activists and have a negative relationship with the police. Additionally, many survivors choose not to involve the police out of compassion for the person who abused them, because they don't want him to have to deal with the police and courts.

HE OPENLY ADMITS WHAT HE DID

It's important that a perpetrator of abuse is open and honest about what he's done. It's the first step towards accountability. But it doesn't mean that the person he abused will suddenly feel safe around him, and she doesn't owe it to him to forgive him.

Often an abuser will openly admit that he did something wrong, but his story is a diluted version of what actually happened. For example, 'I abused her emotionally, but I didn't rape her' or 'I hit her, but it was only once and I wasn't abusive in the rest of the relationship.' It's also not unusual for an abuser to shift the blame onto the person he abused. For example, 'she told me to stop, but she didn't fight me off, so how could I know she didn't want to have sex?' Both of these are tactics used to minimise abuse. That's not what being accountable for your actions means.



YOU'RE DIVIDING THE LEFT

Actually what divides the left isn't women standing up to men who abuse them. What divides the left is those men who fight for their own liberation from capitalism and the State, but want to hold on to their male privilege. Sexism and violence against women divides the left. Men who abuse women are dividing the left, and so are those people who defend them instead of showing solidarity with women who've been abused.

HE'S NOT GOING TO ASSAULT ANYONE AT AN EVENT OR PUBLIC SPACE, SO THERE'S NO NEED TO EXCLUDE HIM

Even if it is unlikely that an abuser will pose a physical threat to women in a social setting, the effects of abusive behaviour are long-term for the person on the receiving end of that abuse. A survivor of abuse will often feel triggered if she has to see the person who abused her. Often survivors of abuse will avoid attending events or going to public spaces in order to avoid the abuser which reinforces the social isolation that abuse creates. Dominating communal spaces is one way that an abuser continues to control the person he abused even after she's left the relationship and cut her connections with him.

HE'S BEEN TO COUNSELLING OR ANTI-VIOLENCE EDUCATION SO THE MATTER'S BEEN RESOLVED

Seeking help to stop being abusive is a good start. But just because someone is receiving counselling to stop being abusive, doesn't automatically mean that he won't repeat that behaviour in future. Even

if a previously abusive person has received help and completely stopped his abusive behaviour, that doesn't mean the people he abused, or their supporters, will feel safe around him. Part of being accountable for your actions is understanding the fact that those you hurt may never completely heal from what happened, and respecting their needs. None of us has the right to decide for someone else that the person who abused her has done enough and his past abusive behaviour is no longer relevant.

CONCLUSION

Misogynist violence is out of control on the left. The response from too many activists is minimising, blaming, denying and ignoring, and it seems to get worse with each new incident. Most of the time community responses to abuse have been a continuation of the emotional abuse already inflicted by the abuser. For example, there have been situations where people deliberately excluded a survivor of intimate partner violence from social events so the person who abused her could feel comfortable attending. This can't keep happening!

We all need to support survivors of sexual and intimate abuse. We need to challenge misogyny. That means understanding the different ways misogyny manifests in behaviour, speech, body language, perceptions, in group dynamics and so on. We need to learn not to dominate, abuse or manipulate other people.

And we need to make it a serious priority, or we'll never succeed in building a world free from oppression. ■



— RYAN BODMAN

NEIL ROBERTS
AND 'THE MAINTENANCE OF SILENCE'
SOCIAL REGRESSION IN MULDOON'S
NEW ZEALAND

SHORTLY AFTER MIDNIGHT on 18 November 1982, Neil Roberts entered a public toilet in Whanganui. With a can of aerosol spray paint he wrote on the wall, 'We have maintained a silence closely resembling stupidity,' with an anarchy symbol and the phrase, 'Anarchy Peace Thinking.' Roberts then walked across the road to Wairere House, the building that housed the Wanganui Police Computer.

At 12:35am Roberts was at the building's entrance, stooped over a red carry-all backpack. A security guard from within Wairere House reached to activate a remote speaker and ask him what he wanted. Before the speaker was activated there was a flash and a 'terrific bang.' Roberts, with a battery he had purchased a few hours earlier, had detonated six sticks of gelignite packed into his backpack. The explosion smashed windows

400 metres away, killed Roberts instantly and destroyed the building's lobby. Nobody else was injured.

Over the following days the print media's attention was drawn to the event and a strikingly homogenous image of Roberts and his final act emerged throughout the pages of the major dailies. Described as the misfit son of a 'wealthy Auckland family,' Roberts, readers were told, was

WE
MAINTAIN

A SILENCE

CLOSE

PRESENT

STUPID

cheerful and gentle though had become involved in the 'punk cult' and become interested in radical politics and drugs. Known to the police for his involvement in violent protests and drug possession, the newspapers quoted a police officer who speculated that, considering Roberts's cannabis conviction, 'he was probably out of his mind when he did it.' A suicide motive came to be attributed to the case, the Herald reporting: 'Police in Wanganui described Roberts as an anarchist punk rocker, and they believe he was acting alone in a suicide bid.' This claim was substantiated by newspapers with interviews of Roberts's acquaintances, resulting in headlines such as 'Punk bomber "didn't want to grow old"' in the Auckland Star or 'Bomber wanted to die young' in the Christchurch Press. The newspapers thus framed Roberts's final act as the tragic end of a troubled young man. Accordingly, little was said about any potential political motive: the message in the toilet was mentioned only in passing and the link between anarchism and Roberts's target was left unconnected. In fact, anarchism was dismissed at the time by one reporter from the Christchurch Press as 'a sad, flippant kind of nihilism'.

Incensed by this coverage, a small number of people wrote to the Press and the Dominion offering a very different interpretation of the event. T. Wainwright wrote: 'Anarchism is not a sad, flippant kind of nihilism, but a complex set of ideas... Of course that young man was sad and undoubtedly despairing, but hardly flippant... When we see the amount of people on the dole, the preparations being made for nuclear war, and other evidence of our rulers' crazy incompetence, is it really so hard to understand why young people shout in our faces, "We have maintained a silence closely resembling stupidity"?' T.W. Bernard, a Dominion correspondent, wrote: 'So, Neil Roberts is no more, and we return to the "all's well in the garden" rationale... But it is this attitude, this inability to realize the increasing crisis created by an inadequate government, that enables us to write off the incident as the bomber's problem rather than one belonging to New Zealand society or its government.' J. Lydon made the suggestion that Roberts's final message, which was quickly painted over, be left 'as a memorial to a young man who has died trying to give cardiac massage to the dying conscience of a country.'

Moving beyond the shallow and individualized framework adopted by the newspapers, the correspondents offered insights into Roberts's final act. Transcending discussions based around Roberts's social non-conformity or his suicidal tendencies, the correspondents sought to understand the act by placing it into its social and political

context. In doing so, they presented the act as a highly politicized and directed attack motivated by deeply held concerns for the direction society was heading. This depiction of societal regression complicates the image of the late 1970s and early 1980s offered in two major general histories of the past two decades.

JAMES BELICH's *Paradise Reforged: A History of the New Zealanders: From the 1880s to the Year 2000* and Michael King's *The Penguin History of New Zealand* present the late 1970s and early 1980s as a prelude to the nation's coming of age. Described by Belich as a transition between 'recolonisation' and 'decolonisation' and by King as the lead up to 'a revolution confirmed,' the social convulsion that occurred in New Zealand during this time period is presented within the framework of societal progress as old shackles were broken and a new course for the nation was set. This new course is represented by a number of developments both during and following the period and include: the return of 'mana Maori'; the continued shift away from New Zealand's economic dependence on Britain; social conflict and legislation connected to counter-cultural politics; and New Zealand's gradually developing independent foreign policy. Belich goes so far as to suggest that this was New Zealand's 'war of independence' as society was reshuffled to cope with the realities of 'decolonisation.' Undoubtedly the period was marked by the breaking of old shackles as social progress heralded the developments mentioned above. However this focus on societal progress overlooks the concerns regarding new shackles and social regression which were also representative of the period.

As highlighted by the correspondents, Neil Roberts' action and the context in which it occurred, offers an opportunity to reconsider the narrative dominated by social progress. Far from being the tragic end of a complicated individual,

Roberts's final act was a highly politicized and directed attack on a government installation that he viewed as a symbol of the authoritarian current infiltrating society. He was not alone in his concerns about the direction society was heading: by placing the attack into its social and political context it can be viewed as an extreme articulation of deeply held reservations that permeated through late 1970s and early 1980s New Zealand. Accordingly, this reassessment of the period serves to complicate the historical narrative that dominates the two most prominent general histories. In turn, the image of the period as part of the nation's progressive march to independence represented by the breaking of old shackles is complicated by simultaneous social regression as new shackles were fastened.

DURING THE LATE 1970s and early 1980s, a number of governmental policies and actions raised concerns amongst large sectors of New Zealand society. Robert Muldoon's National government, elected in November 1975, came to represent what Toby Boraman has described as a 'period of extraordinary authoritarian right populism in New Zealand politics' which polarized the nation. The 1970s was characterized by a downturn in New Zealand's economy, attributed by historians to the Arab Oil Crisis and Britain's entrance into the highly regulated European common market. However, during the 1970s, the downturn in the nation's economic fortunes was often attributed, by commentators on the right, to the so-called 'permissive society' of the 1960s. It was believed by some that 'a new tough realism' was needed to address the issue: hence Muldoon's emphasis on a strong 'law and order' government and a reassertion of traditional social codes. What resulted was a way of life in New Zealand that one journalist described as 'antagonist, mean and grudging' as policies were introduced that were detrimental to a wide sector of the population.

Amongst the victims of these policies were a number of specific groups, including Pacific Islanders and women who worked outside of the home, who were scapegoated by the government as a smokescreen for dealing with the nation's economic woes.

Following the Second World War, full employment had become the norm in New Zealand. However beginning in the early 1970s unemployment had started to rise. To address this issue attempts were made to remove from the labour pool workers who were considered to be expendable. One such group was Pacific Islanders. Beginning under the Labour government, but intensified by National, a concerted effort was made to eject Pacific Island over-stayers from New Zealand with a technique that came to be known as dawnraids. Police officers would arrive at Pacific Islanders' homes early in the morning, detain any over-stayers and deport them, often on the same day. The National government reintroduced dawnraids in February 1975 and complemented the technique with the introduction of random street checks in October of the same year. Random street checks saw police stop and question 'anyone who does not look like a New Zealander, or who speaks with a foreign accent'. Beginning on Labour weekend 1975, police began to carry out random street checks on anybody of Polynesian origin. The individual in question would be ordered to present the appropriate documentation to show that they were legally permitted to be in the country and if they could not do so they were taken to the station for further questioning. No more than 3% of the Polynesian population was illegally in New Zealand at the time, yet these random street checks exposed large numbers of Polynesians to widespread police harassment. In fact, some Maori spent time in police cells for failing to produce evidence of their New Zealand citizenship. This unwarranted and extreme case of persecution elicited concerns from many

quarters: two National backbenchers described it as 'disturbing' and 'concerning' and a Labour MP stated that 'Hitler used these tactics, and so did Mussolini.'

Women who worked outside of the home were similarly victimized by repressive policies introduced by the National government. In an attempt to address the country's rising unemployment, Muldoon, in his customarily divisive way, declared that working women were 'buying "relative affluence" for themselves at the expense of "neglect" for their children.' This declaration represented an attempt by the government to hide the growing problem of unemployment by simply forcing women back into the home. Accordingly, policies were introduced to this effect. Bribes of cheap loans for housing were made available, along with punishments of higher taxes for part-time work. For the most part, the government's attempts to force women back into the home proved unsuccessful. However, the treatment meted out to specific groups such as Pacific Islanders and women who worked outside of the home, serves to highlight the repressive tendencies that, for many, came to characterize Muldoon's National government.

These repressive attacks on specific groups were complemented by governmental policies and actions that affected a much wider section of the population. An issue of critical importance in this regard was the controversy that arose from the 1977 Security Intelligence Service (SIS) Amendment Act. The Bill, in its original form, sparked a nationwide outcry as a host of groups and individuals formed a disparate movement to oppose the policies contained therein. Hugh Price explained that 'the central thread that linked people who opposed the [Bill] was the fear that Mr. Muldoon was personally given powers to bug, and open letters.... and that no significant checks or reporting procedures limit this personal power.' These concerns related to the power the Bill gave

the Prime Minister to issue search warrants. As was his style, Muldoon was dismissive of this opposition telling reporters that the select committee process would give 'fringe groups' a chance to express their opinions. But as Peter Munz stated, it turned out that these "fringe groups" included Bishops of both the Anglican and Catholic churches... the FOL [Federation of Labour], the CCSO, Her Majesty's Opposition, and the New Zealand Law Society.' A member of Muldoon's caucus also fell within these so called 'fringe groups.' Mike Minogue of the Hamilton West Electorate commented that in light of this Bill, 'New Zealand was well on the way to becoming a police state.' In addition, thousands of citizens took to the streets, with 15 000 people descending upon Parliament in 1977, in what was the largest protest since the anti-Vietnam war mobilizations earlier in the decade.

Despite what amounted to considerable opposition from the populace towards a policy which was viewed as consolidating greater power into fewer hands, the SIS Bill was passed with only minor amendments. Defenders of the new law argued that the legislation's mandate was tightly defined and 'sufficient safeguards' existed to 'prevent any abuses'. However the law's detractors argued vehemently to the contrary. Organisation to Abolish the Security Intelligence Service (OASIS), which was formed in the midst of the 1977 outcry, highlighted the lack of accountability enshrined in the law, pointing out the exemption from civil or criminal proceedings of any person authorized under the Act to intercept communication and the lack of access to citizen's personal files held by the SIS. The Council of Civil Liberties vocalized concerns regarding the authority the law provided the SIS to 'tap phones, bug homes, take mail and break and enter homes and offices to get papers.' Perhaps the most contentious of all the policies incorporated in the Act was the issue that had first unified the opposition movement: the Prime Minister's unchecked powers to issue search warrants. The law's detractors were assured that under the law these powers were to be used 'very sparingly.' However, as Mr. Justice Wilson, a retired Supreme Court judge, commented: 'The wielder of the power to issue warrants should ideally be gifted with objectivity, tolerance, and compassion... I do not think that even Mr. Muldoon's most ardent admirers would claim that he has displayed... these talents.' As a result, Price explained, 'the SIS [became Muldoon's] personal instrument, unlimited by judicial review or by any formal obligation to the opposition.' This new power, along with his position as both Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, placed into Muldoon's hands an unprecedented level of political control, unseen in New Zealand since the beginning of the nineteenth-century.

Far from being the tragic end of a complicated individual, Roberts's final act was a highly politicized and directed attack on a government installation that he viewed as a symbol of the authoritarian current infiltrating society.



CONCERNS REGARDING the political power that was being concentrated into fewer hands continued to raise fears of a growing authoritarian current gripping New Zealand. This was accompanied by the immense show of state force that came to characterize the Springbok tour of 1981. Sporting ties with apartheid South Africa had long been a contentious political issue in New Zealand, however in 1981 the National government permitted the Springboks entry into the country for a seven week tour. Shirking its responsibilities under the Gleneagles Agreement of 1977 — which recognized the ‘abomination of apartheid in sport, as in other fields’ — the government budgeted \$2.7 million to fund police protection for the Springbok squad during the tour. The decision to allow the tour to go ahead led to what Boraman describes as a period that ‘resembled a low intensity civil war,’ as a massive anti-tour movement, attempting to disrupt the tour, came face to face with police in violent confrontations across the country.

Over the seven weeks that the Springboks toured the country, confrontations between the police and the anti-tour contingent intensified. The field invasion of Rugby Park in Hamilton, by anti-tour protesters on 25 July 1981, was met by a non-violent police response; in fact the police played a central role in protecting the protesters from the anger of the pro-tour camp. However, after Hamilton the non-violent police response was replaced by a style of policing noted for its aggressive nature. The new approach was first witnessed in Molesworth Street, in downtown Wellington, when a row of police, batons in hand, formed a line across the path of a peaceful protest. When the two groups met the police halted the protest’s course with force. Gordon Christie, a Labour party backbencher who witnessed the whole affray later stated in the House: ‘I heard every word the [police]man with the loud-speaker was able to say. But I want to tell this House that

never once did I hear them tell those [protest] marshals not to go up Molesworth Street... So the law and order of this country was broken not by the protesters on Wednesday night, but by the person who gave the order to baton down women and children.’

Confrontations became commonplace following Molesworth Street. The anti-tour movement, which since 1971 had professed a strict non-violent approach, was confronted weekly with menacing sights. Coils of barbed wire were staked around stadiums; two team policing unit squads (blue and red squad) trained by army veterans, were a central part of the police presence. Police began to appear in what became standard police garb: a helmet and visor, a greatcoat or raincoat — which the Council for Civil Liberties noted hid the officers’ identification numbers — and a MonadnockPR 24 long baton; the use of which became commonplace on the streets of New Zealand, despite the fact they were considered to be lethal weapons by their US manufacturer. Intimidation tactics were employed with vigor by the police. Whacking on shields with their long batons prior to an advance upon protesters became commonplace; infiltration of protesters by plain clothes police officers was standard; and the Red Squad became known for a bizarre, but extremely intimidating ritualized chanting. At team building sessions, or on the streets, members of the squad would stomp while shouting chants such as; ‘R.E.D. R.E.D., Root more, eat more, drink more piss, root more, eat more, drink more piss.’ In this environment of aggressive policing, what resulted was a gratuitous use of force on a protest movement that by and large, remained peaceful. Scores were seriously injured in the confrontations that took place at police cordons staked around stadiums on game day.

Following the tour, the Council of Civil Liberties’ newsletter read: ‘The Springbok tour divided and scarred New Zealand. The issues it



raised and the implications for civil liberty are here to stay.' The police conduct in dealing with the massive popular opposition to the tour was the largest show of state force on the streets of New Zealand since the depression era riots or the 1951 waterfront lockout. However unlike these two events, the sheer number of protesters — upwards of 150 000 — in addition to the television coverage which daily broadcast events into the nation's living rooms, meant that the events of 1981 were more extensively observed. The brutality shown by the police, and the illegality of some of their actions, shocked many. A number of complaints were made in regard to police conduct and although some police officers were charged none were convicted. Despite this, Geoff Chapple suggests that the police force paid a more subtle penalty. Amongst many in society, a distrust of the police persisted after the tour as 'the vision of

police control and violence as an arm of the state' infiltrated society. Such views complemented the fear of an authoritarian turn.

IN THIS CONTEXT of an increasingly repressive and authoritarian government, the punk subculture was further politicized. Punk, Boraman suggests, was 'an angry working class counter cultural response to the mid-1970s recession, the nationwide mood of decline and the conservative authoritarian backlash against the liberalism of the 1960s.' Shortly after its arrival in New Zealand in the mid-1970s, punk became associated with anti-authoritarian politics such as anarchism. Though as Andrew Schmidt explains, events connected with the Springbok tour had the effect of pushing a lot of punks to the left of the political spectrum. At the time of the tour, many punks were involved in anti-tour activities and also became targets for

police persecution: being harassed on the streets or having their gatherings targeted purely for looking like ‘protesters.’ As Roy Montgomery explained: ‘...there was a kind of siege mentality... that tended to affect pubs and parties alike... The whole tour thing put the police into a different mode of response. Like, I went to parties in ’81 where we have the Riot Squad appear... breaking things up. And not necessarily things that needed to be broken up, but there was just this ‘Law-and-order’ thing, [and also] that the police had a trained, rehearsed team, spoiling for fun.’

These experiences were reflected in the music and publications produced during and following the tour. Images of despair and anger relating to societal decay and authoritarianism were typical. The final verse of BlamBlamBlam’s ‘There is no depression in New Zealand’ captures the feeling that the country was on a dangerous path, while many seemed inclined to overlook the problem:

There is no depression in New Zealand;
there are no teeth in our heads
There is no depression in New Zealand;
we sleep in a well made bed
Oh but everybody’s talking about World War
Three,
yes everybody’s talking about World War
Three,
But we’re as safe as safe can be,
there’s no unrest in this country
We have no SIS,
we have no secrets,
we have no rebellion;
we have no valium, valium, no, no.

Similar sentiments are offered by the anarcho-punk band, Riot III in their 1982 song ‘Writing on the Wall.’ The song offers a commentary on the perceived deterioration of society and connects early 1980s New Zealand with the totalitarian world of George Orwell’s Nineteen Eighty-Four:

If anarchy was our music, you’ve succeeded in
closing down our gigs,

Breaking into our parties, outside with your
iron batons,

Getting convictions, making social classes,
racial confrontations,

But you’ve just got a grown awareness that
you’ve lost the balance of law and liberty

You’re all waiting for 1984,

But we all know it’s here.

Meanwhile anarchist political philosophy, with its opposition to all forms of authority, was prominent in some sectors of the punk subculture. A 1982 issue of the anarcho-punk zine *Fascism and Boredom* read: ‘Anarchy is not fascism, nor is it chaos. It is the destruction of the class system which the present day state is based upon. It means everyone being their own leader/ruler... ALL FORMS OF GOVERNMENT HAVE FAILED. All systems up to the present day have ended up with a few telling/forcing the majority how to live.’ It is from within this deeply political, but in many ways despairing punk subculture, that Neil Roberts emerged.

ROBERTS WAS A PROMINENT member of the anarchist punk scene and had been involved in the punk subculture for a number of years. Well known for his interest in anarchist philosophers such as Pyotr Kropotkin and Mikhail Bakunin, acquaintances of Roberts tell how he would carry a dog-eared copy of a Bakunin book at all times. Deeply involved in the anti-tour protests, at one stage Roberts was arrested and detained for 48 hours; an experience his friends suggest hardened his political convictions. Roberts came to fear the direction of contemporary New Zealand society, perceiving a drift towards an authoritarian, surveillance state. With these ideas in mind, he discussed with his friends different actions he could take to challenge the prevailing order. As Steve Luke explained: ‘He had discussed specific tactics with others, and had given up an armed invasion [of a government building]... because

Seven years ago an anarchist blew himself to pieces

WE REMEMBER NEIL ROBERTS. . .

nz first



NEIL ROBERTS . . . talked suicide for three years.

PUNK groups throughout New Zealand held quiet memorials for a martyr last Saturday.

It was seven years ago to the day that anarchist Neil Roberts walked into the foyer of the Wanganui Computer Centre and detonated six sticks of gelignite in a carrybag on his shoulders.

Last week, small groups throughout the country had gatherings to mull over the times that were and consider what could have been—if Roberts' act had sparked the revolution he intended.

The punk movement has splintered in recent years, some sections becoming vocal in the anti-violence protests, others moving into the militant Skinhead faction, others have donned collar and ties.

But seven years ago the movement appeared united as a nation was shocked by a bomb blast as a 21-year-old man ignited his own annihilation.

For years before, the punk movement in New Zealand had gained in momentum, taking direct influence from London

By EDWARD ROONEY

lifestyles and music.

Spiked hair and public exhibitions of self-mutilation, such as safety pins driven through cheeks, were becoming commonplace in New Zealand city centres.

The movement gathered, organised and became louder on the streets with ideas of anarchy and the overthrow of authority.

On November 18, 1982 one of the final acts by an anarchist caught the attention of the authorities when Neil Ian Roberts ended his short life.

Similarities with Guy Fawkes were obvious at the time, although these were overlooked as the days leading up to the bizarre act of self-destruction were examined.

The first hints of the suicidal act police gleaned from the wreckage was

'It was not an act of a coward'

from the rendered body of Roberts himself, parts of which were found 65 metres away from where the explosion took place.

TATTOO

On his chest was a recent tattoo bearing the chilling message: "This punk won't see 23".

Another message was discovered across the street from the centre in a public toilet.

"For too long we have maintained a silence closely resembling stupidity," Roberts had penned.

His friends, far from being shocked by his death, were quietly confident the blast had been planned and executed with precision.

Branwyn Dutton, then aged 18, was angry when

it was suggested Roberts had intended to place the bomb and escape.

"He talked suicide for three years and he had every intention of doing it."

"It was not an act of cowardice . . . it was making a statement with his life."

BANNER

At the front of an Auckland house last weekend, a banner was displayed bearing the legend: "We remember Neil Roberts".

Others that will remember include Rob Butler, who headed the inquiry into the explosion, and the unnamed security guard who witnessed Roberts struggling with his carrybag moments before the blast.

there seemed no way of carrying [it] out... without loss of life.' Rather, Roberts decided on a symbolic act with the hopes, Luke explained, that the action may 'self-perpetuate.' The Wanganui Police Computer was his selected site.

The Wanganui Police Computer, otherwise known as the National Law Enforcement System, was established under the Wanganui Police Computer Act 1976, and commenced operations on 17 February 1977. Situated in Whanganui due to the town's central location, the computer centralized the transport and justice departments' information into a single database accessible to law enforcement personnel at all times. Upon its establishment libertarian groups had expressed

their concerns about the surveillance capabilities offered to the state by the computer and protests were held. However, the lack of newspaper coverage of these protests would suggest that the computer was initially a fringe issue, at least in comparison to the activities related to the SIS Amendment Bill and the Springbok tour. As a result of the furor caused by the latter two issues however, the computer came to serve as a physical reminder of the concerns relating to a growing trend of authoritarianism in New Zealand. As such, a petrol bomb was thrown at the centre prior to the Springbok game in Whanganui. And it was with the view that the computer symbolized a growing authoritarian current in society that

Roberts attacked it in the early hours of 18 November 1982.

In the days and weeks following the attack, messages and leaflets relating to Roberts's act appeared across New Zealand. At the University of Otago 'slogans including "N.R... R.I.P.", "punks," "boots" and the symbol of an anarchist group, were plastered all around the campus in bold black spray paint.' In Christchurch posters bearing Roberts's final message, 'We have maintained a silence closely resembling stupidity,' appeared around the city. In Wellington — along with spray painted messages that read 'Thank you Neil, we won't forget' — posters were plastered around the city referring to the attack:

Shortly after midnight on Wednesday, 17th November, Neil Roberts succeeded in destroying the foyer of the Wanganui Computer Centre and in doing so, gave up his own life... The Wanganui Computer Centre was the most obvious target for Neil's move. The computer, and the highly guarded centre which houses it, represent the danger of our country becoming a police state...

In attacking the Wanganui Police Computer, Roberts was articulating his own despair and frustration. Luke suggests that it was not Roberts's intention to destroy the building that housed the computer and this is supported by the findings of the coroner, who discusses precautions taken by Roberts to avoid injuring others. Rather, the attack appears to be a symbolic statement, expressing both his belief that the population had 'maintained a silence closely resembling stupidity' and his hopes that his action would encourage others to break that silence. He undoubtedly acted in desperation, likely feeling isolated from a society he felt was acquiescing in its own demise. As it turned out, the opposition against the authoritarian current of society Roberts hoped to incite did not eventuate. However, this is not to say that his action would not have been understood.

Despite the newspapers' dismissal of the act as the tragic end of a misfit, Roberts's concerns — as articulated by this extreme act — resonated with many in society who shared his fear of the repressive and authoritarian trend gripping the country.

However, Roberts's act does not fit into the narrative of recent general histories. The works of James Belich and Michael King have gone one better than the newspapers that covered the event in the days following the act, and instead of downplaying Roberts's act they have ignored it all together. Both historians adopt a nationalist progress-orientated narrative and the period of the late 1970s and early 1980s plays a crucial role in their respective depictions of New Zealand's coming of age. Belich frames the Muldoon era as a rough transition between the periods of 'recolonisation' and 'decolonisation' as progressive aspects of society came face to face with 'Rob's Mob' and 'recolonial' New Zealand's last stand. For King, the period represents a transition between the so-called revolution that began in the 1960s and its confirmation in the 1980s and 1990s. As such, Muldoon and the authoritarian and repressive tendencies of his government are presented not as representative of societal regression, but as a stumbling block for societal progression. According to Belich's and King's narratives, Muldoon's National government was followed by the onset of 'decolonial' New Zealand (at least in regards to social policy) or the 'confirmation' of the 'revolution.' However, framing the period within this progress-focused narrative simplifies the past and overlooks telling aspects of the period.

DURING THE LATE 1970s and early 1980s deep concerns permeated society as a socially repressive and authoritarian government raised anxiety amongst many. Specific groups in society, including Pacific Islanders and women who

worked outside of the home, were scapegoated by the government for the nation's faltering economic fortunes and were persecuted as a result. The growing power the SIS Amendment Act offered both the Prime Minister and the SIS raised concerns within society and resulted in a massive opposition movement. Meanwhile the police operation during the Springbok tour brought a level of state violence they had never observed to the attention of many New Zealanders. By adopting a narrative focused on progress, Belich and King overlook such social regression and accordingly, Neil Roberts is omitted from their historical accounts.

Albert Wendt explains: 'We are what we remember. Society is what we remember.' Like the newspapers that covered Roberts's death in the days following the attack, recorded histories play a major role in our understanding of the world and by extension, our interactions with it. If our history is depicted within the framework of a nationalist progressive narrative, dissenting voices such as that of Roberts will be swept aside in the inevitable simplification of the past as exemplified in the works of Belich and King. However, if we make room for the pluralisation of the past, creating imaginative histories that are in tune with historical nuances, we can create histories that better encapsulate past complexities. Adding Roberts into the historical record therefore offers an opportunity to enhance that record. By no means does this dismiss the progressive aspects of the 1970s and 1980s: these were undoubtedly part of the wider story as evidenced by the resulting changes in New Zealand society. However, the admission of Roberts into our histories highlights the complexities of the past. As society was breaking out of old shackles, new shackles were simultaneously being fastened. Thus, by making room for his story, a different image of the past is presented. And perhaps by remembering

such aspects of our past, we can interact with contemporary society in a more meaningful, albeit critical, manner. ■

FURTHER READING

- Belich, James.** *Paradise Reforged: A History of the New Zealanders: From the 1880s to the Year 2000*, Auckland, 2001.
- Boraman, Toby.** 'The New Left and Anarchism in New Zealand from the Mid-1950s to the Early 1980s: An Anarchist Communist Interpretation', PhD Thesis, University of Otago, 2006.
- Boraman, Toby.** *Rabble Rousers and Merry Pranksters: A History of Anarchism in Aotearoa/New Zealand from the mid 1950s to the early 1980s*, Christchurch, 2007.
- Campbell, Russell.** 'System Overload: The Anarchist Rebel in William Keddell's *The Maintenance of Silence*', in R. Porton, ed., *Arena One: Anarchist Film and Video*, Oakland, 2009, pp.129–138.
- Chapple, Geoff.** 1981: *The Tour*, Wellington, 1984.
- Churton, Wade R.** 'Have You Checked the Children?': Punk and postpunk music in New Zealand, 1977–1981, Christchurch, 1999.
- Keddell, William** (Director). *The Maintenance of Silence* [Motion Picture], Wellington, 1984.
- King, Michael.** *The Penguin History of New Zealand*, Auckland, 2003.
- Newnham, Tom.** *By Batons and Barbed Wire: A response to the 1981 Springbok Tour of New Zealand*, Auckland, 1981.

The above is a very abridged version of the sources referenced for this essay. If you want the entire bibliography, feel free to contact Ryan at ryankb@gmail.com.

An anarchist
exploration of
early childhood
education

INSTEAD OF EDUCATION

— G

WHEN THE STATE ADVERSARY published Billie Clayton's 'Are Anarchists anti-children?' in the mid-90s, it dragged the issue of anarchism's disdain for parenthood briefly into the sunlight. Children sucked up energy, resources, ruined meetings and just generally interfered with the activist-centric anarchism predominant then. Times have thankfully changed, the 'scene' has aged, matured even, and has no desire to exclude its children. Children are at the core of my anarchism and are the subject of much conversation and activity. What follows grew from one such conversation about early childhood education.

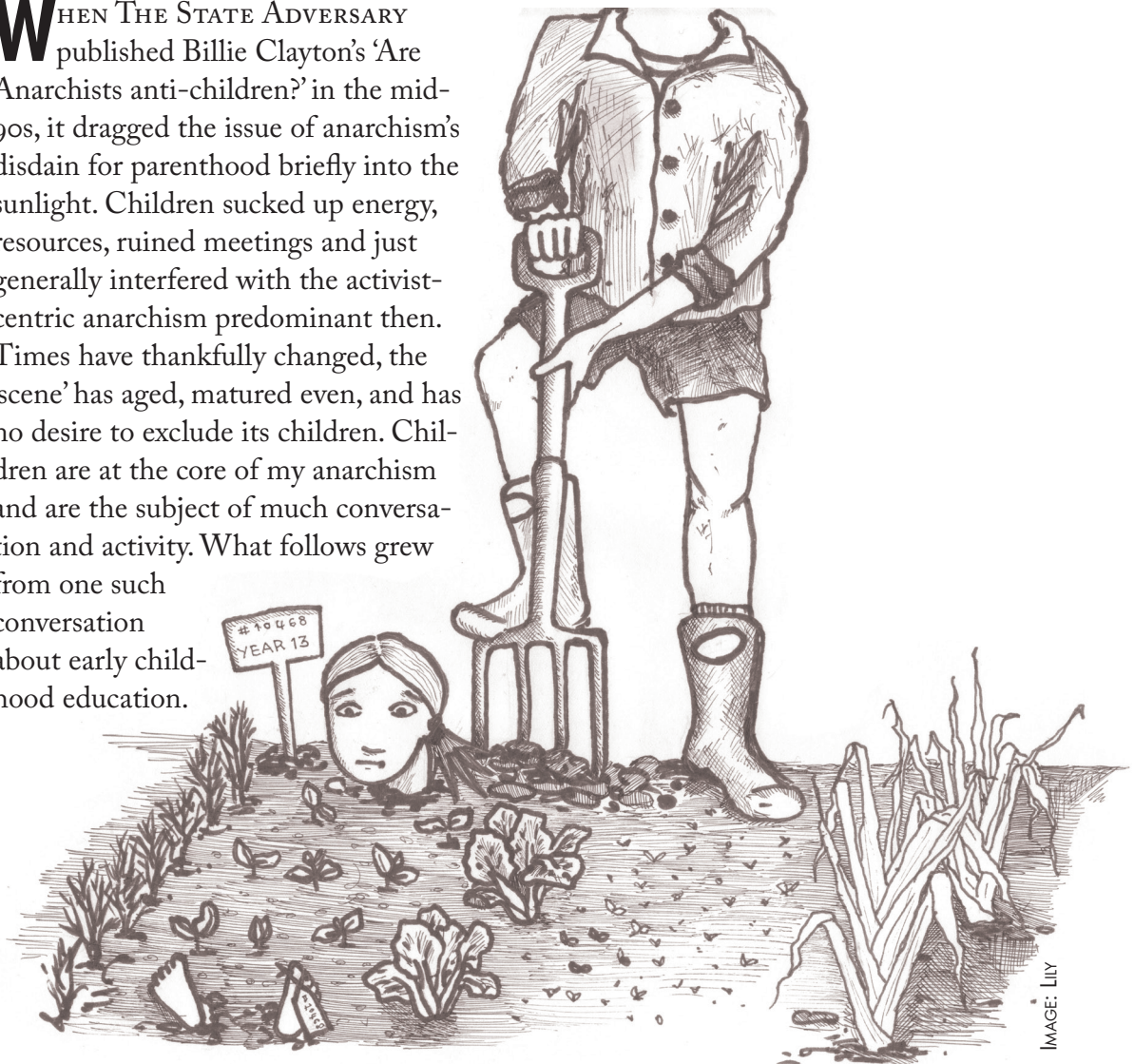


IMAGE: LILY

My sister expressed frustration over her daughter's unhappiness at her Rudolf Steiner early childhood centre. Ruby was bored, did not engage with the activities and was unable to run about as much as she wanted and needed: when she got home each day it was like she had just woken up, it was just 'go go go.' My sister and her partner had chosen Steiner because it was supposed to be an alternative to mainstream education dictated by government with its focus on a checklist of skills that qualify as 'success.' Fair enough; state control of learning — rebranded for the market as 'education' — has created the modern slave-state:

Education, with its supporting system of compulsory and competitive schooling, all its carrots and sticks, its grades, diplomas, and credentials, now seems to me perhaps the most authoritarian and dangerous of all the social inventions of mankind.

Here, Holt offers a definition of education that strips away the feel-good rhetoric of opportunity: education is something that some people do to others for their own good, moulding and shaping them, and trying to make them learn what they think they ought to know.

Education has nothing to do with learning. Schooling as we know it today has its roots in early 1800s Prussia and the philosopher Fichte who envisioned creating an artificial national consensus on matters of national importance: obedient workers with a sense of national identity that willingly became cannon fodder when required. School sorts people into winners and losers, perpetuates an elite group to run the world and maintains an under-class to do the shitwork.

Yet in the classic liberal double-speak, university professors lecture on radical democracy,

justice, equality and excellence. 'Education' as a label is currently out of favour; rather we focus on its Latin origin 'educare' with its notions of respectful reciprocal relationships as our mission, while perpetuating a system of controlled failure.

The one message we will never hear? Education cannot be reformed, carried out wisely or humanely. We need to stop kidding ourselves: it just needs to go. A fundamental right of an individual is to control our own minds and thoughts. Educators attack this right and dictate what you will say, hear, read, write, think and dream about.

Early childhood education (ECE) was largely invisible for most of its history — it was women's work born out of philanthropy and the plight of deserted children. Froebel, inventor of the Kindergarten model we all know so well, did not envision a playful 'garden for children', but rather a metaphor of teachers as gardeners and children as the vegetables. Kindergartens broke the influence of mothers over their children.

ECE was finally discovered by neoliberalism in the 1980s and pulled into the education sphere as government recognised the potential of schools and early childhood curricula as an instrument for producing citizens suited to the demands of a globalised economy which needed multi-skilled, flexible workers, 'life-long learners' who were strongly rooted into the national community, but global in their thinking. Earlier welfare state perspectives emphasised educational ideals such as equality of opportunity, child-centred learning and psychological wellbeing. Now the focus shifted — it was to become meaner and leaner and more effective in producing narrowly defined goals that centred around the notion of economic potential.

‘Life long learning’ is an essential strategy to counter the problems of an ageing and inflexible workforce — quality early childhood education improves educational outcomes and provides childcare that enables mothers to up-skill or enter the workforce. Thus the increased focus on early childhood education and the commissioning of a unifying curriculum to enforce these goals. Te Whāriki, the national curriculum for early childhood education,

came into being in the 1980s as ‘part of an international trend to strengthen connections between the economic success of a nation and education.’

Aotearoa finds itself in a unique and, from an anarchist perspective, rather unusual position when it comes to seeking out radical alternatives.

While early childhood education is not legally compulsory there is essentially an artificial compulsion: for reasons of education, socialisation, or economic needs, the reality is that for most parents

some form of childcare is desired and/or required.

As all early childhood centres must legally follow Te Whāriki, you could understandably assume that any educational ‘alternatives’ would only be tokenistic. Yet the structure of this document allows for considerable pedagogical movement and in fact offers opportunities for those who seek to create a true alternative to education as we know it. Te Whāriki recognises that learning is a social process that occurs through reciprocal and responsive relationships. Pedagogically it draws upon many sources, but primarily Te Ao Māori, developmentalism and constructivism, particularly Vygotsky’s socio-cultural theories of learning and development.

Te Whāriki is a descriptive, rather than prescriptive, framework for curriculum building that is guided by philosophical principles that allow for the reflection of local community contexts. It does not tell you what to teach. This ability for personal interpretation and construction of curriculum is a powerful tool for educators, but is a double-edged sword as it places the onus on personal discourses held by educators. That this ‘openness’ is misinterpreted by many teachers and education centres is widely acknowledged and it is evident that there is a ‘default’ pedagogical position. This position reflects the myriad of discourses teachers are exposed to: developmentalism with its ‘hands off’ free-play philosophy, or more contemporary ideas inspired by science and neoliberalism that place teachers firmly in control of children’s activity and learning. The result? A huge variety in centre philosophy: the image

{ Learning is like breathing. It is a natural, human activity: it is part of being alive. A person who is active, curious, who explores the world using all his or her senses, who meets life with energy and enthusiasm — as all children do — is learning.

of the child, how they best learn, their approach to diversity, the role of the teacher and so on.

As anarchists, when we think of alternative options to a mainstream early childhood centre, at first glance it would seem that we are limited to Playcentres or for-profit centres that follow either the Steiner or Montessori philosophies, but this is not so. A closer look at the more traditional 'alternatives' shows that these centres are more authoritarian than state-run Kindergartens or other private mainstream centres. Steiner and Montessori are shrouded in liberal notions of a gentle holistic learning with an emphasis on art and nature, yet both adhere to these curriculum 'extras' in a manner that is tightly controlled by the teacher — freedom to learn through one's own interests and motivation is thus constrained for the good of the chosen philosophy.

So what are we actually looking for that is 'alternative'?

Aaron Falbel writes:

Learning is like breathing. It is a natural, human activity: it is part of being alive. A person who is active, curious, who explores the world using all his or her senses, who meets life with energy and enthusiasm — as all children do — is learning. Our ability to learn, like our ability to breathe, does not need to be improved or tampered with.

You cannot make a person learn something they do not want to. Self-initiated, directed and controlled activity that reflects one's context builds habits of learning. Falbel further asserts that teachers, despite their well-meaning, attack the process of learning through interfering, manipulating and controlling children: 'empty actions done under the pressure of bribe and threat, greed and fear.' This position is evident to a degree in most early childhood centres.

Yet, as an anarchist, I have no problem in believing that we will probably always have centres and schools because it makes sense to have places where we can get together to share knowledge and resources. It's what goes on there that is critical. Many cultures have no word for 'teacher' or the concept of teaching as we know it. Māori refer to 'ako' to describe a relationship of mutual learning that occurs between a novice and an expert. It is a phrase which is becoming increasingly popular with educators in Aotearoa.

The arguments for learning that is initiated and controlled by the player cannot be refuted. We essentially learn to grasp, roll, crawl, walk and talk with 'motivation' as our only teacher. Traditionally, New Zealand has favoured a free-play approach to learning, a position that drew upon Piaget's 'ages and stages' theories of a naturally occurring, lineal process of development which sees children left alone to learn through their play. This discourse of learning through free-play remains powerful today despite having been challenged by Te Whāriki.

Theoretical knowledge around learning and development has developed significantly for the better. Social-constructivism sees cognitive development begin as social rather than individual activities and as children develop, they gradually internalize the processes they use in social contexts and begin to use them independently. Critically, for both teachers and the whole rationale of early childhood centres, children can perform more challenging tasks when assisted by more advanced and competent individuals through both informal and formal interactions. In language, mathematics, music, science — the benefits of working, playing and learning alongside a more knowledgeable peer are obvious. Considering that 90% of the world's people live in collective social

environments as opposed to Western individualist ones, this shift in theory is long overdue.

The educational theories of Emmi Pikler draw from both developmentalism and social-constructivism, but mix this with an image of the child that would make any anarchist smile.

Children gain an image of themselves and who they are, mirrored in the ongoing relationship between themselves and another. Our image of the child is constructed by who we are and the impact of social and historical discourses: charity, medical, gender, development, rights, economic, liberation and so on. These discourses create multiple lenses that reflect our own pathway. Our image of children and childhood is therefore socially constructed as is what we think children and childhood should be.

Pikler, and to a lesser degree, the Reggio Emilia approach, consider the child as an equal to be awarded the fullest of human rights:

- Respect as a unique individual with the right to live in the here and now
- Freedom to move and explore as one desires
- Time for uninterrupted play
- Acknowledgement and respect of the child's decisions, motives, interests etcetera
- To be an active participant in their lives
- To see the value in struggle and failure
- To allow development and learning at their speed
- Safety, stability and continuity of care

Tolstoy describes education as a compulsory, forcible action of one person upon another to create a predetermined idea of knowledge. Compare this with culture, the consequence of a myriad of influences upon a person, that grows through the free association of people based on the need to both give and receive knowledge. Teaching is a means of both culture and education, the difference being only the matter of compulsion.

At the core of the Pikler model is the removal of power-over relationships that twist the acquisition of culture into 'education.' The early childhood centre is not a closeted place of prescribed learning, rather it is an active participant of the wider community where the natural curiosity of children guides the curriculum. The adult agenda is primarily safety, but eyes and ears are always open: we notice, recognise and respond to the evolution of learning by providing knowledge, resources, and encouragement.

In typical double-speak, traditional educationalists talk of how we must restrict children's freedom in order to prepare them for freedom as adults

within a democracy. Somehow amidst this clusterfuck of control, the early childhood sector is handed a window of freedom and the irony of it is that it exists within a framework established by the State, which in making the curriculum so vague, hopes that the seeds of neoliberalism would filter through the personal pedagogy of teachers and thus create another generation of loyal obedient workers.

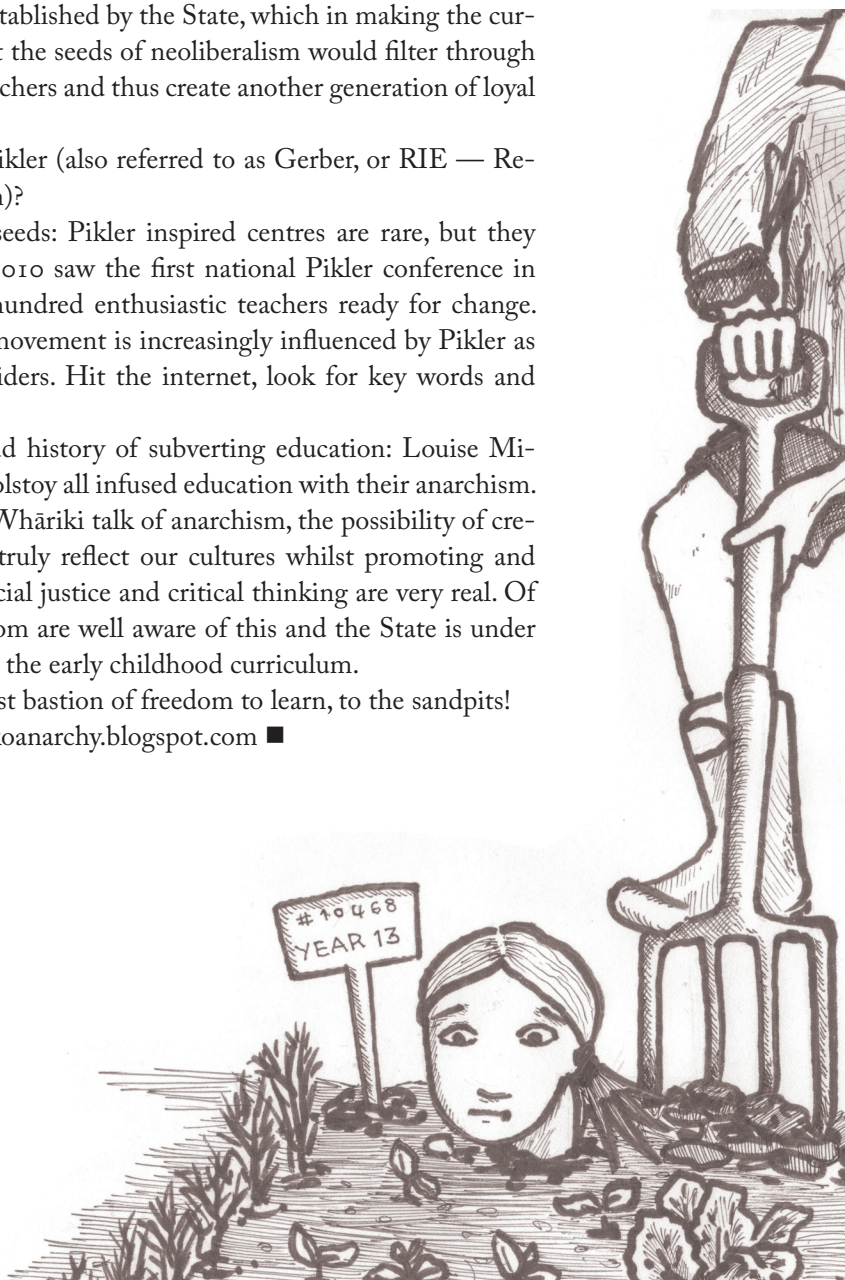
So where do we find Pikler (also referred to as Gerber, or RIE — Resources for Infant Education)?

Everywhere there are seeds: Pikler inspired centres are rare, but they are growing in popularity. 2010 saw the first national Pikler conference in Christchurch with several hundred enthusiastic teachers ready for change. The parent-run Playcentre movement is increasingly influenced by Pikler as are many home-based providers. Hit the internet, look for key words and phrases, ask.

Anarchists have a proud history of subverting education: Louise Michel, Francisco Ferrer and Tolstoy all infused education with their anarchism. While neither Pikler or Te Whāriki talk of anarchism, the possibility of creating learning centres that truly reflect our cultures whilst promoting and practising egalitarianism, social justice and critical thinking are very real. Of course the enemies of freedom are well aware of this and the State is under increasing pressure to revisit the early childhood curriculum.

So, in defence of this last bastion of freedom to learn, to the sandpits!

More information at akoanarchy.blogspot.com ■



THERE ARE TWO STORIES ABOUT RAPA NUI. One is undisputed, clearly documented and virtually ignored; the other is speculative, based on interpretation of scanty evidence and quite well known. Unsurprisingly, the first is about the wrecking of a people and culture by colonisation, the second about the supposed self-destruction of an indigenous culture due to their own foolishness and competitiveness.

The second story of Rapa Nui,¹ otherwise known as Easter Island, has become a much-quoted cliché amongst environmentalists, largely thanks to Jared Diamond's book *Collapse*. Simplistic versions of the story get quoted by environmentalists such as the Green Party co-leader Russell Norman, who used it as the basis of his speech to the party AGM in 2006, and by many others, for whom it's become a standard moral fable.

A TALE OF TWO TALES

Crucifying Easter Island

— SAM



THE FIRST STORY

Basically, the story environmentalists tell goes like this: Rapa Nui was settled by Polynesian people from the Marquesas around 500 AD. At the time the island was a fertile piece of land covered in forest and the population rapidly rose. A complex society developed with a fixation for carving and erecting large stone statues (moai). Clans competed to build bigger statues than their neighbours. Moving the statues required a large amount of timber, so the forest was logged and eventually the island's last tree was felled.

Consequently, the land became impoverished. Soil eroded, fishing became impossible since there was no timber for canoes, pressure on food resources increased. Starvation and war reduced the population massively and the culture vanished leaving a few poverty stricken survivors who spent their time engaged in fighting over the remaining resources, following religious cults and eating each other. This is cited as an allegory for our planet, a reminder of the need for rapacious humans to keep our consumption in balance with nature.

Actually, the history isn't clear at all. If you read anything about Rapa Nui you'll be struck by the number of times phrases such as 'it is thought...' 'it's possible that...' 'perhaps...' and the like occur. You can meander through pages of various books speculating on how moai were moved from the quarry on the Rano Rarakau volcano to the platforms on which they stood. There are suggestions ranging from the possible, such as wooden sledges, rafts, tracks lubricated with kumara and jiggling them along like a fridge, right up to anti-gravity and flying saucers. Along the way there are accounts of engineers experimenting

with cheap concrete moai copies in Wyoming and the Czech Republic, but, as is the case in many other questions of Rapa Nui's history, in the end the only honest answer is 'we haven't a clue how they did it.'

There's a similar discussion about why the statues were built and why they were thrown down. Unfortunately, we can't rely on Rapanui accounts, because what remained of the traditional knowledge after the population was decimated was knocked out by Christian missionaries.

THE OTHER STORY

Recent archaeological evidence tends to point to a later date for settlement of Rapa Nui, as late as 1200 AD. Estimates of the Rapa Nui population at its historic peak range up to 15 000 or more, which seems to be pushing it. Population estimates were made by counting house foundations, assuming a certain number of people per house and assuming a certain occupancy rate. That's a lot of assuming. When Europeans began visiting the island after 1722, the population was estimated to be 2000 to 3000.

The population appears to have grown to around 4000 or so by the mid-19th century. By 1877 it was down to 111.

Some early European visitors describe the people as healthy and well fed and the island as extremely fertile; others, such as James Cook (who is usually pretty down on indigenous people), were more negative in their reports. But it's clear that the population was surviving, had sufficient resources to offer food for sale and had extensive plantations of kumara, bananas, taro and other crops and plenty of chickens.

From 1805 whaling ships had kidnapped Rapanui men as crew and women to be raped. Rape and commercial sex introduced sexually transmitted diseases.

In the 1860s, raids by Peruvian ships enslaved an estimated 1400 of the population, selling them

1. I'm using the names in current usage on the island: Rapa Nui for the place and Rapanui for the people. There's debate about when this name was coined and by whom.

in Peru. A few survivors were later returned after pressure from the French government. They brought with them smallpox, which wiped out much of the remaining population.

Various forms of government ruled the island. Missionaries spread Christianity, opposed traditional practices and beliefs and encouraged the population to settle in two villages. In 1870 a French adventurer, Dutroux-Bornier arrived and declared himself lord of the island. He encouraged a successful war against the missionary-influenced village at Hangaroa, the missionaries left, along with many of their converts. Dutroux-Bornier encouraged locals to move to other islands as labourers for his mates. He was eventually assassinated and an associate, a Tahitian, took over.

After Chile annexed Rapa Nui in 1888, a Chilean sheep farmer leased most of the island, until he was replaced by a British company. The local population was moved into a small corner of the island and their land, which they were forbidden to enter, used to graze sheep. Poverty and diseases, especially leprosy, were rife. In 1914 the poverty-stricken islanders rose up in rebellion. Others tried to escape their homeland in small boats. In 1952 control of the island was passed to the Chilean navy, who ran it as a military ship. In 1964 another revolt occurred.

DOES THE EVIDENCE STACK UP?

There's a grain of truth in the environmentalists' story. Clearly, humans impacted on the Rapa Nui environment, as they did everywhere else they've turned up. Archaeological and palaeobotanical explorations confirm that Rapa Nui was

previously covered in sub-tropical forest with a palm, a now extinct relative of the Chilean *Jubaea chilensis*, as the main canopy and with the smaller hau and toromiro trees.

There are a number of theories on why the palms disappeared — climate change is sometimes cited, as is the introduction of kiore, the Polynesian rat.

As most writers have noticed, nearly all surviving palm seeds have been gnawed by kiore and were incapable of germination. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to notice that if seeds can't germinate, the tree will eventually die out. On Raoul Island where a project to restore the island's ecosystem by removing all introduced vegetation is in progress, the orange trees planted by settlers could be safely ignored as rats ate all the seeds.

Even if the Rapanui were aware of this problem, there was nothing they could do about it — removing rat populations from large islands was considered impossible until helicopters and GPS navigation allowed poisons to be spread precisely enough to kill every single rat.

The image of a person cutting down the last tree on an island is a strong one that sticks in the memory. [...] But it simply didn't happen. [...] there has never been a time when there were no trees on the island. [...] Yet Diamond continually refers to this mythical image.

Rat populations can effectively prevent forest re-growth occurring. On Hauturu (Little Barrier Island) near Auckland, kiore — the only introduced mammal — for many decades prevented any forest regeneration of land previously cleared for farming.

Archaeological evidence also suggests that much of the damage to the forest occurred before the laying down of charcoal deposits — which have been cited as resulting from fires used to clear land for agriculture.

On Rapa Nui sheep and other introduced animals finished off almost all the remaining forest. Eighty percent of the present plant species are introduced.

Diamond cites changes in the Rapanui diet, based on remains in middens, as evidence of famine, but the evidence is open to interpretation. For example, he claims that the disappearance of dolphin bones demonstrates that there was no longer timber to build decent canoes to fish or harpoon dolphins in deep waters. Timber definitely became scarce, but in 1722 the Dutch explorer Jacob Roggeveen was met by a Rapanui man paddling a canoe some five kilometres offshore and other Europeans report canoes, although in small numbers. Anyway, on a couple of occasions I've seen dolphins close enough to land to have been able to harpoon the bouncy little critters without getting my feet wet, had the mood taken me.

Who knows why the Rapanui gave up on dolphin meat? Not me. I can speculate, with the same lack of credibility as Diamond, that the dolphins got sick of being harpooned and avoided the island or that the supply of chickens made dolphin hunting unnecessary. I don't harpoon dolphins either, but it isn't due to a lack of timber for canoes, nor do I go hungry for lack of dolphin meat.

Diamond also cites the small wooden statuettes, moai kavakava, with their protruding ribs and sunken abdomens as evidence of famine, but the things also feature rounded buttocks and quite

normal legs and were carved to represent weird looking ghosts or spirits. In any case, cultural artefacts may represent rare and peculiar things, rather than common occurrences. Frequent car chases in US movies of the 1970s can't be used to prove that spectacular evasions of pursuing police were regular events in that decade.

Diamond naturally prefers the higher peak population estimates of 15 000 or so, which would mean a population density of 86 people per square kilometre (at 163 km², Rapa Nui is a little less than twice the size of Waiheke). His reasoning is self-fulfilling — since colonisation is known to have sharply reduced the population, he reasons that the population must have been large or else a prior population crash as a result of environmental destruction wouldn't have been possible. He simply constructs the facts to suit his thesis.

Another one of Diamond's claims is that the Rapanui turned to cannibalism (like a lot of Westerners, he's obsessed with cannibalism). He says human bones frequently turn up in later Rapa Nui rubbish heaps, but doesn't cite a source for this. Those who have studied the place at first hand don't back him up. Flenley and Bahn² say that, while cannibalism cannot be totally discounted, there is no real archaeological evidence, only oral traditions. These were recorded long after the culture had been destroyed and were likely to be corrupted by missionaries trying to turn people from the 'evil' pagan ways of their ancestors. Other studies suggest ritual cannibalism existed, but not to the extent of being a significant food source.

To give him credit, Diamond's story is slightly more complex than the simplified versions trotted out by the likes of Norman and other re-tellers. Diamond at least mentions the evidence for other theories of forest destruction, even if he rejects them. However, Diamond repeatedly comes

2. John Flenley and Paul Bahn, *The Enigmas of Easter Island*, Oxford University Press 2002.

back to bogus but powerful images, particularly the phrase 'What did the islander think as he cut down the last palm tree?'

The image of a person cutting down the last tree on an island is a strong one that sticks in the memory. Russell Norman puts it like this: 'The people who cut down the last tree knew that they were cutting down the last tree.' But it simply didn't happen. Even Diamond notes that the forest destruction would have been gradual. After several generations had felled trees, the last palm sapling would have been an oddity of a no longer useful species.

The last native tree, a toromiro growing on a scree slope out of reach of sheep, was actually cut down in 1960 (interestingly, research with a close relative of the toromiro shows the seeds are unharmed, and possibly encouraged to germinate, by rat predation). By this time several introduced tree species were present — there has never been a time when there were no trees on the island.

Yet Diamond continually refers to this mythical image. Why?

FAIRY STORIES

The probable answer is that it's a good story. It sells books. History is littered with good stories that probably didn't happen, but are a lot more interesting than the boring reality. And history is full of historians with theories to prove, looking for evidence that fits the bill. Diamond is in a long line of Westerners coming to Rapa Nui with a theory to prove.

The Kon-Tiki guy, Thor Heyerdahl, tried to find evidence of a non-Polynesian race, with a European connection, settling Rapa Nui from South America — it being obvious to him that lowly Polynesians were incapable of building the moai. Erich von Daniken went one better by speculating that the island was settled by stone carving aliens.

All this is standard tabloid journalism, albeit with an academic façade. If you want to make up

silly stories and present them as fact, it's always best to choose a place about which little is known and people who have no power to refute your assertions (Though globalisation may be breaking this down in places — Diamond is currently facing a lawsuit from two Papua New Guineans he apparently misrepresented in a New Yorker article, aptly titled *Vengeance is Ours*). This is why British newspapers quote anonymous Russian scientists and set their made-up stories in places such as Kazakhstan or small New Zealand townships.

Secondly, why do Diamond and co gloss over the destruction of the Rapanui people and culture by colonisation? There are a number of reasons — stories about colonisation aren't good sellers, while 'green' stories are currently fashionable. An account of the impacts of colonisation on the Rapanui doesn't fulfil Diamond's purpose, nor add weight to his pre-formed ideas. There are some nasty skeletons in the closet for those who dig around with colonial history, particularly if you are White and wealthy and live in a colonised country.

Mainstream environmentalists often try to elevate 'the environment' as a determining issue that transcends merely human concerns. It becomes a weapon against those who examine the workings of human societies and are concerned that they are riddled with authoritarianism, class oppression, racism and sexism. Just as Marxists once relegated sexism to be something minor to be considered 'after the revolution', capitalist and social democrat environmentalists dismiss colonisation as a low priority, preaching a reactionary 'we are all in this together' mantra.

Diamond, Norman and the rest are simply typical of their peer groups in their studied disinterest in the impacts of European colonisation on indigenous people. In Diamond's chapter on Australia in *Collapse*, one might imagine an account of Aboriginal lifestyles might be of interest to a writer proclaiming a mission to help us live within our environmental limits. It could at



Above: More than 300 protest the closure of Fundo Vaitea, in favour of the Hitoriangi clan, in defense of the Sasipa (corfo) workers, and against the Chilean government's maltreatment of Rapa Nui and the people, February 2011.

least be worth mentioning the failure of settlers to learn from Aboriginal practices as a factor in their inability to adapt to the local environment. But no, in the book *Aboriginals* barely get half a paragraph.

The Rapanui do a bit better; in a 40-page chapter, the history of colonisation gets a paragraph and a half.

There's much to be learned here. The story of ecological collapse has some foundation — people often do great damage to newly discovered environments, often putting into effect cycles that have unexpected consequences. Left to them-

selves, they sooner or later learn to either live in something close to a balance with their ecosystem or their society eventually collapses.

Capitalism, particularly in its vicious off-with-the-gloves colonial form, is a different story. It has no need to live within its ecological means and is willing to wreak destruction and move elsewhere. If people get in the way, they are bought, sold or exterminated. If they possess something it wants, it forms a conspiracy with the State to legally steal it. Determined resistance can keep it in check, or force it to behave with some slight decency, but in essence it's a destructive force. The

experience of the Rapanui is grim, but no more so than that of many other cultures in their encounters with capitalism.

There are a couple of lessons here for Russell Norman and other environmentalists. If you want to survive, you can't make a nice accommodation with the perpetrators of ecocide: either capitalism and colonialism have to go, or planet Earth does.

And if you want to tell fairy tales, stick to fairies and don't steal other people's history to suit your own purposes.

UPDATE ON RAPA NUI

Rapanui activism has been on the rise in recent years. The full integration of the island with Chile in 1966 meant there were no barriers to immigration to the island by Chileans, but a law was passed preventing non-Rapanui (other than the Chilean government) purchasing land from locals.

In 2009, Mataverí airport was occupied and briefly closed down by protests against the increasing number of tourists and Chilean immigrants. The increasing non-Rapanui population has given rise to fears that locals will become politically and economically marginalised and that the population is outgrowing the available medical services and other infrastructure.

In 2010 Leviante Araki, head of the Rapanui Parliament, wrote to the Pacific Islands Forum and the president of Chile, proposing the country secede from Chile and create political links with the rest of Polynesia.

A long-standing grievance has been the land occupied by the initially government-run Hanga Roa Hotel. The land was originally taken with the agreement of the Hitorangi clan in what was believed to be a temporary arrangement. During the rule of the Pinochet regime, the hotel was 'privatised' and the land title transferred to one of the dictator's mates.

Last year the hotel and other sites were occupied by the original owners. Paramilitary gen-

darmes were despatched to the island and, despite a court twice rejecting applications for a judicial order to evict the occupiers, violently ended the protests with tear gas, rubber bullets and batons.

The current owners of the hotel have proposed turning it over — in ten years time — to a group of local Rapanui businesspeople. The Hitorangi clan have not been consulted on the decision and are opposed to it. The dispute continues and a demonstration of 200 supporters of the Hitorangi clan, and for autonomy for the island, took place in February this year. ■

SOURCES

Grant McCall. *Rapanui: Tradition and Survival on Easter Island.* Sydney: George Allen and Unwin, & Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii, 1994.

Jared Diamond. *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed.* New York: Viking, 2005.

Alfred Metraux. *Ethnology of Easter Island.* Honolulu: Bernice P. Bishop Museum Press reprint, 1971.

Terry L. Hunt, et al. Late Colonization of Easter Island. *Science* 311. 2006.

Terry L Hunt. Rethinking Easter Island's Ecological Catastrophe. *Journal of Archeological Science.* 2006.

Benny Peiser. From Genocide to Ecocide: The Rape of Rapa Nui. *Energy and Environment.* Vol 16 No. 3 & 4. 2005.

Mike Maunder. The Conservation of the Extinct Toromiro Tree. www.kew.org. 2008.

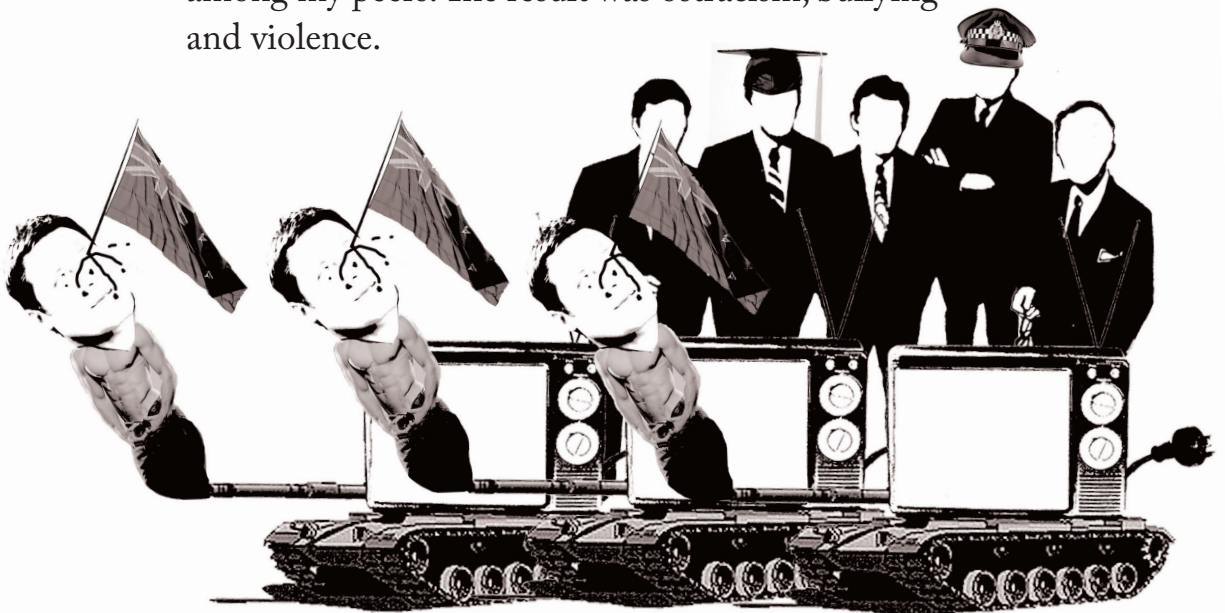
Emma Young. Easter Island: A Monumental Collapse. *New Scientist.* 31st of July 2006.

THOUGHTS ON A NON-OPPRESSIVE MASCULINITY

— Chris

CONSIDERING HOW INFLUENTIAL gender politics has been in my life, I've certainly found it difficult to write about in depth. Like any effective system of oppression, our gender identities are strictly enforced and most are barely aware of it. Thinking back to my younger years, I feel like I could write a book on the countless occasions where gender norms of being a 'man' were enforced on me. This became more pronounced around the age of 13, when it became clear I was not fitting into the masculine box that had been firmly established among my peers. The result was ostracism, bullying and violence.

ARTWORK BY NIGEL AND CHRISTOPHER J



SINCE MY MID-TEENS when I first became exposed to radical politics I've been fortunate enough to be in some way connected to feminist and queer analyses of gender, sex and sexuality. Much of this experience has been rooted in the idea that these categories are something to be subverted, turned upside down, bent or thrown out altogether.

These days my paid work is in facilitating sexual violence prevention workshops in high schools. Much of my energy goes into working with young males trying to promote respectful sexual relationships, while at the same time challenging rape myths, sexism and homophobia. Reliving high school class dynamics in the context of sexual violence workshops is fascinating work. There are very set boundaries for what it is to be masculine in Aotearoa, especially with Pākehā males. I'm sure you can imagine what these boundaries are: teenage guys should be aggressive, tough, independent, dominant and of course every guy should want sex at all times. I also notice how homophobia is used as a policing mechanism to ensure that young males carry on these traits. If I had a dollar for every time a student called something or someone 'gay' for acting outside a gender norm, well, I'd have a decent amount of dollars!

It does not take me very long to notice that the males in these classes do not fit this rigid interpretation of masculinity. Many of these boys try to hide that fact, much like I did, and I try to do my best to encourage those who deviate from gender norms. I once had a young man ask me in an anonymous question exercise, 'If I cry, does it make me less of a man?' I nearly started crying myself, partly because it is so tragic that someone could think such a thing and partly because I was so happy that a young man was thinking about it at all.

Most of the males I work with in high schools are not going to be ready for radical gender theory, and at the moment I feel the best way to decrease male violence against women is to promote alternative masculinities based on a feminist analysis of gender oppression. I don't have much of a personal interest in masculinity myself, but am primarily concerned with strategic ways to decrease violence against women. Now, this leads to some questions: within a social hierarchy that enforces male privilege, to what extent is it possible for there to be a feminist masculinity? If it is not possible, how does this influence our struggle against gender violence and oppression in an anti-capitalist context?

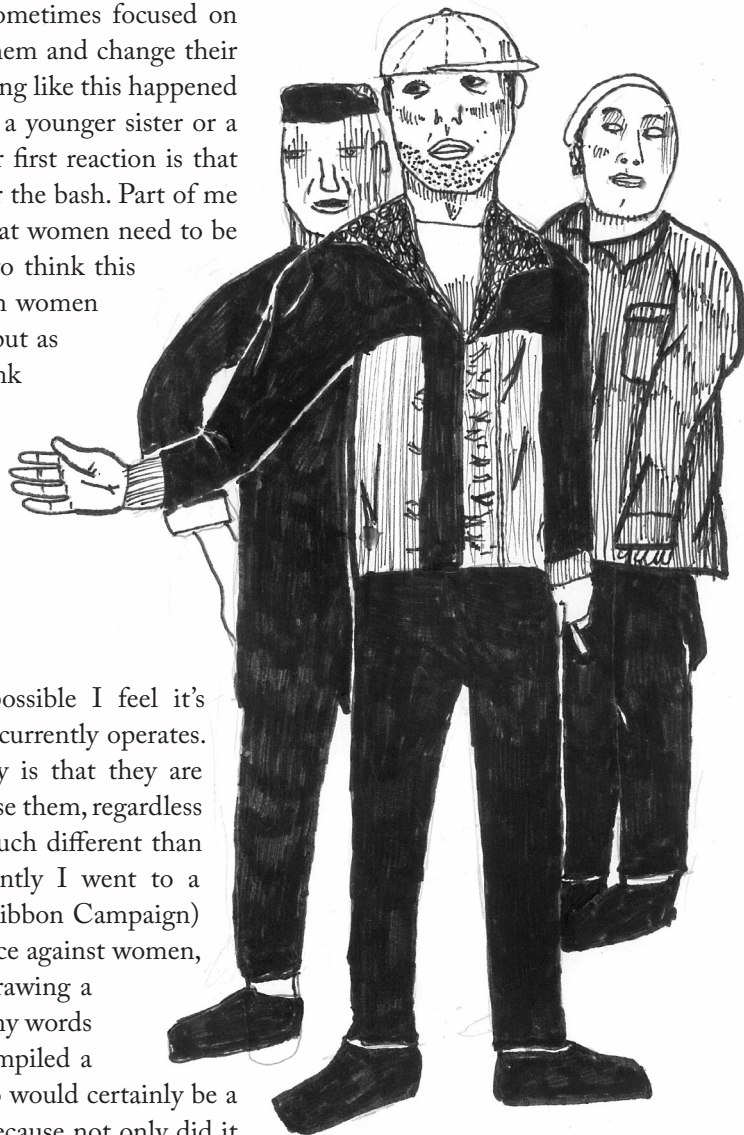
Sometimes I wonder if by being involved in promoting non-oppressive versions of masculinity I'm just reinforcing a gender binary I do not support in the first place. What about genderqueer and transgender people? The following discussion is not meant to exclude, as oppressive masculinity certainly affects those with transgender and genderqueer identities. When I speak of male or female I simply mean anyone who identifies as such.

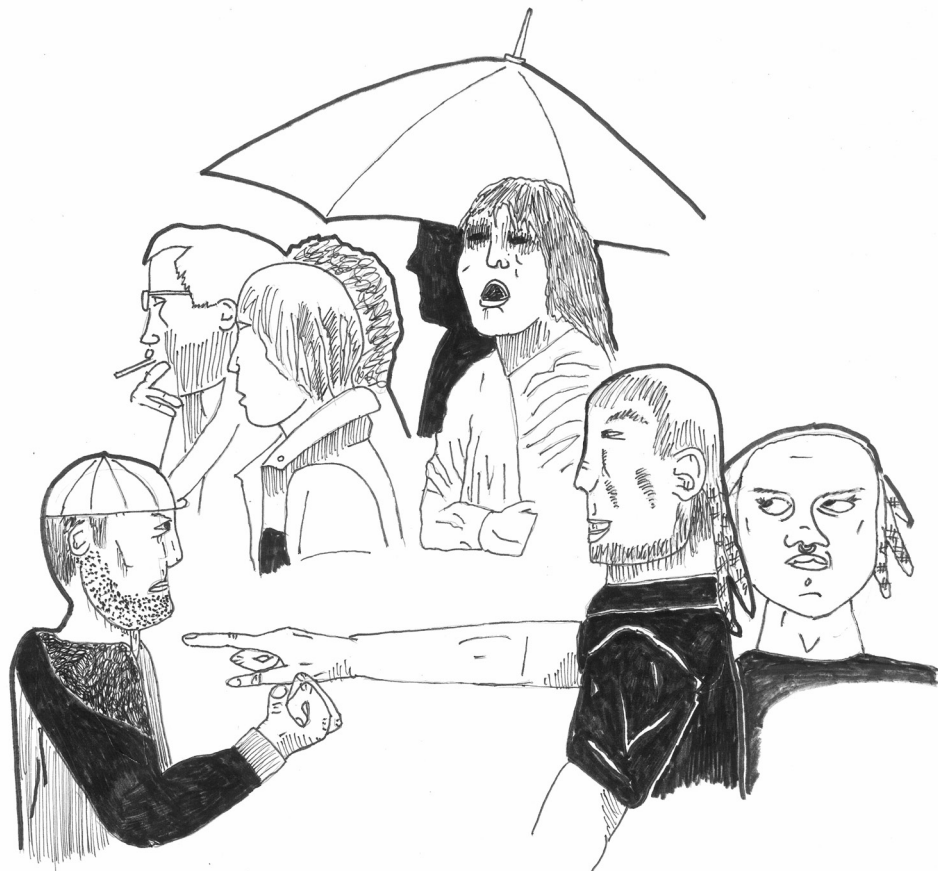


Since the reality is that there exists a firmly entrenched binary with one half oppressing the other, does it make sense long term to work within these confines to at least make the balance less violent? It may not be that radical, but I can see it work in a way. Rape myths are very common in classes that I facilitate, and are often the most contentious topic of discussion. One of the most common rape myths debated in class is the idea that a female is either partly or completely at fault if she is drunk or high and has sexual violence perpetrated against her. Often a group of young women will insist that she should not have put herself in such a stupid situation or that she was 'asking for it.' This will frequently be backed up by a group of vocal boys saying the same thing. In a situation like this I've sometimes focused on the discussion with the guys and tried to level with them and change their tune. I have asked them how they would feel if something like this happened to women in their lives that they care about, perhaps a younger sister or a girlfriend? What would their reaction be? Often their first reaction is that they would gather their mates and give the perpetrator the bash. Part of me feels like I am exploiting a distinctly macho notion that women need to be protected, in order to bust a rape myth. But I'd like to think this makes young men understand the connection between women they care about and everyone else, not as possessions but as people that they care about. If this is the case, then I think it will reduce violence in the short and long term. That is one example of working within or exploiting the gender binary in a positive way. But although it may undermine oppressive masculinity, I'm not sure whether or not I am helping to make a less gendered world.

HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY

To figure out if a non-oppressive masculinity is possible I feel it's important to define the context in which masculinity currently operates. Ideally, my conception of masculinity and femininity is that they are something fluid, to be taken on by anyone wanting to use them, regardless of the body they have. This of course is something much different than the dominant version of Western masculinity. Recently I went to a workshop by Michael Kauffman (founder of White Ribbon Campaign) about violence prevention programs, focused on violence against women, which are aimed at men. He started the session by drawing a large box on a whiteboard and asked participants for any words they associate with being a 'real' man. Quickly we compiled a list of words that amounted to a picture of a man who would certainly be a giant oppressive dickhead. The exercise worked well because not only did it





show how being a 'real man' is so tied to violent behaviour but it also showed how unattainable many of these traits are and that ultimately, they harm males trying to live up to them. This standard of dominant masculinity has also been referred to as 'hegemonic masculinity.'

Recently I helped facilitate at a four day youth sexual health hui. At one point there was an opportunity to have a discussion with just the 'guys' about expectations around their gender roles as young men. Almost every person, and especially those you would describe as the most masculine, struggled with expectations. As one fellow put it, you either 'make it' as a man or get beat up.

The term 'hegemonic masculinity' has been used to define these traits that are the most honoured and influential cultural representation of masculinity.¹ Or in other words the set of traits

and behaviours which constitute an ideal man. This particular version of masculinity will continue to be hegemonic so long as it corresponds to institutions of power and privilege.² If hegemonic masculinity is intimately tied to our oppressive social hierarchy, where does that leave anti-capitalists involved in anti sexism work? In a way, I see the struggle against dominant masculinity as a kind of metaphor for our struggle against capitalism. Can capitalism be reformed into something humane, or does it by necessity rely on violence and exploitation? I'd say that capitalism in its core relies on violence but at the same time I'll support pretty much anything that mitigates that violence. The only real condition of this reform is that it is a means, not an end. Ultimately we need something new and socially just to take its place. The same question applies to masculinity — is it possible to work to reform hegemonic masculinity

1. Flood, Michael. 'Between Men and Masculinity'. In *Manning the Next Millennium: Studies in Masculinities*. Ed. S. Pearce and V. Muller. Black Swan Press, 2002.

2. Ibid, 208.

so that it becomes non-oppressive? I've seen quite a few initiatives that have aimed to alter our current dominant form of masculinity. Social marketing campaigns are everywhere you look these days, portraying masculine men standing against violence, as well as a growing number of organisations that work specifically with men around issues of modern masculinity. This is hard work, and necessary; I think campaigns like these lay the groundwork for more substantial change down the road. Long term I believe that broader social relations need to change for there to be a more comprehensive change to dominant masculinity and the treatment of women in society. Capitalism thrives on inequality and privilege, and its relationship with sexism and other forms of oppression is mutually reinforcing. This isn't to say they are permanently linked, but I think that justice and equality for women is only going to be possible if we live in a democratic, socially just society.

ALTERNATIVE MASCULINITIES

There are two main questions that come to mind: what could a feminist or 'radical' masculinity look like, and is such a thing possible in a society with reinforced male privilege? This concept is a very new one and still evolving. First, it would be one that pushes at the edges of masculinity's accepted norms and definitions. In other words:

Radical masculinity is a masculinity that is transformative — the performance of masculine identity that aims in some way, to *change* how masculinity/ies are conceptualised. Radical masculinities are often concerned with challenging and criticising gender binaries, and problematising traditional understandings of what is male.³

3. *What is radical Masculinity?* 2009. <http://criticalmasculinities.wordpress.com/2009/12/20/what-is-radical-masculinity/>

From reading prominent bloggers on gender and masculinity, it seems to me that a 'radical' masculinity, rather than being some sort of blueprint to end sexism, is really just an example of being a decent human being. To answer my own question, is a feminist masculinity possible in a society with reinforced male privilege? Perhaps it could be, but only with some conditions. I think the essential characteristic of a potential feminist based masculinity would be an ongoing consciousness of male privilege and how it affects our behaviours and choices, and a willingness to engage with the issues this raises. I hesitate to make the statement that there can be a *feminist* masculinity, because feminism is rooted in the direct experience of gender oppression. Perhaps it is possible, but I don't think it is the place of those who benefit from male privilege to make that call. I identify as 'pro feminist' rather than explicitly feminist for those same reasons: so as to not appropriate an experience I do not know.

COLLECTIVE STRUGGLE

So far, I have discussed 'radical' masculinity primarily in the context of individual practice. Sometimes individualised practice is criticised as being isolated — the basis for insular subcultures or lifestyleism, but it doesn't necessarily have to be that way. It also creates openings for discussion, collaboration, mutual learning, and solidarity that can be an essential part of building the basis for collective, confrontational struggles.⁴ Collective action could be networks of men who publicly challenge sexism. Recently an Auckland radio station had a 'win a Ukrainian wife' contest that attracted much public attention and an organised group of men challenging it would have been helpful. Discussion groups, collectives and

4. Neigh, Scott. *Radical Masculinity?* In *Canadian lefty in Occupied Land*. 2009. <http://scottneigh.blogspot.com/2009/12/radical-masculinity.html>



networks can serve as a basis for a wide range of vital anti-sexism work.

As for anti-capitalist struggle in Aotearoa, I'm not aware of many proactive collective efforts to challenge gender oppression. What is clear though is that our communities are often paralyzed by acts of violence towards women. Not only is there much anti-oppression work to be done amongst ourselves but we currently lack the processes and skills needed to address and resolve violent acts after they happen.

So really there is plenty of work to be done, we just need more people to take anti-sexism seriously and get involved. The only space I've been able to engage with anti-sexism in a collective manner has been within feminist NGOs in Auckland. There is currently a push to get more men involved in violence prevention programs and male engagement in the community is an increasing focus. I believe there is a danger of including men in feminist organisations, in the sense that men

need to be very aware of the space they take up. In violence prevention workshops my female co-facilitator can make a point, and five minutes later I can say the exact same thing and students are far more likely to listen to me. The same principle works in general for men everywhere and we need to be sensitive to this so we do not marginalise the voices of women we are working with.

There are other dangers as well, as the Australian pro-feminist activist Michael Flood states:

There is no doubt that involving men in the work of preventing violence against women involves dangers: the dilution of a feminist agenda, the lessening of resources for the victims and survivors of this violence, and the marginalization of women's voices and leadership. These dangers overlap with those associated with involving men in gender-related programming and policy in general.⁵

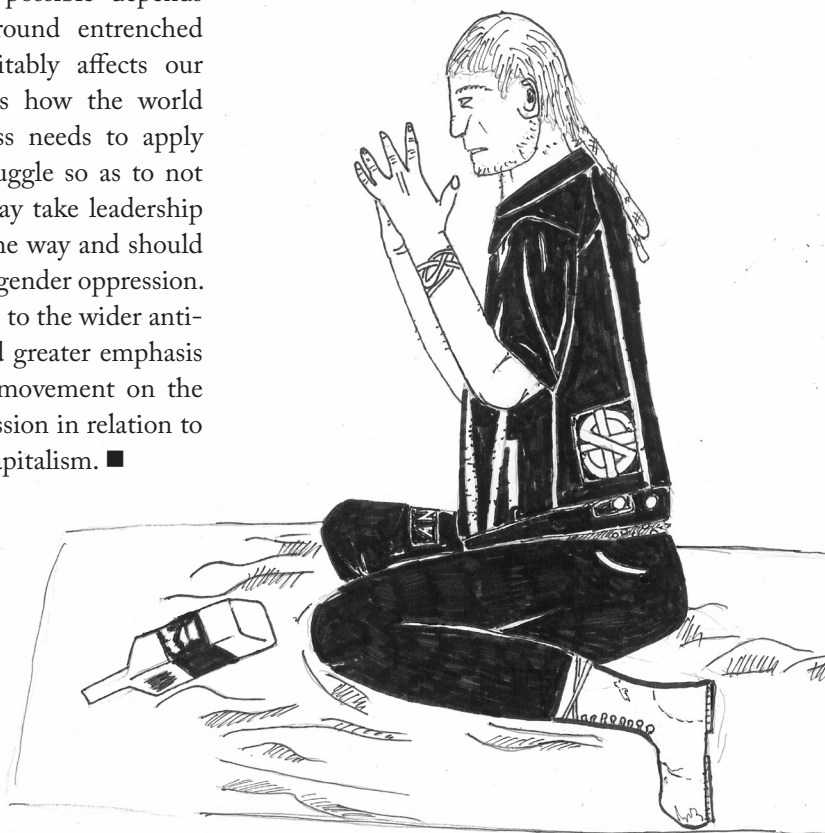
5. Flood, Michael. *Lets Stop Violence Before it Starts*. 2009

Flood states that it is important for men to be involved in prevention programs because men are the primary perpetrators of violence. For those men involved in this struggle there are three key principles:

- That work done is rooted feminist analysis/content/frameworks etc.
- That there be partnerships with women and women's groups. And even accountability.
- Protection of 'women's space,' women-only, and women-focused programs.⁶

These principles are not just applicable in the world of NGOs but any anti-oppression work being done by men alongside women.

So back to my original questions, I think that alternative and feminist based masculinities are vital in providing space for individual acts of resistance as well as collective anti-sexism work. The extent to which this feminist based masculinity is possible depends on ongoing male consciousness around entrenched male privilege and how this inevitably affects our thoughts and behaviours as well as how the world interacts with us. This consciousness needs to apply to male involvement in feminist struggle so as to not appropriate, marginalise or in any way take leadership away from feminists, who have led the way and should continue to do so in the fight against gender oppression. These principles are deeply applicable to the wider anti-capitalist movement in Aotearoa and greater emphasis needs to be placed by men in our movement on the importance of fighting gender oppression in relation to other types of oppression linked to capitalism. ■



6. Ibid, page 16.



— PS

GOING RURAL

THE DESIRE OF MANY ANARCHISTS to live rurally, in self-sufficient communities closely resembling post-revolutionary living has been a hot topic in our circles for decades. Some rubbish the idea because they view it simply as hippies or lifestyle anarchists running away from the real working class struggle. For others it is the one and only solution towards the building of an egalitarian society.

In this brief article, I am not making the case for either position, but simply presenting three case studies of rural communities. I will say, however, that in my opinion revolution becomes possible when people come together and organise, and locality does not come into the equation.

The three communities are the French community of Tarnac, Grüebli in Switzerland and Parihaka in Aotearoa.

TARNAC

LOCATED AT APPROXIMATELY 715m above sea level on the Plateau de Millevaches in central France, Tarnac is a long way from anywhere. In a region that has only around 14 inhabitants per square kilometre (compared with France's average of 116, NZ is 16), depopulated over recent decades because of its inaccessibility to industrial farming practices, the community responded with a great deal of enthusiasm when, a few years ago, young people started moving to Tarnac (population 327).

In 2005, a collective of urban political activists bought an old farmhouse called 'Goutailloux.' They were keen to start a rural agricultural project and were attracted by the region's communist past. The Plateau was part of liberated France during the Second World War where communist partisans fought against the Nazis. Veterans of that struggle are still alive today. Until March 2008, the mayors had been members of the Communist Party.

Over the next few years, more collectives formed and more land was purchased with anti-capitalist activists from across Europe moving to Tarnac and its surrounding villages. They established gardens, fixed houses, learned how to look after animals and got involved in community af-

fairs. When the only shop was going to close its doors, it was the new arrivals who took over the lease. They now run the shop and the bar. Several times a week, they do a food-delivery with a truck across the district (a red star decorates the truck). This service is particularly popular with the elderly population.

These new inhabitants are currently developing cheap and easy ways of building more houses. Around 30-

40 people have moved to Tarnac as part of the new collectives. They say that they didn't move there to introduce political labels and theory to Tarnac, but rather to contribute to the community, pursue their agricultural experiments as well as create a space for the radical left from across Europe to meet and plot.

'If we have settled in Tarnac, it is of course for the old traditions of resistance to central authority, working-class mutual assistance and rural communism that survive there. Our idea has never been for us to take refuge there, but on the contrary to regroup there so as to elaborate other social relations, to make liveable relations with the world that are different than those that currently dominate, and precisely devastate the world.'

On 11 November 2008, Tarnac was raided big time. Hundreds of cops from France's anti-terrorism unit surrounded the original collective house, arrested people and accused them of terrorism. Further raids took place in other flats across France. By the end of the operation, nine people sat in jail for periods up to six months. Ten were subsequently accused of 'criminal association for the purposes of terrorist activity' in connection with the sabotage of train lines that had caused delays on the French railways. So far, very little evidence has been presented against them, but central to the prosecution case is their alleged authorship of a book, *The Coming Insurrection*, and

Opposite: Mirco standing before Grübli, Switzerland.



Above: Police from France's anti-terrorism unit scour Tarnac, November 2008.

their supposed association with what the French government and media have termed an 'ultra-left' or 'anarcho-autonomous movement.'

The book, written by *The Invisible Committee*, is divided into two parts. The first attempts a complete diagnosis of the totality of modern capitalist civilisation, moving through what is referred to as the 'seven circles' of alienation: self, social relations, work, the economy, urbanity, the environment and, to close, civilisation. The latter part of the book begins to offer a prescription for revolutionary struggle based on the formation of communes, or affinity group-style units, in an underground network that will build its forces outside of mainstream politics, and attack in moments of crisis — political, social, and environmental — to push towards an anti-capitalist revolution. The insurrection envisioned will revolve around, 'the local appropriation of power by the people, of the

physical blocking of the economy and of the annihilation of police forces.'

The book and its ideas have certainly received a popularity boost as a result of the raids, particularly in North America (Glenn Beck's rants on Fox News would have helped, too). While the initial months following the raids were hard for the people in Tarnac, the formation of a strong solidarity group and the eventual return of all the accused to the village (after bail conditions were varied) have strengthened the initiatives by the collectives.

In the bar adjoining Tarnac's grocery store, as farmers tucked into their lunch, Jérôme, 28, who moved from the city seeking an alternative lifestyle in Tarnac, said he knew those who had been arrested and had stayed at their farm. 'The portrayal of this place has been absurd. The farm is a very collective place, and the village has a con-

vivial atmosphere, doors are always open. They say we lived a secretive existence hidden away in the woods. That's not true — the farm is beside the road. They talk of a 'group' when there is no group. They say there was a ringleader... but there is no boss here, that's an absurdity. It's against our whole thinking.'

Chopping wood outside his house in Tarnac, André Filippin, 65, said: 'It's ridiculous. I see them at the shop every day of the year. I help them with their drains; they help me. They are people who came to [the region] to change their lives, to help people. We don't view them as terrorists here.'

GRÜEBLI

'It has to start somewhere; it has to start sometime. What better place than here, what better time than now?'

AT 1300 METRES ABOVE SEA LEVEL in central Switzerland, a group of people have found their place. A family of four plus a few individual humans along with seven cows, 21 sheep, pigs, chickens and geese are creating a self-sufficient collectively run farm with 32 acres of paddocks and 146 acres of forest.

About 10 years ago, Heidi and Mirko decided to move to the countryside after spending many years in Switzerland's squatting and punk scene. While they did not grow up on farms, they possess many talents. Mirko, for example, is a shoemaker by trade, and Heidi spent years working as a chef at various left-wing restaurants. They were lucky enough to find a place in the Swiss pre-Alps.

The closest neighbour is 30 minutes away on foot, and there is no road to the farm. Trampers come by during the summer months, and the establishment of a small stall has generated some income. They also receive government subsidies for farming. In Switzerland, farming is heavily subsidised. It is not without some irony that a farm run by a group of anarchists receives money that is made available as a result of the right-wing

political parties! Farming, and particularly farming at high altitudes, is seen as part of the Swiss national heritage (think *Heidi*). It is argued that unless it is supported by subsidies, it will disappear entirely.


After working on a farm for a summer, Heidi and Mirko were given the opportunity to move into a farmhouse that was only really used during the summer months. However, they decided to stay there permanently, establish gardens, start making cheese and fix up the house.

Soon after, they had kids who now go to school and kindergarten. For them, walking to school would take a very long time. Fortunately for the family, a cable car was recently built to their house from the valley. Again, most of the money came from the federal government, which views the area as 'a landscape of national significance' where 'structural improvements for farmers with kids' are of a high priority. While only 450 metres in length, the cable car covers 350 metres in altitude, dramatically decreasing the time to get to school and the nearest town.


While it sounds like the idyllic nuclear family story, Mirko and Heidi never lost touch with the punk and DIY scene. They continue organising concerts on their farm and having people to stay and work with them.

They are currently looking for more people to move there, as they are now able to purchase the house and land. They want to establish a collective, not continue as they have with the two of them running the place and having all the responsibilities. In their call-out they write:

We consciously don't participate in the free market because we simply don't feel like it. However, the logical conclusion is that we don't want to work like the free market either and are not clocking hours. The work on the farm, making cheese, cooking and washing... for us that's life with a lot of qualities – and not dull work. If you think: Today I did a 10-



There is no one way or one place to organise. For the Zapatistas in Chiapas it's the caracoles. Siberian workers join together in the anarcho-syndicalist Confederation of Labour, and in South Korea, peasants link up in the Federation of Farmers and Fishermen. A revolution evolved out of the occupation of Tahrir Square in Cairo while in the squats of Europe's big cities, a buzzing feeling of interconnectedness takes you from one meeting to the next.



hour day but that person only worked for 6 hours – you won't get very far here. It is the responsibility of each individual to contribute to the success of the project and to communal living. One of our rules shall be that we won't have many rules. That's why the top priority in our view for someone living here is a willingness to work on yourself.

PARIHAKA

BETWEEN TARANAKI, a 2500 metre high volcano, and the Tasman Sea on Aotearoa's West Coast, lies a small settlement called Parihaka. You might wonder why people didn't build their houses right by the sea where food is abundant? They did. However, the initial settlement was destroyed by the cannons fired from the boats of the colonial forces. So the people moved inland, only to find themselves confronted by a massive army of 1500 soliders a few years later.

With the publication of Dick Scott's book *Ask That Mountain* in 1975, the Parihaka exhibition in Wellington in 2000 and the International Parihaka Peace Festival held at Parihaka in recent years, the invasion of this village in 1881 and the massive confiscation of land in Taranaki has entered the consciousness of thousands of people across Aotearoa. However, to a lot of people Parihaka is not just a place where you can dance to reggae music for a few days in early January, but it is also home.

About 50 people live at Parihaka Pā permanently, and many more call it their home. Isolated in rural Taranaki, it is a lively place where half the population is under 18. While at its peak in the 1870s, the community was inhabited by over 2000 people, making it the biggest Māori community in the country at the time. The 1881 invasion of the Pā by armed colonial troops coupled with the subsequent occupation and incarceration of hundreds of villagers in the South Island led to a massive decline.

The monthly meetings on the 18th and 19th of each month, which started as a response to the war in Waitara in 1860, have by and large held the community together. Today, they are still the main fora for discussion. The meeting days involve preparing food together, eating together, a powhiri for manuhiri (welcoming of guests) and discussion both in Te Reo and English on the topics of the day.

While the community is small and economically poor, plans are developing to grow the numbers of inhabitants again and create a sustainable economic base. A town plan is in the works, and an upgrade to infrastructure has started.

Survival can be challenging in a rural community like Parihaka. Some people find employment in the surrounding dairy farms, while others are fortunate enough to find part-time work locally. Some people on the Pā drive the 40 km to town everyday for work. Many on the Pā are busy caring for family or living on a pension.

People live in individual single-family homes. The village is classified as a reserve, which means no one pays rates to the council, and many houses are built without council consents. While people own their houses, the land is owned collectively by thousands of people: the descendants of Parihaka. There is a governance body elected by the people that is responsible for looking after the infrastructure.

The three marae (communal meeting houses) are the centre of activity in the village. These are where political meetings are held, as well as birthday parties, funerals, family reunions, school visits, monthly meetings, and they are used as a place of learning. Everybody contributes to the marae by working in the kitchens, feeding people, growing food in the garden, doing maintenance work and playing a role during powhiri.

Outside of the community garden and the marae, there aren't very many collective projects yet. While everybody helps each other out, there are no concrete plans in terms of organising education for the children in the village, housing and large-scale cultivations to provide enough food for the residents and the marae. However, people have started to organise themselves, and many ideas are taking shape.

Like in every other community, there is also conflict. While it can get pretty heated in a meeting, the guiding principles put in place by leaders of the resistance in the 1800s have meant that people want to make the village last for the next generation. After all, everybody is fairly closely related.

The dairy farms that surround Parihaka are more of a reminder of the massive land confiscation of the 1800s than a picturesque rural backdrop. Colonisation continues to be a feature of life at Parihaka, and the struggle for justice is ongoing. But Parihaka is not a ghost town, not anymore at least. The tātarakihi (literally the cicada, but figuratively used for children) can be heard all across the village.

ONE NO, MANY YESES

THESE THREE EXAMPLES give some insight into the potential of radical rural living and revolutionary social changes; but country life isn't for everyone! The transformation of our world into one without oppression and hierarchy must happen everywhere: in the cities and the villages, in our bedrooms and our workplaces.

To me, it feels like we are more and more isolated. We might be able to boast having heaps of 'friends' on Facebook; but in reality, I miss the social interactions that seemed so natural before the internet came along (or was it just because I was a child?). As we all become more atomised and everything is commodified, the only answer can be to get together with people and organise. The cliché 'get-to-know-your-neighbour' isn't what I mean. After all, it might be the person two doors down from you instead that you really dig.

There is no one way or one place to organise. For the Zapatistas in Chiapas it's the caracoles. Siberian workers join together in the anarcho-syndicalist Confederation of Labour, and in South Korea, peasants link up in the Federation of Farmers and Fishermen. A revolution evolved out of the occupation of Tahrir Square in Cairo while in the squats of Europe's big cities, a buzzing feeling of interconnectedness takes you from one meeting to the next.

There are an infinite number of possibilities to organise for a life free of capital and the State. ■



LOOKING BACK AT
ANARCHISTS AND THE

2006 PROGRESSIVE
ENTERPRISES LOCKOUT

— ASHER

IN AUGUST 2006 OVER 500 UNIONISED WORKERS at Progressive Enterprises distribution centres in Auckland, Palmerston North and Christchurch, members of the National Distribution Union (NDU) called a 48 hour strike as a part of their effort to get a national contract, pay parity between the three centres and a pay rise (of a differing percentage at each site). The distribution centres supplied merchandise to Progressive owned supermarkets (including the Woolworths, Countdown, Foodtown and SuperValue brands) across New Zealand. The next day, August 26, Progressive announced that it was locking out the workers indefinitely. The lockout continued for almost a month, finally ending on September 21 with an agreement for pay parity and a 4.5% pay rise.

During the lockout, there were extensive solidarity actions and fundraising efforts throughout New Zealand and Australia. While I will give a brief overview of these, the main purpose of this article is to focus on the activity of anarchists in New Zealand, and to examine how anarchists interacted with both rank and file Progressive employees and union officials. I want to ask some questions that arise when supporting struggles from the outside: whose voices get listened to during an industrial dispute? How do we maintain ongoing contact with workers after industrial action has died down?

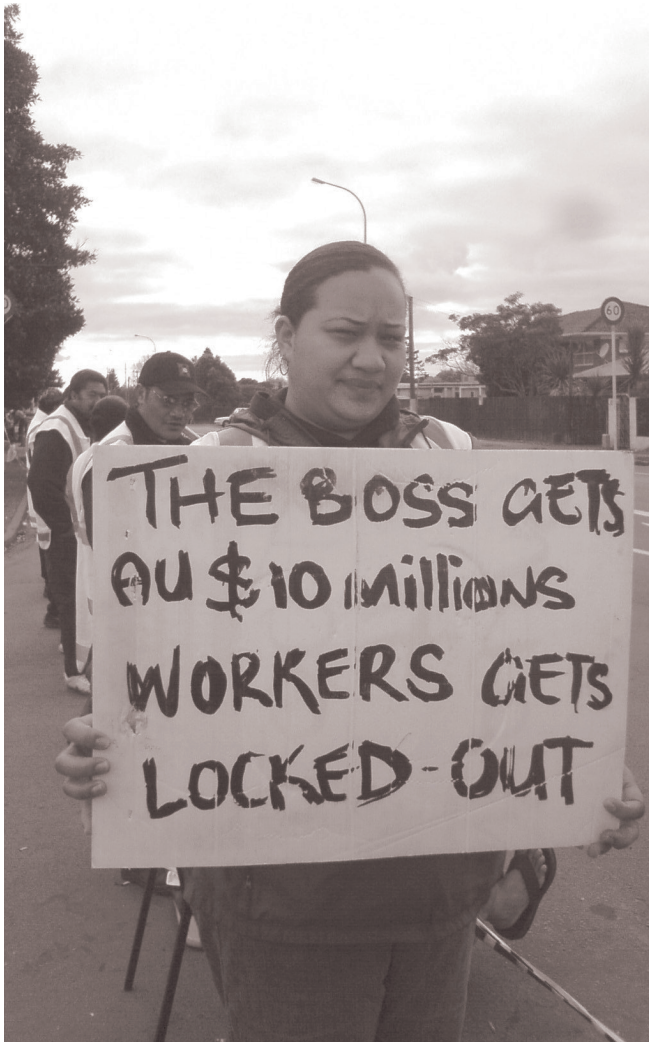
A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF ACTIONS TAKEN

THE PICKET LINES were of foremost importance in this struggle. At all three distribution centres, Progressive workers and their supporters held picket lines around the clock for the entirety of the lockout. In Auckland and Christchurch, picket lines held strong and more or less completely stopped trucks from entering or leaving. The picket line outside the Palmerston North distribution centre — which had the highest wages prior to the lockout — was less effective, with almost half of the 93 union members at the site scabbing on their workmates. Because of this the Palmerston North centre remained open during the lockout, although not at full functionality. To get around the picket lines, Progressive also set up a number of

makeshift distribution centres stocked with shipping containers in underground and aboveground car parks at their supermarkets. Some non-union temp workers hired by Progressive in Auckland quit their jobs after discussions with the locked-out workers.

Progressive also contracted Linfox Logistics, a 'supply chain solutions provider' to continue distribution from the makeshift centres across the country. There were some initial confrontations on picket lines in Auckland, including one on September 8 in which a Linfox driver swung a metal pole out his window at picketers — an incident which saw ten picketers (including Progressive employees and union officials) arrested by police. After this Linfox drivers agreed not to cross any picket lines in Auckland. This agreement did not extend to the rest of the country and did not stop Linfox drivers in Auckland making deliveries where picket lines did not exist.

As well as the permanent picket lines at the three striking distribution centres, there were flying pickets at some of the makeshift centres in different cities. These were sometimes held by Progressive employees and their supporters, and sometimes entirely by supporters. The flying pickets had a variety of effectiveness. Sometimes they managed to stop trucks entirely; other times they did not have the numbers to do so, or picketers lacked the willingness or ability to risk arrest.



There was also some illegal activity undertaken in an effort to impede work at some of the makeshift distribution centres. On several occasions padlocks holding the shipping containers shut had their keyholes glued shut. It's likely that this was only a minor inconvenience to Progressive since they would only have to cut off the old padlock and replace it with a new one.

Supporters also held an extensive informational campaign targeted at Progressive supermarkets around the country. Between two and ten people would stand outside the supermarket

doors, with collection buckets and leaflets (produced and printed in huge numbers by the NDU). Often the supporters would encourage shoppers to boycott Progressive supermarkets until the lockout was withdrawn and the workers' demands were met, although the NDU itself never actually called for a boycott. Anecdotal evidence exists that a number of people respected the boycott request and decided to shop elsewhere. Supporters also took leaflets inside the store. As the lockout progressed, more and more stores ran out of stock and had empty shelves, perfect for leaving leaflets on. At the time, Progressive supermarkets check-out staff (many of whom are also NDU members) were nearing negotiations for their own contract, and again, anecdotal evidence exists that checkout and security staff willingly turned a blind eye to leafleting and other activities inside supermarkets in a show of support for distribution centre staff.

Workers and their supporters organised public rallies and marches around New Zealand. In Palmerston North, over 200 people attended a rally at the distribution centre on September 16, which included a creative display of solidarity by the Postal Workers Union. They erected a mailbox among the tents used by picketers, and promised to deliver letters of support addressed to 'Camp Union, Lockout Island, Corner Mihaere Drive and Mako Mako Road, Palmerston North.' The Australian UNITE union organised several protests in Melbourne outside Woolworths stores, distributed leaflets encouraging a boycott of Australian Woolworths stores and raised funds. In Auckland there was a large march through the suburb of Mangere (where the distribution centre was located) which was seen as an opportunity for the distribution centre workers to thank the local community for their extensive support throughout the lockout.

Wharfies in New Zealand and Australia took action unofficially, slowing down unloading of goods destined for Progressive Enterprises

supermarkets. The Maritime Union of New Zealand (MUNZ) threatened to blacklist (that is, refuse to unload) Progressive cargo entirely, however the lockout finished before they carried out this threat. Overall, NDU researcher Joe Hendren stated that Progressive may have lost over \$15 million during the lockout.

On both sides of the Tasman supporters took on a huge and vital fund-raising effort. At picket lines, at public meetings, on protest marches and any other public area with high foot traffic, collection buckets were ever present. They received high levels of donations from the public — as an example, four supporters were able to collect \$1000 in just an hour during peak time at the Wellington train station. The NDU set up an 0900 telephone number that people could phone to make an automatic \$20 donation. MUNZ members agreed to each donate an hour of pay every week until the lockout ended. Many other unions made donations, including three Australian transport sector unions and Change To Win, an American union federation. In Palmerston North, the local branch of the Association of University Staff created an adopt-a-family scheme through which members were assigned to a locked-out worker and their family to support them directly. Additionally, supporters often brought food directly to picket lines. By the end of September over \$400 000 had been raised for the lockout fund, not counting donations of food or other materials. This support was vital to enable the workers to survive financially during the dispute, to ensure they could still pay their rent or mortgages and feed themselves and their families.

THE ANARCHIST RESPONSE TO THE LOCKOUT

ANARCHISTS TOOK PART IN NEARLY all of the actions listed above. In Auckland, two anarchists worked as organisers for the NDU (and one of them was among the ten arrested in the incident mentioned earlier). Other anarchists, most notably members of Radical Youth, an organisation made up of predominantly high-school aged people, also spent many hours on the picket lines and engaging in flying pickets. Wellington anarchists, without a local distribution centre, engaged in fund-raising, picketing a makeshift distribution centre in Lower Hutt (which saw three arrested for blocking a truck) and some also travelled up to Palmerston North to support the picket there. Christchurch anarchists were involved in setting up a support group for the locked out workers with other radicals. This group helped coordinate flying pickets, fund-raising and a march, in addition to joining the picket at the distribution centre. In other areas without a distribution centre, including Dunedin and the East Cape, anarchists were involved in fund-raising and pickets of makeshift distribution centres.

In spite of the widespread anarchist support, communication between radicals involved in supporting the struggle was virtually non-existent out-

union officials [...] are constrained by both the law and their role as mediators between capital and workers, and therefore, in periods of heightened struggle, will inevitably be forced to either take a position more conservative than the workers whose dues pay their salaries or to abandon their job.

side of posts on Aotearoa Indymedia. This meant there was no coordinated nationwide support campaign by anarchists or the wider radical community. I was lucky enough to be travelling from Auckland to Christchurch via Wellington at the time of the lockout and participated in support actions in all three main centres. Because of this I was able to see some massive differences in activities in different parts of the country; some of the things anarchists did raised specific issues. I'm drawing on this experience to write this article, and to raise some ideas that I hope will improve the effectiveness and efficiency of anarchist support for industrial actions in the future, and our fight for a better society.

RELATIONS WITH THE LOCKED-OUT WORKERS AND WITH THE UNION

THE KEY PLANK OF ANARCHIST THEORY is self-organisation: that the struggle must always be controlled by those directly affected by it. In a situation like the Progressive lockout, that obviously means those workers locked out by Progressive Enterprises. However, rather than taking the lead from the locked out workers, some anarchists advocated taking the lead from union officials. For example, anarchists from Wellington had an argument on a private email list over whether or not attempts should be made to block trucks at a makeshift distribution centre in Lower Hutt — a move which had been called for by workers (and acted upon by workers, union officials and supporters in both Auckland and Christchurch) but had been directly opposed by the Palmerston North NDU official. In the end, some anarchists made the decision to blockade, which led to three of them being arrested (and unfortunately failed to stop the trucks).

The differences between workers and union officials became most apparent at the conclusion of the dispute. During what were to be the final set of negotiations on September 21, the delegated negotiations team (made up of locked-out workers) was asked to leave, while the higher-ups from Progressive Enterprises and the NDU remained in the room and continued the negotiations. The proposed agreement was not circulated to union members straight away. They were not to find out the details until the next day, when they had to vote for or against ratification immediately afterwards. The Christchurch workers almost voted it down — only 51% agreed to sign in the end, although the proposed agreement would provide them with the largest pay increase of all three sites involved in the dispute. They were so angry about the agreement that they voted not to return to work the next day (a Friday). In the end, at all three sites, workers marched back en masse on Friday morning only to immediately leave again. In Christchurch and Auckland Progressive workers took action in solidarity with fellow NDU members working at Feltex carpets who had lost their jobs after the company was put into receivership. In Auckland, Progressive workers held a protest outside a

branch of ANZ bank, who had started the receivership proceedings, while Christchurch workers marched to the Feltex site and joined the workers there in a wildcat occupation of the factory premises.

It is important to recognise the difference between workers and the officials who claim to represent them. While many union officials may be personally supportive of particular forms of action, they are constrained by both the law and their role as mediators between capital and workers, and therefore, in periods of heightened struggle, will inevitably be forced to either take a position more conservative than the workers whose dues pay their salaries or to abandon their job.

One of the reasons recognising this difference became a problem was the lack of actual conversation between anarchist supporters on picket lines and the locked-out workers. For obvious reasons, this was an issue in Wellington (where the nearest distribution centre was several hours away in Palmerston North) and in the smaller centres such as Dunedin. But this also happened in Auckland and Christchurch. In a situation such as this, where the workers knew each other well, it was always going to be hard for an outsider to make any real connections. But there were some anarchists who made no effort whatsoever to talk to anyone other than the other anarchists on the picket lines. Perhaps at a one-off event this would be understandable, but in a prolonged struggle such as this where many anarchists spent hours or even days on the lines, that was a massive failure. We need to work to build real connections with workers whose struggle we are supporting so that we can maintain ongoing contact with each other. Rather than parachuting in, supporting a struggle temporarily then running off to the next big thing, we need to build connections with other fights, to help broaden the class struggle, not to assist in its atomisation.

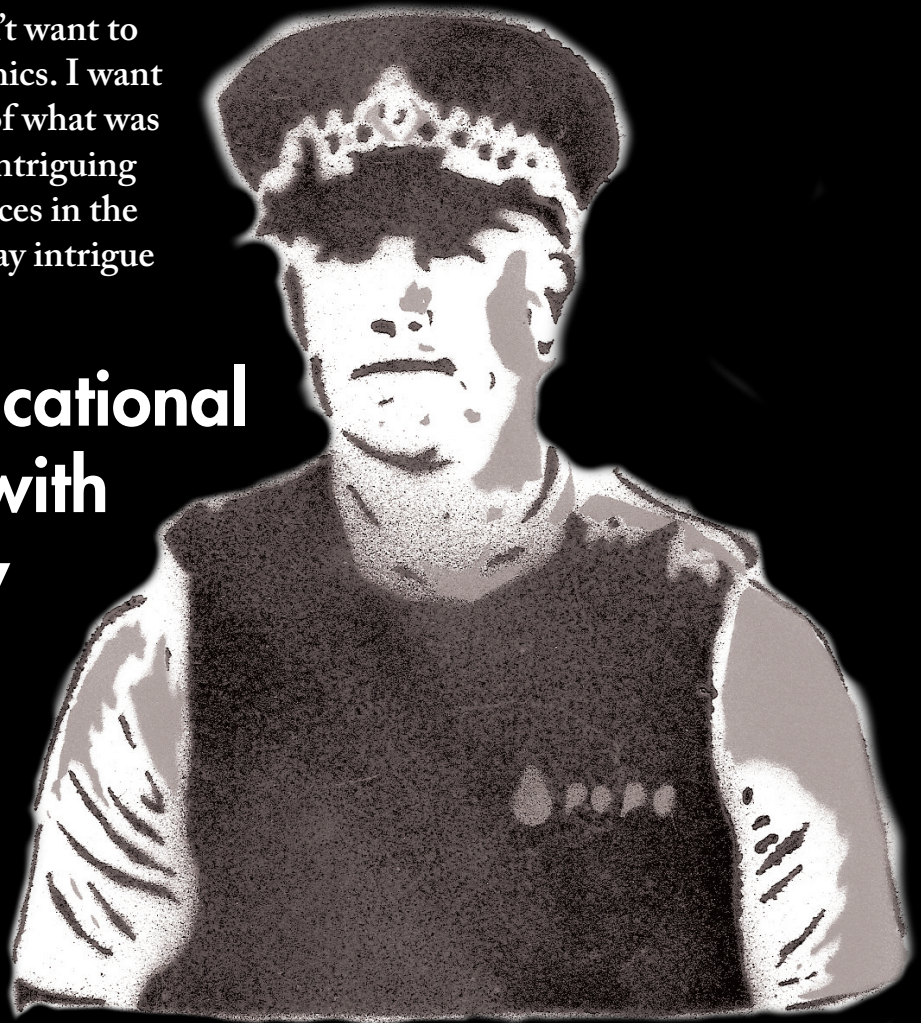
In creating these relationships, we also need to be honest about who we are and why we're there. That doesn't mean we need to introduce ourselves with 'Hi, I'm Asher, and I'm a member of the Aotearoa Workers Solidarity Movement, an anarchist-communist organisation working towards a global revolution which will see the destruction of the ruling class, indeed all classes, and replace capital and the state with a federation of workplace and community councils where all who are affected by a decision play an equal role in making that decision, in a world without money or borders.' But it does mean that we shouldn't be ashamed of our politics, or the organisations we are involved in; if we are ashamed of our beliefs or the groups we are involved in then we should be questioning why we hold those beliefs or are involved in those groups in the first place.

Currently, if most people have even heard of anarchism, they generally have a negative impression of it: black blocs or bombs. The easiest way to change that is to challenge those associations — if we're standing alongside someone on a picket line, supporting them, and they know that we are anarchists, then at worst they'll think 'oh, I guess there's at least one anarchist who isn't a complete idiot' and at best, they may even question some of the assumptions they hold about what anarchism is. If we are ever to restore the long-lost connection between anarchism and working class solidarity in people's minds, then we need to start being openly known as anarchists when we engage in acts of working class solidarity. ■

I WAS ARRESTED for shoplifting a year ago and I'd like to tell you about it. If you think stealing is an inexcusable criminal act you probably won't be quickly persuaded otherwise. In any case, I don't want to write about ethics. I want to tell a story of what was for me a very intriguing set of experiences in the hope that it may intrigue others.

An educational brush with the law

— Tyler



ARTWORK BY PARERAUKAWA KURA

PERHAPS MY MAIN MISTAKE was not to have realized that I was ill prepared to play the role of shoplifter. I stuck out as an obvious delinquent in that setting with my bare feet, ripped jeans and unkempt facial hair — ironically, precisely the things which mark me as a trustworthy local at home in the countryside.

My method was also a poor one in hindsight so I'll put its appeal down to sunstroke. I got one of those reusable shopping bags and causally added my items to it as I browsed the aisles. Then on my way out I paid for one item in the express lane, leaving the bag over my shoulder as if it simply had other things in it which I'd brought in with me. I walked out and off down the corridor smoothly. All good. Just about.

A young supermarket worker jogged up behind me and apologized, saying that the alarm had beeped as I left. Could I just come back and have my bag checked. I'm pretty sure this was a bluff. They don't put magnetic tags on every item in the store and I don't think mustard powder is stolen often enough to get one, but I could be wrong.

Anyway, I had a contingency plan for this scenario that I had heard works and was interested to try out. I looked shocked and embarrassed and apologised for forgetting to pay for the things in the bag, as I'd had it over my shoulder and forgotten about it, had a rough day, etc. I intended to pay and had the money on me and would be happy to pay immediately. I assumed that this would be an agreeable resolution for the supermarket, that they would prefer to have my money and send me off rather than bother the police for such a trifling amount of money — that they would choose to believe me out of convenience. I was well wrong.

It turned out that this supermarket had a policy of always calling the police. I was ushered into the manager's office and sat in a chair in a corner. The manager sat disapprovingly behind her

desk and my friend from the hallway stood menacingly in the only doorway. The manager was uninterested in my story. She only wanted to see my driver's license, with which I obliged, and to get the cops there as soon as possible — which wasn't very soon. I don't think that \$20 crimes by thieves cooperating in their own detainment

are a high priority call-out.

When it became clear that I'd be there for a while, I suggested amicably to the doorway man that he might as well sit down. Not wanting to accept my invitation and risk allying himself with the enemy, he smirked as if I had ulterior motives and declined. He spent the next three hours on his feet, poor guy.

Very quickly I got the impression that I was not held in high regard by my new friends. It wasn't long before I realised that I was thoroughly despised. As a shoplifter, it seems, I was part of an elusive criminal class, which these workers often get to curse but seldom catch. As a case in point, I got to witness another theft in progress while in the manager's office. This one was much better thought out than my own — simpler and ultimately more successful. I enjoyed my privileged backstage seat as the drama unfolded via security radio.

Two guys had filled a shopping bag with meat and upon reaching the checkouts, bolted through the doors, running for the nearest exit. A short way down the street, a third man had a car waiting and they sped off into the sunset. Security managed to keep up on foot well enough to take note of the vehicle's colour.

I was now silent observer of an unexpectedly vicious outpouring of hatred by the manager and security guards. They steamed and fussed and swore and it seemed as if they personally had been done a great injustice.

Eventually, they turned their attention back to me, the not so elusive thief. The security guard sat down intimidatingly next to me and attempted to restore some of his mana by exacting what he thought was his authority over me.

I happen to know a little bit about trespass orders, not a lot, but more than him it turned out. He tried to explain to me that I needed to sign his copy of my trespass order to make it official. I tried to explain that wasn't the case, he just needed to give it to me. He said that the cops would make

me sign it when they showed up. He then tried to explain to me that I needed to let him take a photo of my face for them to put on their wall. I tried to explain to him that I did not need to and would not in fact pose for him. He said that the cops would make me when they showed up.

I now had time to sit and wait and reflect on the uncanny hatred (you could actually see the fire in their eyes, I swear) which I had just witnessed. These workers do not lose anything when someone shoplifts. They are paid an hourly rate regardless. Yet they showed an incredible empathy with the business that employs them, which funnily enough also effectively loses nothing from such thefts. That same business willingly throws out more edible food each day than any gang of thieves could ever hope to carry out the front doors. Also, they have insurance and make millions of dollars profit a year

regardless. Those underpaid shift workers probably had more in common with the meat thieves than with the equally elusive owners and stockholders profiting from their labour.

Later that day... the police finally arrive.

Security guard: He won't sign his trespass order.


Cop: He doesn't have to.

Security guard: He's not letting me take a picture of him.

Cop: He doesn't have to.

Me: Can I have a drink of water?

Everyone: NO!



The cop said, Don't You Look At Me! and with an arm to the throat pulled him over backwards onto the floor and dragged him into an adjacent room. I saw the blue-sleeved arm of the law pummel the kidneys of a homeless man in the fetal position with several heavy blows before the room was filled with supportive officers and the door closed.

It seemed to take a long time to be escorted out through the store. Everywhere I met with the disapproving eyes of the public. I had expected it, but it hit me harder that I expected it to. I know I am a nice guy, but in that situation everyone assumed the worst. Maybe it was all exaggerated by my hunger since I hadn't been allowed to eat the biscuits that I hadn't been allowed to buy after I hadn't been allowed to steal them.

I'd been arrested before for participating in nonviolent direct action at protests, so once in police custody I was on familiar ground. Often I find my time in the cold concrete cells relaxing and meditative. Although there is definitely something terrifying about knowing there are at least four bolted steel doors between you and freedom. This time, however, the more I tried to relax, the more reasons I found for why getting arrested that day was a really dumb idea.

Eventually I decided, reluctantly, that since I needed to be back home up north that weekend, the best thing to do would be to refuse to sign for bail. That way I would be taken to court the next morning instead of being released that evening and made to come back the following week. I regretted that decision immediately but it turned out to be the best I'd made all day.

My decision made me less than popular with the officer on duty, who didn't see the logic. I considered myself lucky to still have received dinner (I didn't risk asking for a vegan option) before being left alone in darkness to ponder the night away.

I found the worst part about sleeping in a police cell was not the mattress (I like them thin), not the blanket (not in summer anyway) but the brilliant halogen light that came buzzing to life periodically, stunning me wide



awake to an officer's shout of 'Move!' to check if I was still alive. Each time you think it might be morning but it isn't.

When it finally was morning all of us sleepover guests got weetbix in a communal holding cell and then a convenient (though cramped) free bus ride to the courthouse. The scene was now set for more backstage observations. I sat and listened to my fellow prisoners' stories of police busts, dawn raids, drunken fights, drug deals, accumulated fines and of how much more efficient the courts are in Kaikohe. Most people were quite talkative. Either that or still asleep.

And so we waited. And waited. First to see a lawyer (who unfortunately for me was fairly unhelpful and then when I appeared in court, fairly invisible), and finally to be called before a judge.

At one stage we were shifted cells. The cop announced our imminent departure and my friend from Kaikohe was first to the door. The cop said again to hurry up because we're moving and Kaikohe put a foot through the open door.

Everything froze. Instantly the cop was in the man's face telling him sternly and forcefully to Get Back In, We're Not Going Yet. Out of nowhere stepped a bigger, scarier, louder cop who added his two cents of Shut The Fuck Up, Get Back, Don't You Try That On Me, I'm In Charge. The man was by that stage back sufficiently far enough, but refused to cower submissively as was obviously desired. He was shouted down and glared at for trying to explain the mistake, but kept his ground and maintained staunch eye contact the whole time.

When we did go, he was first and I was right behind. He glanced at the reinforcement cop as we walked past.

Oops.

The cop said, Don't You Look At Me! and with an arm to the throat pulled him over backwards onto the floor and dragged him into an adjacent room. I saw the blue-sleeved arm of the law pummel the kidneys of a homeless man in the fetal position with several heavy blows before the room was filled with supportive officers and the door closed. Amidst cries of protest the rest of us had been locked back into the cell down the hall. Somehow I knew it would be pointless to demand the officer's badge number. Some time later the man was escorted to our new cell clutching his stomach. Everyone was as pissed off as me; I was the only one surprised.

That one event affected me more than anything else. It occurs to me now that just as the security guard has plenty in common with the thief, so the police officer is much the same as the criminal. It is a faint and wonky line which so artificially separates good and evil in our society and in our minds, though we are tempted to think of it as bold and straight.

To conclude this tale, I pleaded guilty and was discharged with a conviction, but no penalty. I made it back to my friend's house just in time. He had been calling hospitals to see if I had been in an accident, but he was unable to get any information because we are unrelated. He was about to call my mum!

Every brush I've had with the law has been educational. While relatively brief, they have still managed to be incredibly frustrating. I feel for anyone caught in our so-called justice system no matter what the reason. For anyone with an interest in justice, I recommend first-hand experience. Never mind respectability, it is overrated. ■



Whose revolution?

White supremacy
and the anarchist movement

— BAMBOO

THIS ARTICLE IS ABOUT WHITE PRIVILEGE, White supremacy and racism in anarchist and radical movements. I hope it can be some kind of a resource or reference point so nobody has an excuse to keep ignoring the underlying race and ethnic hierarchies in the currently White-dominated movement in Aotearoa. I encourage anarchists to incorporate intersectional analyses of oppression. I'm focusing on racism here because it is an issue that's not very well understood by a lot of White anarchists, who believe that racism is 'out there' in society, embodied by neo-Nazis and the State. The latent racism, Eurocentrism, colonial attitudes and White supremacy that are reproduced in the anarchist movement in Aotearoa are rarely talked about or acknowledged.

Anti-racism and decolonisation need to be a priority in anarchist circles; it should be blaringly obvious by now to White people that the struggle for tino rangatiratanga and against racism is fundamental to achieving any kind of social liberation on this whenua. I want to point out some of the issues that I can see (as a Tauīwi persyn of colour) and encourage particularly Pākehā anarchists to think about some ways that the anarchist movement in Aotearoa can incorporate more anti-racist practices in anarchist ways of organising, working, relating and being.

GENERAL THEORIES OF RACE AND RACISM

Racism is not just an idea or belief, it is a power structure and relationship that operates on many levels and intersects with many other forms of oppression. Racism cannot be viewed as an isolated issue, and it doesn't only manifest as prejudices or stereotypes. It is closely connected to colonial, imperialist and capitalist interests. Racism is a power structure existing in institutions, representations, social environments and interpersonal relationships. As a power structure, it has a history that is built on genocide, violence,

war, slavery and colonisation. It doesn't affect all racialised groups in the same way.

Racism is a systemic, societal, institutional, omnipresent, and epistemologically embedded phenomenon that pervades every vestige of our reality. For most Whites, however, racism is like murder: the concept exists but someone has to commit it in order for it to happen. This limited view of such a multilayered syndrome cultivates the sinister nature of racism and, in fact, perpetuates racist phenomena rather than eradicates them. Further, this view of racism disguises its true essence, thus allowing its tenets to proliferate.

— Omowale Akintunde¹

The ideology of racism is founded on two different kinds of assumptions: biological superiority and cultural superiority. Historically, the idea of race developed as a quasi-scientific biological theory that divided human populations into a hierarchy of 'races' that were supposedly biologically, phenotypically and genetically distinct from each other. 'Race' did not exist in antiquity and it is not a universal concept but a fairly recent construct that conveniently emerged at a time of European colonialism and slavery. It was used as an ideological and scientific justification for Empire and domination of non-White people. One of the earliest examples of scientific racism was an essay written by Joseph de Gobineau called *Essay on the Inequality of Human Races*, which was said to have a significant influence on Hitler and National Socialism.

Most colonial race hierarchies place White/Aryan/European/Anglo people at the top, then yellow, red, brown and finally Black at the bottom. The 'science' of craniometry also existed as a way of classifying races through the measurement

1. *Multicultural Education* v. 7 no. 2 (Winter 1999) <http://www.peopleofcolororganize.com/analysis/white-racism-white-supremacy-white-privilege-social-construction-race/>

of skull sizes, which was then used to determine intellectual abilities. Its conclusion was, of course, that Europeans were the most intelligent of all the races. Racism that is based on the assumption of biological superiority entails 'solutions' that involve biological interventions such as eugenics and genocide as well as anti-miscegenation policies — forbidding sex and reproduction between people from different races in order to maintain racial purity.

In the 21st century, biological race as a scientific idea has generally been discredited. Although race doesn't exist as a biological fact, the idea of racial difference is still very real and affects people's experience of inequality; it is still frequently used to explain cultural difference.

The other aspect of racism that is more relevant to White anarchists is the assumption of European cultural superiority: that Europeans are more advanced, progressive and civilised than the rest of the world; non-European people are backward, traditional and conservative. Therefore White people should dominate and make other peoples assimilate to European cultures. A variation on this idea that's more common on the liberal left is that womyn and queers are oppressed in non-Western cultures and need Westerners to liberate them from their own culture. This is particularly rich considering how widespread misogyny and heterosexism are in the West.

Racist interventions based on discourses of cultural superiority use cultural imperialism as a strategy of domination — domination through 'civilising' and missionising, converting non-Europeans to a Western way of life through institutions such as the education system, political system, health system and economic system in which Western values are instilled by coercion or manipulation. It is especially important for Western anarchists to be aware of cultural imperialism when they want to participate or intervene in majority world, indigenous and migrant struggles.

Racism produces a system of power that privileges White people in the West. It's part of the state system where predominantly rich White heterosexual men have the power to make decisions for everyone else.

Racism is more than just being prejudiced against a person because of their ethnicity. It's having the power to act on that prejudice by oppressing and dominating. A simplified equation would be power + prejudice = racism.

WHITE PRIVILEGE

'White privilege means that White people don't have to think about racism. White privilege means that White people can think of themselves as normal and generalize universally that what they experience is the standard. White privilege is a major barrier to activism and has historically undermined radical multiracial and anti-racist movement building. An example is White radicals organizing actions that involve possible arrest without thinking about how People Of Color have a very different relationship to the police i.e. police

Racist interventions based on **discourses of cultural superiority** use *cultural imperialism* as a strategy of domination — domination through 'civilising' and missionising [...] Western anarchists to be aware of cultural imperialism when they want to *participate or intervene* in **majority world, indigenous and migrant struggles.**

brutality is a daily reality in communities of Color and People Of Color are treated different at the hands of police generally speaking. White privilege often leads to White activists thinking that their way of organizing is the only way to organize and that their tactics are the most radical tactics.’²

SOME EXAMPLES OF WHITE PRIVILEGE WORTH THINKING ABOUT INCLUDE:

- If you were arrested and it was reported in the capitalist media, the journalist wouldn’t state your ethnicity.
- When people tell racist jokes, they aren’t about you, your ancestors or your family.
- You would never be denied a job based on your ethnicity.
- Most of the people you see in the movies and on TV share your ethnicity.
- You have never been told by strangers to fuck off home.
- When people complain about jobs being stolen from ‘real Kiwis’ they aren’t blaming you or your family for stealing those jobs.
- Your grandparents would not have been restricted from immigrating to New Zealand during the un-official White New Zealand policy.
- Violence in your community would not be attributed to your culture or ethnic identity
- When strangers ask where you are from, you can reply with the name of a place in New Zealand, and they accept your answer.

White privilege is based on the construction of Whiteness as the norm, which all racialised groups are measured against, where ethnic differences depart from. Whiteness is everywhere yet nowhere. To some extent Whiteness is fluid: who gets included in the ‘White’ category and benefits from White privilege is different in different contexts. During apartheid in South Africa, Japanese people were considered ‘honorary Whites’ and Māori players in the All Blacks were offered the same status so that they could play rugby in South Africa. Meanwhile, Chinese people were considered Black. Perhaps due to their strength as an imperialist nation, Europeans had considered Japanese people as ‘Aryans of the East.’ Whiteness isn’t necessarily based on skin colour, but on power, class and proximity to European (ruling class) ideals.

Whiteness is used to mask class differences. Instead of blaming poverty on the capitalist economy, White people can blame indigenous people and

2. Chris Crass. ‘Beyond the Whiteness—Global Capitalism and White Supremacy: thoughts on movement building and anti-racist organizing’ in Collective Liberation on my mind. <http://www.kersplebedeb.com/mystuff/books/collectiveliberation/beyond.html>

immigrants for being lazy or stealing their jobs. It is also used for nation-building and nationalist projects, to construct a sense of unity based on the dominant White ethnicity and create a distinction between 'Us' (White people who belong here) and 'Them' (People Of Colour who don't). At the end of the day, Whiteness works to serve the interests of the rich, replacing class conflict with ethnic conflict.

RACISM IN THE RADICAL LEFT

Anti-racism isn't just accepting people of different ethnicities or fighting neo-Nazis and fascists. It's also about understanding power dynamics and cultural nuances; it's about being aware of your own cultural background and how it informs the way you behave, communicate and organise. Attempting to be 'colour blind' doesn't help, it just sweeps racism under the carpet and masks inequality by homogenising everyone as 'one people.' Doing that only serves to uphold institutional racism.

The White supremacist capitalist patriarchal system of oppression that shapes our realities affects us in different ways. Your ethnic background and culture informs your perspectives of the world. Even though there are differences and contradicting views within cultures and ethnic groups, there are certain things to be aware of when your culture is dominant. Pākehā anarchists may reject social hierarchy and the colonial state system, but many of them are still unaware of the privileges they have by being part of the dominant culture, and of how that influences the way they organise, campaign, speak and write. More importantly, many Pākehā anarchists are unaware of how racism and manifestations of White supremacy are reproduced in the Pākehā-dominated anarchist networks in Aotearoa. To

make it easier to understand, I'm going to break it down by identifying the different aspects of White supremacy that are reproduced in the anarchist movement.

WHITE SAVIOUR SYNDROME

This is the attitude whereby White anarchists feel entitled to lead or intervene in struggles that aren't directly about their own liberation. For example, trying to take over indigenous or non-White people's struggles and rescue them, instead of standing in solidarity with them. For a fictional representation of this, watch the Hollywood film *Avatar*, where a White man, part of the colonising culture, is physically transformed into one of the indigenous people, then leads them to overthrow the colonial oppressors, thus saving the day. Inherent to this feeling of entitlement to lead and dominate is the assumption that non-White oppressed peoples are politically immature and thus incapable of organising for their own liberation and that White people know what's best for everyone else. This attitude is a patronising and paternalistic benevolence that fails to recognise the autonomy and agency of non-White peoples and ultimately undermines the goals of self-determination.

CULTURAL APPROPRIATION

I'm using this term to mean taking, stealing or adopting cultural symbols, spirituality, practices, language, music, dress and adornment from colonised or dominated cultures, by members of the dominant culture. It usually involves taking things out of their context without respecting the culture or people that it comes from. The most visible forms of cultural appropriation by White anarchists could be hairstyles such as Mohawks or dreadlocks, or getting tā moko to look more

alternative or 'tribal.' Mohawk haircuts have come to symbolise White punk culture rather than the Mohawk nation, and dreadlocks are associated more with White hippy culture than with Rastafarianism. These, I guess, 'successful,' cultural appropriations result in the erasure of the cultures from whom it was appropriated. The dominant culture has already taken so much from indigenous and majority world people that for White privileged people to do the same is disrespectful and insulting.

Cultural appropriation is not the same thing as cultural exchanges — which have been going on forever since no culture is isolated and unaffected by others. The issue here is with White privileged people's continued exploitation of non-White and indigenous cultures and people. It's also related to the colonial attitude of grand entitlement: the entitlement to take, name, define, narrate and to judge.

TOKENISM

Tokenism is shallow, superficial attempts to address racism, as opposed to real efforts to be allies, share space or build solidarity. For example tokenising People Of Colour in the anarchist scene to prove that it's not just a White scene, and then using their existence as an excuse not to address racism because 'we' are so inclusive. I remember being at a meeting of all Tauīwi anarchists to discuss the name for a local anarchist zine. Someone suggested the name 'Te Ahi.' When it was challenged as being tokenistic, a Pākehā anarchist said, 'it's better to be tokenistic than nothing.' In another situation, I was asked if I wanted to be part of the Indymedia collective because they 'needed more womyn, especially non-Pākehā womyn.' Tokenism also happens when non-White people are invited to events just to be

'decoration' without being properly informed of what is going on or the way the event will run. It's tokenistic when consultations with Iwi get done under Pākehā terms and the Iwi's suggestions on issues are ignored because the decisions had already been made and the consultations were done just to 'tick the box.' Tokenism is offensive and disrespectful, and it only works to reproduce Eurocentrism and White supremacy.

CULTURAL INSENSITIVITY

This includes not being aware of your own cultural background and history as well as other people's cultures. It can also include insensitivity to people's experiences of racism. People who've experienced racism their whole life can be triggered by the experience of being in a predominantly White anarchist space, especially if they're used to being ignored because of their ethnicity.

EUROCENTRISM

This is based on the assumption that European, Pākehā or White experiences are universal. A lot of White anarchists have a tendency to universalise their experiences. For example, they might talk about 'the working class' in a way that includes only the White (male) working class. The experiences of White anarchists are thought of as the norm, People Of Colour's experiences are ignored and silenced, which then makes the priorities of anarchist activism White-centric.

Most anarchist histories and anarchist theorists that are celebrated and recognised are from Europe. So much anarchist literature which is supposed to be written to relate to the experiences of the readers assumes the reader is a young heterosexual white male, and often the theories, perspectives and descriptions of oppressive conditions don't specify the subject

position of the author. This excludes non-European people from anarchist history, theory and experience.

ROMANTICISM


This is when White anarchists romanticise People Of Colour, majority world and indigenous struggles or culture. Think about the Zapatistas in Mexico; how many White anarchists have been to Mexico to ‘experience’ the struggle of the Zapatistas? Think about Palestine and the symbolism of the young male freedom fighter wearing a Keffiyeh. The language used to describe indigenous cultures by White anarcho-primitivists is also essentialist and romanticises indigenous cultures. Even the word ‘primitive’ is highly contested as it harks back to colonial usage to justify ‘civilising missions.’ Even if anarcho-primitivists use it in a positive sense, it’s still not up to White anarchists to label or classify other peoples’ existence. Romanticism is very problematic as it reduces struggles and cultures to an object of desire or fetish.

ISLAMOPHOBIA


Islamophobia is steadily increasing in Western countries. European countries have taken the lead by banning burqas and using colonial quasi-feminist rhetoric to justify the ban. On the radical left, Islamophobia takes the form of racialising Muslims and Islamic cultures as backward, misogynist, authoritarian, violent and homophobic.

SECULARISM AND ATHEIST FUNDAMENTALISM

Anarchism has a long historical relationship with atheism, which has its roots in Enlightenment thinking. Anarchists sometimes argue that religion is the cause of political conflicts, wars, sexism and homophobia, and use this as an excuse to be disrespectful of others’ religious beliefs. These issues have more to do with religious fundamentalism rather than religion itself. Religion or spirituality can be a very personal thing or it can be part of a cultural identity. Dismissing people’s religious beliefs and traditions often amounts to racist exclusion.



Most anarchist histories and anarchist theorists that are celebrated and recognised are from Europe. So much anarchist literature [...] assumes the reader is a young heterosexual white male, often the theories, perspectives and descriptions of oppressive conditions don’t specify the subject position of the author.



INDIVIDUALISM

Contemporary liberal Western culture emphasises the primacy of the individual; community comes second. Individualism is a Western concept that is different to more family-orientated cultures where everything is taken into consideration in relation to others. In anarchist practice this is reflected in the notion of the self as the starting point for activism and emphasis on changing oneself and one's lifestyle. This leads to lifestyle approaches to anarchist strategy including anti-racism. I've heard White people talk about their 'personal journey' and growth in working on themselves to be better White allies to People Of Colour. Focusing solely on yourself could improve your relationships with People Of Colour but in the long run isn't directly challenging the structural nature of racism and the collective responsibility that should be taken to dismantle racist oppression.

Individualistic tendencies in collective organising are also a problem in Eurocentric forms of organising. For example, when there are unequal levels of responsibility felt for maintaining collectives, individuals who don't feel responsible for the wellbeing and goals of the group always leave one person to pick up the pieces when tasks aren't done. This is part of the culture of White supremacy where there is a lack of consideration for the collective as a whole.

PROTESTS AND ARRESTIBILITY

As activists, protesting is part of the strategy of our campaigns and expressions of dissent. Usually, there is some guarantee of safety, that you're not going to be shot at or that you and your family members won't be 'disappeared' by the State. Protesting is a dangerous activity in a lot of non-Western countries where you are risking a lot to be involved in political activism. In Western countries, protesting can be more of a risk for People Of Colour, whose political dissent is frequently constructed as 'terrorism', than it is for Pākehā.

The assumption that everyone should be willing to get arrested at a protest or that if you're not willing to be arrested, you're somehow less 'hardcore' comes from a position of privilege — White privilege, because the New Zealand police and courts treat People Of Colour differently from Pākehā, as well as the privilege of having permanent residency or citizenship here and not having to worry about being deported.

GUIDELINES FOR WHITE ALLIES

Here are some helpful hints on how to build solidarity and avoid reproducing White supremacy within anarchist struggles:

- Don't treat People Of Colour like priests; we're not here to absolve you of your racism and hear your confession stories.

- Don't expect us to be an audience for your 'freak outs', your 'seeing the light' or 'OMG, I feel so guilty for being White and privileged' stories.
- Talk to other White people, pull each other up on racist shit, challenge and discuss your fears and guilt and strategies for being allies.
- Don't expect us to be the ones having to bear the burden of challenging your people on racism.
- Don't expect us to be experts on all People Of Colour or even our own cultures, our experiences are not all the same and we can't speak for or represent other People Of Colour.
- Avoid judging the authenticity of someone's ethnicity or culture.
- Stop tokenising us or consulting us when decisions are already made.
- Get over the temptation of White saviour syndrome.
- Listen.
- Don't diminish what we say if we express ourselves in a way that may make you feel uncomfortable.
- Do work to earn and build trust.
- Support our struggles but don't take over.
- Know that you don't have all the answers.

White anarchists need to start addressing racism and become more aware of how racialised power dynamics are reproduced in the movement — and they need to do it with an intersectional approach, taking into account all other oppressions including ageism, sexism, class, homophobia, ableism, transphobia, fatphobia and speciesism. I've described some of the ways that White supremacy is reproduced in the movement in the hope that these expressions of White supremacy and racism will be recognised, further examined and challenged—without People Of Colour always having to bring it up. Anti-racist practices need to be actively incorporated into the predominantly

White anarchist movement. Anarchist anti-racism needs to go beyond just fighting neo-Nazis. There are a lot of resources out there and writings by anarchist People Of Colour and indigenous activists and these should be more widely accessed and made accessible.

For me, anarchism has always been a useful theory to understand how and why oppression exists and operates, as well as a general strategy for challenging social hierarchies and inequality directly. It's about making visible the oppressive conditions unseen in mainstream media, and at the same time building empowering pathways that address the roots of the problem. If we're going to work together across cultures, borders, genders, sexualities, generations, abilities and languages, we better start recognising our own oppressive behaviours collectively and individually; we better re-think our priorities to expand the relevance of anarchist praxis to people beyond the current demographics of the movement. ■

White anarchists: deal with being the best anti-racist allies you can. We need you — and you need us — but we will do this shit without you.

— Ashanti Alston

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Post-colonial anarchism by Roger White

Our culture, our resistance zine

People of colour organise: www.peopleofcolororganize.com

Race Revolt zine

Aotearoa Anarcha-feminist Hui 2010 Reader

A STRATEGY FOR (A) CHANGE

building a culture of resistance

— Beyond Resistance

In Aotearoa, as around the world, the effects of capitalism are being felt more than ever. In the workplace we face individualised contracts, casualised labour, and a range of anti-worker laws designed to erode collective resistance. Where unions do exist they are ineffective and mirror the very structures that diffuse real power in the first place. The unemployed and those on benefits have experienced massive cuts to their only means of survival, while entire communities are being gentrified by developers, councils and landlords who place profit before people.

THE FORCES OF CAPITALISM AND THE STATE ASIDE, we live in a society used to the delegation of power to someone else. By giving up power to that of a representative (politician, community bureaucrat or union official) who will supposedly act on our behalf, the practice of self-organisation and collective action needed for meaningful change is lost.

In order to challenge these conditions, it is necessary to struggle in a way that encourages the building of collective power and self-activity. As a collective, Beyond Resistance has been trying to facilitate such a building of self-activity. We've been involved in a few struggles now — many were unsuccessful. The lessons learned from being involved in various struggles have enabled us to put down on paper some thoughts for action, and has also helped us in dealing with the aftermath of two major earthquakes in Christchurch. These thoughts have come in handy when organising action around the draconian earthquake laws and the savage conditions faced by the working class. But they are equally relevant for the wider anarchist movement in Aotearoa.

The pressing issue is this: we must move away from single-issue activism towards a constructive anarchism based on organisation and long-term struggle. To do this, we believe it is impor-

tant to clarify some key areas of our thinking. This includes an understanding of dual power.

WHAT IS DUAL POWER?

Dual power refers to a State of affairs in which working class power poses a direct challenge to the State and threatens to replace it as the accepted power in society. To do this involves creating the embryo of the new world while fighting the current one — ‘building the new in the shell of the old.’

By encouraging direct control of struggles by those in struggle, the practice of non-hierarchical workplace and community assemblies, and collective decision-making, anarchists can facilitate the growth of a culture of resistance and begin to confront the uneven power dynamics under capitalism.

Put simply, the way we organise our struggles and the way we relate to others during those struggles helps build a new power, which will one day destabilise and confront the current power held by the capitalist class. By doing this we not only oppose the State, we also prepare ourselves for the difficult questions and confrontations that will arise in a revolutionary situation.

Running a collective for food distribution or a radical bookshop, while having its own value, does not confront wider social relations. Dual power is not just building counter institutions that will magically grow within capitalism and replace it once it is gone. Such counter-institutions may collectively manage a resource and practice new forms of organization (both valuable things), but on their own they are not enough to bring about radical social change. The State will not peacefully relinquish power to such institutions. Rather, those in power will try their best to destroy them using whatever coercion and force is necessary. This is because dual power directly challenges the legitimacy of the State. A situation where two social forms compete for legitimacy is inherently un-

stable — one or the other must prevail eventually. Therefore dual power is both creative (in building new forms of social relations), and destructive (to confront and replace capitalist social relations and the power of the state).

As a collective, Beyond Resistance have decided that single-issue campaigns that do not work towards building dual power, although important, should not be the focus of our efforts as an organisation. Campaigns that do not contribute toward the building of dual power should be seriously analysed and evaluated. We may morally and politically approve of such movements and participate individually, but as a small movement with limited resources, anarchists in Aotearoa must reject the liberalism of activism and concern ourselves with organising.

A REVOLUTIONARY FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE

Equally important is having a revolutionary feminist perspective in everything we as anarchists do. We need a revolutionary feminist analysis of our society that challenges male dominance, compulsory heterosexuality, and the binary gender system. Secondly, anarchist internal operations (organizing structure, roles and responsibilities, meeting procedures, decision making, etcetera) must ensure women’s participation and be strongly aware of practices that tend to favour men’s voices over women’s, and must work to overcome them. Thirdly, anarchists must not neglect revolutionary feminist political struggle, particularly those kinds which connect struggles against sexism with the class struggle and building dual power. Finally, our future vision must be feminist. It should imagine a world not only without sexism or homophobia but one in which gender relations are completely transformed and liberated.

TINO RANGATIRATANGA

This is a sticky topic within the anarchist movement in Aotearoa and needs wider discussion.

What is clear is that racist structures, actions and ideas mean that Māori are over-represented in the most exploited parts of the working class. As a result, class struggle is necessary for Māori self-determination. However Māori are also oppressed and exploited as Māori, since Māori land, economy, language, laws, arts, spiritual traditions and so on, have been repressed, but also taken and used for the benefit of capitalism and White supremacy.

Therefore anarchist activity in Aotearoa must recognize the ongoing history of indigenous self-organisation and resistance to both capitalism and colonization. It would be detrimental to ignore the very real past of colonisation and forms of Māori protest against it — as contradictory as this may seem to Eurocentric anarchist traditions. Cultural diversity and self-determination does not have to imply nationalism and a nation state, therefore

Beyond Resistance aims to support, engage with and learn from grassroots indigenous struggle in Aotearoa.

Class struggle anarchists offer a critique of corporate and representative approaches to social change, and should work alongside grassroots Māori struggle in Aotearoa to develop an understanding of the links between colonization and class exploitation.

ANARCHISM IN ACTION

Rather than rally people around a particular issue (an activist approach), we believe the pressing task ahead for anarchists is to build relationships between people in order to transform power dynamics and confront capitalism.

This does not involve choosing an issue we perceive to be the most important and trying to enrol people to that end. Instead, the issues and concerns need to be defined by people themselves. Anarchist organizing should facilitate people's ability to tackle these concerns, and encourage collective action to create change and to build dual power.

Chasing workers at picket lines with flyers, or distributing class struggle newspapers door-to-door is not necessarily class struggle ('activism for people with better politics'). Such activity views class struggle as something that happens to other people, something outside of ourselves. Instead, being involved in our own, everyday workplace and community struggles, building solidarity networks with our neighbours and co-workers, and encouraging collective decision making in public and inclusive spaces, are ways of putting anarchist communist ideas into practice.

SOLIDARITY NETWORKS

Solidarity networks are networks of people who support the ideas of direct action, solidarity, collective decision-making and self-organisation. Such net-

Politics [...] is not separated into a specialised activity that only certain people do. By organising our own forms of direct action [...] we weaken the social dynamics currently upheld by capitalism and point to a different kind of power.

works span across different communities and different workplaces (regardless of unions or not), in order to support and connect struggles and build collective action. Networks try to bring anyone affected by an issue together to collectively discuss the issue, regardless of union membership, place of employment, gender, race or age. The key is the self-activity of all of those concerned, to widen the fight, and encourage a state of permanent dialogue.

Solidarity networks offer important support to those who are isolated (such as sub-contractors, temps, casual workers, the unemployed and those at home) and help build a sense of community. They act as an important source of skill sharing and education — doing all the useful things the current unions do (acting as source of advice, sharing knowledge on labour law, fostering solidarity) while critiquing their legalist and bureaucratic frameworks. Importantly, they are not limited to the workplace.

By promoting direct action and solidarity, putting across anarchist ideas and offering practical examples of those ideas in practice, we would hopefully start to build a culture of resistance. This is vastly different to the current representative unions or community boards, whose unaccountable officials take it on themselves to control the fight and steer it along an acceptable path. By practicing and promoting mass meetings in times of struggle, we plant the seeds of ongoing, relevant forms of resistance which empower all of those affected — not just network members, but those who aren't members of the network and who may never want to be.

ASSEMBLIES

As anarchist organisers, our roles should be to put forward explicitly anarchist ideas and, where possible, call for open assemblies during workplace or community struggles.

Assemblies are a way of building forums in which we collectively organize struggle and take collective action, rather than individual or representative solutions. As such, it is a means of directly involving everyone in struggle, to collectively solve the problems we face. Politics, therefore, is not separated into a specialised activity that only certain people do. By organising our own forms of direct action (such as workplace direct action, rent strikes and other activity) we weaken the social dynamics currently upheld by capitalism and point to a different kind of power — one that encourages the collective, working class power of the future.

It is also a way of keeping politicians or others in check, and helps prevent struggles being co-opted for personal gain. Having power reside at the widest base, and having recallable delegates answerable directly to those involved provides greater accountability, and makes it harder for someone to sidetrack or control the direction of the struggle.

Sadly, the lack of community and collective forums means such assemblies are far from common (even more so outside of struggle). While public and inclusive decision making forums are the goal, we realise that such forums may not be applicable in certain situations (especially in tense workplace conditions, in which case such a strategy would only work after a long period of discreet agitation). Instead, revolutionary, self-managed assemblies should be viewed as the ideal forum to work towards, and not a one-step solution.

Historically, in times of heightened class struggle, such forms of decision-making have appeared spontaneously and without outside influence. By encouraging such forms in the here and now, we plant the seeds of revolution which can only truly blossom during times of mass social struggle. This is the role of anarchists as revolutionary organisers, and the goal of Beyond Resistance. ■